

THE IMPACT OF GENDER DISPARITY ON THE ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE OF THE SECONDARY EDUCATION DEPARTMENT IN BALOCHISTAN

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the role of gender disparity on the organizational performance of the secondary education department in Balochistan. Although the countries have committed themselves to promote equal power between the genders, women are still badly underrepresented in the educational leadership of the country like Pakistan. The research adopts a mixed-methods design, combining survey responses and qualitative interviews to explore the influence of gender-based exclusion on institutional performance, specifically in domains like morale, innovation, and policy implementation. The negative association between gender disparity and organizational performance is valid according to the quantitative results such as regression and correlation analysis. Cultural norms, discriminatory practices and inadequate enforcement of policies were cited as the major obstacles. Qualitative data (in particular, thematic analysis of interviews) also illuminates the actual experience of teachers and educators (female identified), and reveals institutional discrimination and absence of systemic support.

Based on the, Organizational Culture Theory, the research points to illuminating the fact that gender disparity can be more than a social injustice, but also a strategic impediment to the performance of the institutions. The research proposes gender-sensitive changes, leadership training of women, and tighter implementation of policies to increase equity and efficiency in the administration of education

Keywords: Gender disparity, organizational performance, educational leadership, Balochistan, policy implementation, mixed-method.

INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the backbones of national development and social change. However, in some of the areas such as Balochistan (which is the largest but least developed province in Pakistan) there are systemic gender differences which act as a hindering factor towards leadership equity in the public education system. Women constitute a good percentage in the teaching work force, but in leadership positions in Secondary Education Department, women

continue to be grossly underrepresented. This leadership translation still continues although there are numerous national and international obligations to gender equality.

Institutional and traditional patriarchal systems in Balochistan limit women in roles of making decisions and enforce male domination in the leadership system. Such dynamics do not only present a challenge to any notion of fairness and inclusion, but taken to their logical conclusion,

poisons the well of ineffective educational institutions. Studies have indicated that exclusive leadership leads to better organizational performance on parameters of innovation, communication, and responsiveness to policies—however, all these attributes are not evident in male-dominated frameworks.

Regardless of the recommended changes in terms of national education policies and the Balochistan Education Sector Plan (2020-2025), the symbolism of female inclusion in leadership has led to no practical equity. Cultural resistance, lack of proper enforcement of policy has made any real change impossible. In addition, very few empirical studies can be found with regards to gender-based exclusion in leadership and its relationship to organizational performance of public education system in the province of Balochistan.

The proposed research aims at bridging that gap by looking at the influence of gender disparity on the organizational performance in the Secondary Education Department in Balochistan. The research will be the use of a mixed-methodology and theoretical foundation base in Organizational Culture Theory to explore the structural, cultural and policy-related obstacles that thwart women pushing forward and undermine institutional performance.

When the study identifies the relationship between gender disparity and organizational outcomes, it delivers practical recommendations to educational reforms and gender equality. It highlights that attaining gender-inclusive leadership is by no means an issue of social justice but an organisational strategy to enhance better-institutional performances.

Research Objectives

To determine how gender disparity affects the organizational performance of secondary education department Balochistan.

Research Questions

This paper discuss the existing gender disparity in the secondary education department in the province of Balochistan, the effects of the same on the organizational output and the major cultural and social causes of the same.

Research Hypotheses

H: The existence of gender disparity has a negative effect on the organizational performance

of secondary education department in Balochistan.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Organizational Culture Theory

Organizational Culture Theory offers a robust framework for understanding how entrenched institutional beliefs, power hierarchies, and unwritten norms shape gender dynamics and influence performance. It posits that every organization has a distinct culture composed of shared values, assumptions, and practices that guide behavior and decision-making (Hunter, 2019). In male-dominated environments—such as the Secondary Education Department of Balochistan—these cultural norms often reinforce patriarchal leadership models, marginalizing women and limiting institutional innovation and effectiveness.

Despite national policies promoting gender equality, practical implementation often falls short due to deeply rooted organizational resistance. According to Ramos et al. (2022), public institutions in Pakistan frequently operate under male-centric norms, even when their official policies appear inclusive. This gap between policy and practice creates an environment where gender disparity thrives, particularly in leadership roles. Women are often excluded from informal decision-making circles and overlooked in promotion processes, diminishing their influence and reducing organizational diversity.

Such exclusionary cultures not only prevent capable women from contributing to institutional leadership but also weaken organizational performance. Poggesi et al. (2019) assert that inclusive leadership fosters better communication, ethical decision-making, and stronger team cohesion—all of which are critical in the education sector. Conversely, when leadership lacks gender diversity, it results in limited innovation, reduced morale, and ineffective cooperation.

In Balochistan's education sector, this is evident in the persistent underrepresentation of women in managerial positions, despite their qualifications and presence in the workforce. The masculine-dominated organizational culture reinforces stereotypes, creating structural barriers that hinder women's participation. As noted by Kazmi (2023), institutional biases, lack of

mentorship, and gendered expectations about leadership contribute to lower female retention and limited career mobility in Pakistan's education departments.

Therefore, Organizational Culture Theory not only explains how gender disparity becomes institutionalized but also reveals its detrimental impact on performance outcomes. Addressing this issue requires transforming organizational norms, promoting inclusive workplace practices, and enforcing gender-sensitive policies. Such changes are essential not just for achieving equity but for improving institutional performance across the board.

In many parts of Pakistan, parental attitudes continue to play a significant role in shaping girls' perceptions of their capabilities. Daughters are often viewed as needing protection, which can limit their confidence and agency. This early socialization leads to internalized beliefs about gender roles, contributing to women's underrepresentation in leadership and decision-making spaces later in life (Zafar, 2021). Parents usually consider their daughters as weak, timid, and too vulnerable; they need to be protected by the male members of the society. Because of this reason females cannot suggest or protest. This is the first step of subjugation and suppression. The educated females have the double identity – professional and private. Another finding of her research was that the income of the women is not considered as the main financial source for the family, but as supplementary to the income of their males. She also found that those results were not valid for the upper and advanced families, where complete freedom is given to their females. Achieving gender balance in leadership remains one of the most critical issues in the pursuit of social justice and equitable governance. When women are excluded from high-level leadership positions, they are denied both influence and the opportunity to shape institutional outcomes in ways that reflect diverse needs (Ramos, et al, 2022). Leadership is not only associated with authority and decision-making but also with access to networks, resources, and recognition. The absence of women in such roles limits the potential for inclusive policymaking and reinforces structural inequality. Gender-equitable leadership enhances representation, ensures that diverse perspectives are incorporated

into institutional goals, and strengthens democratic values (Iqbal & Rauf, 2021).

Because leaders have great influence, women who are kept out of positions of high leadership are deprived of the ability to change the world. The benefits of leadership are further amplified by the high prestige and privilege that come with it, as well as the opportunities that arise from leading in one area. The top leader in the majority of firms is also the one who receives the highest compensation, as managers and supervisors often earn more than employees without leadership responsibilities. Gender inequality and disparity continue to be central concerns in contemporary research and policy discourse, particularly in developing countries like Pakistan. Globally, male-dominated cultural systems persist in limiting women's access to power, resources, and leadership opportunities, perpetuating structural inequities (Kazmi, 2023). These imbalances are particularly pronounced in institutional and professional contexts where decision-making roles are overwhelmingly occupied by men. In Pakistan, deeply entrenched gender norms and unequal power dynamics continue to affect women's participation in educational leadership and governance (Fatima & Ahmed, 2021). Addressing these disparities requires both structural reforms and cultural transformation. Despite legislative reforms aimed at increasing women's representation in leadership, progress in countries like Pakistan and Samoa remains limited. In Pakistan, gender quotas have been introduced at both national and provincial levels, such as in Punjab where women's representation in administrative roles increased through reserved seats. However, these measures have not significantly shifted institutional power dynamics, especially in education (Showunmi, 2021). Critics argue that such quotas often function symbolically and lack the structural support needed for meaningful inclusion, such as capacity-building, mentorship, and accountability frameworks (Zafar, 2021). As a result, while representation may improve on paper, the influence and authority granted to women in decision-making roles remain insufficient.

Recent research on women's representation in higher education leadership in Pakistan highlights the persistent influence of structural and institutional barriers. These include biased recruitment and promotion systems, limited

access to professional networks and mentorship, and a lack of transparent evaluation mechanisms (Iqbal & Rauf, 2021). Such barriers hinder women's advancement despite their qualifications and commitment. Moreover, these challenges are compounded by sociocultural expectations that often prioritize men for leadership roles, resulting in fewer women occupying decision-making positions. Promoting gender-inclusive leadership requires systemic interventions that address both policy implementation and institutional culture. However, women in leadership roles in education offer an example that can support the retention of female students.

The categorization of individuals based on biological sex has long influenced perceptions of capability, particularly in leadership and performance-related roles. These assumptions often reinforce the stereotype that men are inherently more suited for tasks requiring strength, authority, or assertiveness, while women are perceived as weaker or less competent in such domains (Tabassum & Nayak, 2021). This biologically rooted bias continues to underpin structural gender disparities in professional settings, including education. As a result, women are frequently excluded from high-responsibility roles and are expected to conform to submissive or supportive positions. These perceptions not only undermine women's contributions but also perpetuate discriminatory practices within leadership structures (Kazmi, 2023). In this sense, women's cases were unfavorable. Women's soft structures by nature forced males to make decisions. Man is abusing the authority that the Almighty Allah has given him, which we refer to as biological distinctions. This explains why men create socio-cultural roles and obligations and why men control society and culture worldwide. Gender disparity is the state in which no feminine is granted the necessary authority to make judgments for masculine sex in a culture dominated by men. In this context, decisions about what to do are made by men, either directly or through other sexes.

The rights of the feminine were taken away by the male dominance in a variety of ways. The definition of inequality is "lack of evenness or social disparity." It is also characterized as treating people differently based on their gender. It results from various gender roles that are socially

prescribed. The proportion of female students in professional programs was 5% in 1965. In 1985, this percentage rose to 40% in the fields of law and medicine and above 30% in business and dentistry. Few women hold prominent positions in the corporate sector and serve on boards of directors. Though the amount of attention on gender equality in practice and policy is influenced by female leaders,. Women in leadership roles often support fair resource transfer, and legislatures with larger proportions of women typically support spending on social welfare, health care, and education at the expense of military. However, the persistence of men's dominance in positions of decision-making restricts women's capacity to shape policy at the local, national, and international levels of government as well as in communities and schools Milazzo & Goldstein, (2019). Stereotypes related to these perceived differences between men and women may act as an invisible ceiling for women's advancement to upper leadership positions in higher education administration. Men are associated with the larger workplace, while women are associated with the home and raising young children. According to stereotypes about women, their status in the public sphere is generally lower and their work is generally seen as inferior because men's work and world are generally valued more than women's Tabassum & Nayak, (2021). Women, for instance, try to reach a compromise with other people instead of engaging in conflict. Feminist theories eliminate artificial division or false dichotomies in favor of women's perspectives and experiences. The leadership styles attributed to men and women are also included in the individual perspectives. Akanji et al. (2019) assert that the basis of a traditional leadership style associated with men is a hierarchical organizational structure, where decision-making authority is centralized at the top and instructions and communications go through formal channels. However, since it promotes "increased employee performance and innovation flowing from enhanced commitment, motivation, and employee capability," today's organizations feel that a relationship-oriented approach is more appropriate (p. 33). It's interesting to observe that women typically take the lead when it comes to style preference. Guillet et al. (2019). It is advised that companies take advantage of the innate skills and qualities of

women. According to the cultural perspective, women's limited success in achieving high-level positions can be explained by the organizational context, which includes culture, ideology, and policies Ramos et al., (2022). While management in organizations is portrayed as gender-neutral, prior research has shown that it frequently involves practices that are consistent with traits that are traditionally valued in men. According to Poggesi et al. (2019)'s research, women perform better in fields related to peer-reviewed knowledge than in rich academic fields related to commercial research. Women managers frequently challenge patriarchal ideologies that associate women with unpaid labour, marriage, and the family and defend women in lower management roles with little power and opportunity. In addition, a workplace where peers are primarily male tends to marginalize women managers.

Rather than focusing on specific people or gender roles, the structural perspective examines the nature of organizational structures and the organization of work O'Connor, (2020). What seem to be gender-based variations in work behaviour are actually reactions to organizational structure and a person's position within it. The design of work systems itself bears a significant portion of the blame for the actions people take at work and their eventual outcome within organizations. Regarding the effect of organizations on women's career advancement, researchers have adopted a variety of stances. According to Kanter any potential benefits that women might have from organizations are eliminated by the bureaucracy's authoritarian nature Kanter, (2019).

She further contended that women suffer from the span of control and singular authority because they have less access to the decision-making process. In a similar vein, another researcher proposed that bureaucracies deliberately conceal the reality that success in their organizations requires only masculine attributes. Less bureaucracy and a flatter organizational structure are what these two women are advocating. However, radical, socialist, and lesbian feminists see hierarchy and bureaucracy as inherently anti-feminist, while liberal feminists do not. Hunter, (2019).

Because they are underrepresented, women in education leadership in Pakistan confront several

obstacles, including underrepresentation. Kazmi, (2023). Studies conducted in the Asian and US contexts demonstrate a connection between the underrepresentation of women leaders in educational leadership development and the hurdles associated with assuming leadership roles. Nonetheless, a number of studies have previously addressed Pakistan's low representation of women in leadership roles. Gender inequality at the top of companies has been widely demonstrated to result, at least in part, from pervasive gender prejudice and discrimination. "Women get less leadership opportunities than men indeed with equivalent qualifications" is an example of gender discrimination. Not only is there still the idea of a "glass ceiling," but women in leadership positions also face challenges in keeping their jobs because of a number of issues, such as juggling work and personal obligations, being unable to adjust to changing roles, and the negative stereotypes associated with gender.

A growing body of empirical research has highlighted the persistent underrepresentation of women in leadership roles across educational institutions. For instance, Shah and Haider (2021) conducted a mixed-method study in Pakistan's Punjab province and found that women were systematically excluded from school leadership roles due to informal hiring practices and male-preferred cultural norms. The study emphasized that despite having equal academic qualifications, female educators had limited access to professional development and leadership mentoring.

In a related study, Kabeer et al. (2022) investigated gender disparity across secondary schools in South Asia, finding that women in education often face both "glass ceiling" and "sticky floor" barriers—failing to reach the top due to structural obstacles and being held in lower-tier roles due to stereotypes and unequal performance evaluations. These findings mirror the barriers faced by women in Balochistan, reinforcing the need for systemic reform.

Gender disparity challenges in Pakistani organizations are deeply rooted in traditional management structures, often excluding women from strategic leadership roles. Added a regional perspective, showing that South Asian women in management face systemic marginalization, partly due to deeply embedded social expectations

regarding leadership and gender. Some studies have directly associated gender disparity to lower effectiveness of the organization. As an example, Yasmeen, Blouch, and Khan (2022) relied on survey data of 300 employees in the Pakistani education departments working in the public sector. Their results indicated that institutions that had male dominated leadership lines, were found to have more cases of interpersonal conflict, low innovation, and low employee morale. On the other hand, more gender-diverse workplaces created a positive effect on the team cohesion and communication due to their emphasis on diversity at the leadership level.

Equally, Fatima and Ahmed (2021) discovered that the exclusion of women in the educational leadership results in adverse effects in the reflexiveness of the school towards the community needs of the school and teacher student relationships and governance, in general. Their research adopted structural equation modelling model and made the conclusion that gender diversity is positively associated statistically with the organisational adaptability and quality of decision making.

Institutional and socio-cultural barriers are also highlighted in empirical research studies. In qualitative interviews with female administrators in rural and urban Pakistan, Showunmi (2021) found that the expectations towards female parents and members of the family usually clash with the requirements of the leadership position. Gendered norms about the workplace were perpetuated through these societal norms held by both women and men.

Similarly, Ramos et al. (2022) studied institutional policies in Nigerian and Pakistan education departments. They discovered an existence of poor or non-existent implementation together with inconsistency at a local level of gender equity plans that were on paper. They reached a conclusion that the main obstacles to effective gender transformations are organizational inertia and absence of political will.

Singularities are evidenced in other developing regions as well. Milazzo and Goldstein (2019) performed a cross-national comparative study to find out the gender parity in education management and they found that countries with higher gender parity in education management roles are more likely to invest in community-

based educational programs and even the results are better in terms of student performance and its retention.

Guedes et al. (2020) conducted studies in sub-Saharan Africa and indicated that leadership preparation programs specifically focused on female students had the immediate effect of improving school governance and accountability in addition to giving them a greater likelihood of promotion. This implies that the investment in institutionalizing women executive leadership can yield system wide dividends as opposed to gender equity itself. Though empirical research is localized in Balochistan to a certain level, its patterns unveiled in these studies are very pertinent. They say that:

Bias is a universal issue both in structure and culture.

Inclusive leadership improves performances and innovation in schools.

Unaccompanied policies are just of a symbolic nature.

Women should have capacity building and mentoring programs.

These teachings raise concern regarding the relevance of empirical based strategies to help deal with gender disparity in secondary education department in Balochistan.

The empirical literature depicts multiple common trends: the first one is that gender disparity in leadership still exists in South Asia because of the deep cultural standards. Second, the education sector in Pakistan is surely associated with lip service on the one hand, and poor execution. Third, inclusive leadership is highly beneficial in terms of performance indicators as international models demonstrate. At last, the gender and institutional design intersection has to be tackled with respect to policy, training, and cultural change.

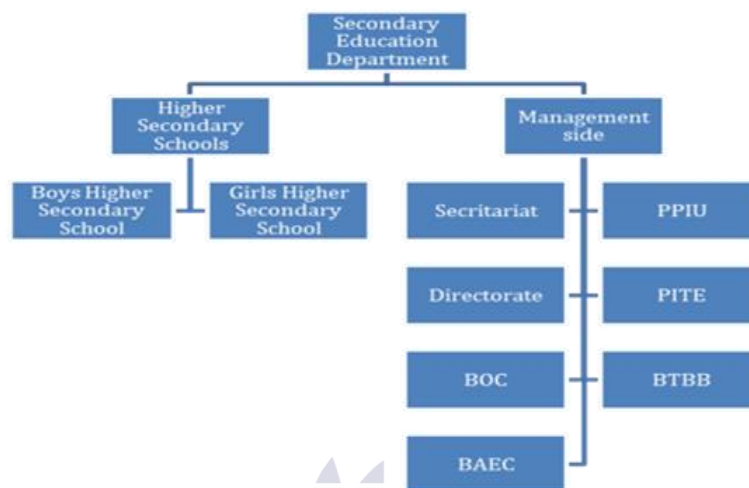
Such trends explain why Balochistan is the target of the present study, whose educational leadership is dominated by males in spite of a strong female presence in teaching positions. Through the analysis of the influence of gender disparity on the performance of the organizations provided, the current study is able to address a major gap in the national and regional discourse of education.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of how gender disparity affects the organizational performance of the Secondary Education Department in Balochistan. Grounded in Organizational Culture Theory, the study examined how cultural norms and institutional practices contribute to

leadership disparities and hinder effective performance.

The research was conducted under a positivist paradigm to objectively explore relationships between gender-based exclusion and organizational outcomes. The target population consisted of administrative staff, including principals, vice-principals, and managers of higher secondary schools across Balochistan.



Quantitative Phase

A total of 150 respondents participated in the quantitative survey using a structured questionnaire. Of these, 98 were male (65.3%) and 52 were female (34.7%), allowing a gendered lens on organizational dynamics. The survey instrument captured perceptions on gender disparity, policy implementation, cultural barriers, and institutional performance.

Data were analyzed using SPSS, employing Descriptive statistics to provide a summary of perceptions, To investigate the gender disparity in leadership positions, use the chi-square test. Multiple regression analysis is used to ascertain the effect of cultural factors and gender disparities on organizational performance, whereas correlation analysis is used to evaluate

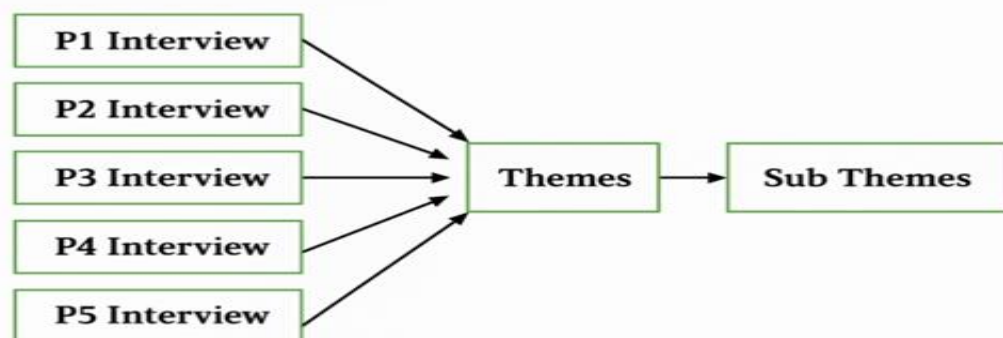
the correlations between variables. Cronbach's alpha was used to confirm the questionnaire's reliability, ensuring the instrument's consistency.

Qualitative Phase

To deepen insights, 10 key informant interviews were conducted with senior female principals, school administrators, and subject specialists. The qualitative data explored experiences with organizational culture, leadership access, and policy effectiveness.

Data were analyzed using Thematic Analysis, involving:

- Open coding,
- Theme development,
- Cross-case synthesis.



This dual approach ensured triangulation, enhancing the credibility and dependability of the findings by validating quantitative trends with qualitative depth.

RESULTS

This study used a mixed-methods approach to examine the effects of gender disparity on the

performance of the Secondary Education Department in Balochistan. The findings from both quantitative and qualitative data converge to support the hypothesis that gender disparity negatively affects organizational performance.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 below summarizes key perceptions related to gender disparity, organizational performance, cultural barriers



Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation
Women managers in Balochistan's Education Department face more challenges compared to their male counterparts.	4.15	0.76
There is a noticeable gender gap in managerial roles in the education sector.	4.20	0.68
Organizational performance would improve with more women in managerial positions.	4.31	0.72
Family policies that favor one gender create barriers in the workplace.	4.19	0.81
There are sufficient efforts to enforce gender equality policies.	3.96	0.89

, and policy enforcement.

These values indicate strong agreement among respondents that gender disparity exists and that it negatively impacts institutional performance. The high mean for performance improvement (4.31) suggests consensus that female inclusion in leadership would benefit organizational outcomes.

Chi-Square Test: Gender Representation

To examine gender disparity in leadership roles, a Chi-square test was conducted. The results revealed a statistically significant imbalance in gender distribution among leadership positions.

Table 2: Chi-Square Test Results

Variable	Chi-Square Value	df	p-value
Gender & Leadership Role	15.24	1	0.001

A p-value of 0.001 ($p < 0.05$) confirms a significant disparity between male and female representation in leadership, supporting the claim that inequality is systemic in the department.

Correlation Analysis Correlation analysis was performed to identify the relationships between gender-related variables and organizational performance.

Table 3: Correlation Matrix

Variables	Gender Challenges	Gender Gap	Performance Improvement	Cultural Barriers	Policy Efforts
Gender Challenges	1.00	0.72	0.68	0.65	0.54
Gender Gap	0.72	1.00	0.74	0.69	0.60
Performance Improvement	0.68	0.74	1.00	0.71	0.58
Cultural Barriers	0.65	0.69	0.71	1.00	0.63
Policy Efforts	0.54	0.60	0.58	0.63	1.00

The strong positive correlations between Gender Gap and Performance Improvement ($r = 0.74$), and between Cultural Barriers and Performance Improvement ($r = 0.71$), suggest that reducing gender disparity and cultural obstacles is associated with improved institutional performance.

Regression Analysis

To further examine the predictive effect of gender disparity on organizational performance, a multiple regression analysis was conducted.

Table 4: Regression Results

Predictor	Beta (β)	t-value	p-value	Interpretation
Gender Challenges	-0.42	-3.21	0.002	Significant negative impact on performance
Gender Gap	-0.55	-4.11	0.001	Strong negative relationship with performance
Cultural Barriers	-0.37	-2.89	0.004	Cultural norms significantly hinder performance
Policy Efforts	0.28	2.01	0.047	Policy improvements positively influence performance

Model Summary:

- $R^2 = 0.62$
- Adjusted $R^2 = 0.59$
- $F = 23.45$, $p < 0.001$

The regression model explains 62% of the variance in organizational performance. Gender Challenges, Gender Gap, and Cultural Barriers all have significant negative effects, confirming Hypothesis 2. Policy Efforts, though weaker, show a positive contribution, suggesting room for improvement through stronger implementation.

Thematic Analysis (Qualitative Data)

Ten interviews with senior female staff revealed six themes consistent with the quantitative findings:

1. Cultural Barriers to Female Leadership

Participants consistently highlighted cultural expectations as major obstacles. One principal noted:

“Even if I’m eligible, people assume I can’t manage because I’m a woman. It’s the mindset, not my ability, that limits me.”

Beyond external pressures, internalized inferiority prevents many women from aspiring to

leadership. Cultural messaging that leadership is "not for women" reduces confidence and increases fear of criticism.

"Negative attitude by women themselves to occupy leadership positions and fear of criticisms."

"No one listens to a female, even if she holds an MD post."

2. Organizational Discrimination and Male Dominance

Respondents reported biased institutional environments that favored men in hiring and promotions:

"Decisions are made before the interviews even happen. Most of the time, men are already selected."

Gender bias in hiring and promotion processes was widely acknowledged by participants. They noted that merit-based systems are often undermined by favoritism and informal male networks. Men are presumed to be more committed or available, especially for roles requiring mobility or visibility.

"In every panel I've seen for administrative hiring, the assumption is that a man will be more dedicated or available—even though women work harder and stay longer in schools." (Participant 1)

"Females are kept away from higher positions."

Contradictory practices within workplaces create unequal advancement. Women are both excluded and, in some instances, tokenized, depending on male supervisors' preferences or biases.

"It's difficult to generalize since every office has its own unique circumstances. However, common patterns do emerge."

"Women's salary expectations are lower than those of equally qualified men, and they're less likely to secure entry-level jobs. This widens the wage gap as they move up the corporate ladder."

Opportunities such as training sessions, leadership workshops, or policy-making seminars are often allocated preferentially to male staff. Women are overlooked for such development due to assumptions about family obligations, safety, or their perceived lack of long-term commitment.

"When there's a seminar or training, men are chosen because they can travel. Women are left out."

This limited access prevents women from acquiring necessary leadership competencies and credentials.

Participants frequently pointed out that gender inclusion policies exist but are rarely implemented or monitored effectively. These policies are often performative rather than transformative.

"Policies exist only on paper. There is no one to see if they're followed."

Without accountability mechanisms or gender audits, the institutional framework remains static, failing to address or reduce existing disparities.

3. Lack of Support and Mentorship

Interviewees expressed a lack of mentoring structures for women:

"There's no senior female leader to guide us. We're left to struggle alone in a male-driven system."

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4. Workplace Safety, Harassment, and Support Facilities

Most respondents acknowledged that increasing female representation in managerial roles enhances the overall performance of the education department. Female leaders bring diverse perspectives, improve decision-making,

and identify challenges specific to women, making the work environment more inclusive and efficient. Additionally, respondents highlighted that female managers tend to be more ethical, dedicated, and transparent, reducing corruption and fostering a more accountable system.

Supporting Responses

“A female manager can identify the challenges and problems of women better than a male manager.”

“Having more women in management brings diverse perspectives and ideas that enhance decision-making.”

“Women in managerial roles improve the education department’s performance by promoting inclusivity, enhancing decision-making, fostering a supportive work environment, and prioritizing student and teacher development.”

5. Policy Implementation Gaps

While some policies have contributed to progress, such as improving female enrollment rates and promoting safer learning environments, their impact remains limited due to weak enforcement, insufficient financial support, and societal resistance. Respondents emphasized that policies should go beyond documentation and be actively enforced to create tangible improvements in gender equity.

To enhance the effectiveness of gender-related policies, the government must focus on strict policy enforcement, increased funding for gender-inclusive programs, and community engagement to challenge cultural norms that restrict women’s participation in education and leadership. Additionally, there should be monitoring mechanisms to ensure policy execution aligns with intended outcomes. Without addressing these gaps, gender disparities in the education sector will persist despite the presence of formal policies.

DISCUSSION

This study provides compelling evidence that gender disparity in leadership significantly undermines the organizational performance of the Secondary Education Department in Balochistan. The results from both quantitative and qualitative data support Hypothesis 2,

affirming that exclusion of women from managerial roles correlates strongly with reduced institutional effectiveness.

The Chi-square analysis confirmed a significant gender imbalance in leadership, revealing that female educators are systemically underrepresented in senior roles despite their qualifications. This supports earlier work by Kazmi (2023) and Ramos et al. (2022), who noted that entrenched patriarchal norms persist in public sector institutions in Pakistan, making leadership access more difficult for women.

The regression analysis further emphasized the impact of gender disparity on organizational outcomes. Key variables—Gender Challenges, Gender Gap, and Cultural Barriers—were all negatively associated with performance indicators such as communication, morale, and innovation. This aligns directly with Organizational Culture Theory, which asserts that internal culture shapes who is empowered to lead and how effectively organizations operate. The findings support Poggesi et al. (2019), who argue that lack of diversity in leadership not only reflects systemic injustice but also leads to inefficiency and stagnation.

Moreover, qualitative interviews added depth to the statistical results. Respondents consistently highlighted how cultural expectations, discriminatory hiring practices, lack of mentoring, and inflexible work environments serve as invisible barriers to female leadership. These first-hand accounts reinforce the idea that organizational performance suffers not simply due to the absence of women in leadership, but because of a broader organizational culture that resists inclusivity.

Participants noted that schools led by women often experienced improvements in staff morale, discipline, and collaborative decision-making. This further strengthens the argument that promoting gender-inclusive leadership is not merely a social imperative—it is a strategic necessity. Organizations with inclusive cultures are more adaptive, ethical, and innovative, all of which are crucial traits for educational institutions facing evolving demands.

Additionally, the moderate positive influence of policy efforts—as revealed in the regression results—suggests that improvements in gender

equity policies could play a meaningful role. However, the interviews clearly indicate that current policy implementation is weak, often existing only on paper. This gap between policy intent and institutional practice reflects an entrenched organizational resistance to change, which must be addressed through leadership commitment and accountability.

In sum, the study confirms that gender disparity is not only a moral concern but a structural flaw that undermines the Secondary Education Department's capacity to perform effectively. By embedding exclusionary norms, the organizational culture curtails diverse perspectives, reduces staff morale, and blocks pathways to innovation. Addressing this requires structural reforms, cultural shifts, and consistent enforcement of equity policies.

Conclusion

This study concludes that gender disparity in leadership roles significantly weakens organizational performance in the Secondary Education Department of Balochistan. Drawing on the framework of Organizational Culture Theory, the findings show that deeply embedded institutional norms and patriarchal practices not only exclude qualified women from leadership positions but also hinder the overall effectiveness of educational institutions. Quantitative results confirmed that Gender Challenges, Cultural Barriers, and a persistent Gender Gap are strongly associated with lower organizational morale, reduced innovation, and weaker decision-making capacity. The regression analysis clearly established that gender-based exclusion has a statistically significant negative effect on institutional performance.

The qualitative data further revealed that discriminatory workplace cultures, inflexible structures, lack of mentoring, and poor policy enforcement collectively restrict women's advancement. Respondents emphasized that even when women are qualified and capable, systemic barriers prevent them from leading, and their absence from leadership reduces organizational adaptability and cohesion.

Together, the findings establish that addressing gender disparity is not merely an ethical obligation—it is a strategic requirement for performance improvement in education governance. Transforming the organizational

culture to become more inclusive is essential for unleashing the full leadership potential available within the workforce.

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