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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
School Culture, Teacher Collaboration, Leadership Practices, Student Outcomes, Secondary Education	The current study examined school culture in public secondary schools in a district of Punjab, focusing on teachers' collaboration, leadership practices, and student outcomes. A multi-stage sampling technique was used for the selection of the 192 secondary school teachers from 32 randomly selected schools. A 15-item self-developed questionnaire on five-point Likert scale was used to find teachers' perceptions. For data analysis, SPSS 26 software was used with descriptive statistics. The findings of study revealed positive school culture, with strong teacher collaboration & teamwork. Most of the teachers reported debating problems, sharing ideas, supporting each other, & using online resources in the teaching-learning process. The leadership practices were largely observed positively, with teachers feeling valued and trusted by their head teachers. Still, involvement in decision-making processes was moderate proposing room for improvement in the distributed leadership in the schools. In this regard, the study concluded that while the schools demonstrate the culture of collaboration, trust, and mutual support, there is potential for growth in the shared decision-making and leadership involvement.
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INTRODUCTION

The school cultures are very significant. The school cultures shape people's thinking, feelings, and actions (Kleinsasser, 2013; Ngumuta, Kirimi & Rubai 2024). Schoen (2005) defined school culture as "the holistic activities and 'ways of being and doing' of those who work in or participate regularly within school". Barth (2002) gave much progressively concise meaning of school culture: "A school's culture is complex pattern of norms, attitudes, beliefs, values, ceremonies, traditions, and myths that

are deeply ingrained in the very core of the organization." The school's culture decides how teachers and learners act, feel and think (Peterson & Deal, 2009). Further, constructive school culture guides individuals to concentrate on specific viewpoints, supports obligation, builds inspiration & inspires people to enhance the execution and feel equipped (Peterson & Deal, 2009b). The school culture reflects the shared beliefs, attitudes, and values within a school community, influencing behaviors and interactions amid educators, administrators and students. School culture arises from subculture of teachers, pupils, school principals, district administrators, and a few bureaucrats involved in key decision-making.

The developers of school culture are all the employees in the school, as well as pupils, though the influence of the wider and immediate community or the social and demographic characteristics of environment, and other influences cannot be excluded either; all of which as a whole can be divided into external and internal factors (Pavlović & Oljača, 2011). School culture is not tied to the region or country level. It is the term and symbol of school climate specific to one school. The visitors can observe the school's culture through the decoration of the wall the staff members' behaviour and the students' behaviour (Pavlović & Oljača, 2011). Bender, Egbrink, Wolfhagen and Dolmans (2016) indicate that the culture of quality is an organizational culture in which all stakeholders, internally and externally, through the critical reflection, contribute to quality improvement (Abbas, Tariq & Jamil, 2021). Therefore, it reflects the shift from control, accountability and regulation to autonomy, credibility and educational improvement based on an institution's experience, expertise and values. Goldring and Knox (2002) have suggested three levels of school culture: the first is management to run the school, second are the beliefs and values which provide us with strong direction to manage the affairs of the schools, and third, there comes the shared knowledge among staff members about the school affairs.

Fullan (2010) suggested that leaders follow Herold and Fedor's (2008) key points for building the school culture: Careful entry to the new setting, listening to and learning from those who have been there longer, engaging in fact-finding and joint problem-solving, forthrightly addressing people's concerns, being enthusiastic, genuine, and sincere about change in circumstances, obtaining buy-in for what needs fixing, developing a credible plan for making that fix. School culture affects schools in many ways over diverse variables (Bass, 2004; Bektas & Ocal 2012; Bellou, 2010; Sezgin, 2010; Yavuz, 2010). The school culture affects student achievement, one of most important factors (Brown, 2005; Hofman et al., 2002; Macneil et al., 2009; Pritchard et al., 2005; Worrel, 2014). The research on school culture is rare in Pakistan; yet, one aspect is discussed by Salfi and Saeed (2007). Teachers' collaboration and leadership practices are core components of school culture that have a profound impact on learning environment. When teachers collaborate well, they share resources, strategies, and expertise, creating professional learning community that drives continuous improvement. Salfi and Saeed (2007) revealed there was a good relationship amid school size & school culture, school level and achievement of students. Smaller schools have shown positive culture, better than middle and big schools.

Research Questions

1. What is status of school culture in terms of teacher collaboration, leadership practices, and student responsibility in public secondary schools of District Sheikhpura?

2. How do the teachers perceive collaborative practices, leadership involvement, and support mechanisms among teachers, head teachers, and students in their schools?

LITERATURE REVIEW

A school with a positive culture encourages teamwork, high standards, and nurturing environment that benefits teachers' and students' achievement. More and more people realize that a strong school culture is based upon the teacher collaboration. Both instructional strategies and student outcomes typically increase in classrooms when teachers collaborate, exchange ideas, and work as a team to address challenges. For a positive school culture, collaboration is necessary to promote shared goals and collective responsibility (Ngumuta, Kiriimi & Rubai 2024). The teachers can share techniques, evaluate their work, and apply data-driven decisions to address learning issues for the students in collaborative spaces. This ultimately results in improved student learning outcomes and a happier classroom atmosphere. Recent studies have highlighted value of cooperation in creating a school culture. Teacher cooperation substantially impacted creation of a supportive school culture, where teachers felt more involved in their professional development & connected to their colleagues (Liu, Bellibas & Printy, 2022). The authors pointed out that when educators work well together, they nurture culture of ongoing improvement, strengthening their dedication to their students' academic attainment. Teachers can collaborate more efficiently when they are part of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs).

PLCs allow teachers to share the instructional ideas, participate in reflective practice, and examine student performance (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). According to research, Feger and Arruda (2019), PLC -implemented schools exhibit notable gains in student outcomes and teacher satisfaction. In these environments, educators are more equipped to fill in knowledge gaps, offer personalized instruction, and meaningfully assist students' development. The collaboration among teachers also improves job satisfaction, which supports a supportive school climate. The teachers who work in collaborative workplaces report better levels of professional fulfilment and less stress, which results in more stable and effective teaching teams. A happy and supportive work atmosphere increases the likelihood that instructors will stay in the field, lowering turnover and maintaining classroom continuity. Both instructors and students gain from this consistency as it helps create a more supportive and cohesive school culture (Goddard & Kim, 2020). Leadership greatly influences the culture of a school or institution. Effective leadership techniques create the circumstances for cooperation, creativity, and ongoing progress. Establishing the common vision, fostering teacher collaboration, and fostering an environment that fosters professional development are among the responsibilities of principals and other school leaders.

Leithwood et al., (2017) revealed that effective leadership practices are among the most important elements in creating a positive school culture and organizational outcomes (Jamil, Mehmood & Aziz, 2024). Strong school cultures result from transformational leadership, which inspires & inspires employees to realize a common goal. Transformational leadership methods positively impact school culture by developing the sense of collective efficacy among teachers and boosting collaborative decision-making, according to Liu and Hallinger's (2022) meta-analysis of research on the school leadership. The school culture is strengthened when transformational leaders give teachers freedom

to take charge of professional development and participate in initiatives for school-wide change. It has been demonstrated that distributed leadership, in which staff members and instructors share leadership duties, improves school culture. Distributed leadership promotes a sense of ownership and accountability among instructors and enables more inclusive decision-making processes, claim [Harris and Spillane \(2020\)](#). This leadership fosters better collaboration and engagement in school development activities by letting teachers to assume leadership roles in their teams. Teachers who feel more appreciated and stimulated in leadership positions are likely to positively contribute to the school's culture.

The school culture is greatly influenced by instructional leadership centered on attractive teaching and learning. By offering professional development, establishing high standards for student success, and ensuring that teachers have tools & support they require to be successful, instructional leaders, according to [Robinson et al. \(2009\)](#), directly impact the caliber of instruction. This emphasis on the teaching and learning fosters a school culture that prioritizes student outcomes and promotes staff members' ongoing growth. [Sebastian, Allensworth and Huang \(2017\)](#) illustrates relationship amid collaborative practices, school culture, and leadership styles, which shows that schools with good instructional leadership have higher levels of teacher cooperation and better student results. Strong leadership, collaborative teaching, and high expectations define a positive school culture linked to greater social-emotional development, higher student involvement & enhanced academic success ([Bryk & Schneider, 2002](#)). It is more likely that schools where instructors work in a collaborative and inspiring atmosphere will give students the excellent training and assistance they require to achieve. Several aspects of school culture, such as safety, teaching and learning, relationships, and school environment, have been found to influence student outcomes, as per [Thapa, Cohen, Guffey and Higgins \(2013\)](#).

By fostering a secure and encouraging environment where students feel appreciated and included, these components help to create school culture that fosters student learning. Positive school cultures are typically associated with increased attendance, decreased dropout rates, and better academic results. Schools with strong leadership and collaborative cultures are better equipped to meet the requirements of a diverse student body, especially those from underprivileged backgrounds ([Kraft & Papay, 2012](#)). By sharing ideas for meeting needs of struggling children, instructors can ensure that students receive education and support of highest caliber. It is made possible by joint practices. In students' academic success, higher-order thinking is focused in national & international literature as several studies are in support with importance of critical thinking about teachers' perceptions and practices ([Jamil & Muhammad, 2019](#); [Jamil, Muhammad & Qureshi, 2021a, 2021b](#); [Liu, 2023](#)), the policy documents ([Jamil et al., 2024](#); [Jamil, Muhammad & Aslam, 2024](#); [Jamil, Muhammad, Masood & Habib, 2020](#)), and textbooks ([Jamil, Mehmood, & Noorani, 2024](#); [Jamil, Mehmood, & Shah, 2024](#); [Naseer, Muhammad & Jamil, 2021](#)). To improve student outcomes and eliminate gaps in educational success, authors stressed the standing of developing a healthy school culture ([Cosner & Jones, 2016](#)).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

It was a quantitative study with a descriptive research design. The study population consisted of all the secondary school teachers teaching in the public secondary schools of district Sheikhpura, and

the study sample consisted of 192 secondary school teachers selected through multi-stage sampling technique. A total of 32 public secondary schools were selected randomly, including eight male schools from urban areas and eight from rural areas and similarly eight female schools from urban areas and eight from rural areas. Six secondary school teachers (SSTs) were selected randomly from each selected school. In this way, total sample size was 192 teachers. The survey questionnaire was developed on five-point Likert-type scale comprising 15 close-ended statements. Experts validated the tool. Researcher personally visited the selected schools for data collection. Data analysis was done using SPSS version 26, and simple descriptive were applied. Findings on basis of data analysis are as follows:

FINDINGS OF STUDY

Table 1 Teachers' perceptions about Research Phenomena

Statements	SA	AG	NE	DA	SD
My fellow teachers discuss their problems with each other	30.2	43.4	19.0	6.9	5.0
My fellow teachers share their ideas and experiences	30.7	47.1	14.3	6.9	11
Teachers take help from online resources	27.0	36.5	20.6	12.2	3.7
Teachers help each other in the teaching-learning process	14.8	65.6	9.5	7.4	2.6
Teachers in my school work as a team	20.6	49.7	16.4	7.9	5.3
My Head Teacher involves teachers in decision-making	18.5	46.0	19.6	11.6	4.2
My Head Teacher gives due value to the teachers' opinions	15.3	42.3	19.6	11.6	7.4
Teachers in my school spend time to plan their lessons	15.9	39.2	24.9	18.0	2.1
My head teacher helps teachers in solving their problems	28.0	42.3	15.3	10.1	4.2
My Head Teacher trusts the teachers	20.1	49.7	15.3	8.5	6.3
My head teacher appreciates the teachers' good work	33.9	41.3	14.8	5.8	4.2
My fellow teachers focus on the student learning outcomes	33.3	43.4	12.7	9.5	11
Teachers and head teacher in my school work cooperatively	29.6	37.0	23.8	7.9	1.6
Students feel their responsibilities regarding academics	12.2	38.1	32.3	14.8	2.6
Students at my school have improved their results	14.3	64.6	15.3	5.3	5.0

(SA=Strongly Agree, AG=Agree, NE=Neutral, DA=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree)

The above table shows that most teachers agreed or strongly agreed, 43.4% & 30.2%, respectively, to point that their fellow teachers discuss their problems with each other. Most teachers, i.e., 47.1% and 30.7%, agreed or strongly agreed that their fellow teachers share their ideas and experiences. Most teachers, 36.5% and 27%, agreed or strongly agreed that their fellow teachers take help from online resources. Most teachers, 65.6%, agreed that teachers help each other in teaching-learning. Most teachers, i.e., 49.7% and 20.6%, agreed and strongly agreed that teachers work as a team. Most of the teachers, 46% and 18.5%, agreed and strongly agreed that their head teacher involved them in decision-making. Most of the teachers, 42.3% and 15.3%, agreed or strongly agreed that their head teacher gives value to their opinion. Opinion of the teachers was moderate on the point that they spend time planning their lessons, i.e., 39.2% agreed, 15.9% strongly agreed, while 24.9% remained neutral.

Most teachers, i.e., 42.3% & 28% respectively, agreed and strongly agreed that their head teachers help them solve their problems. Most of the teachers, 49.7% and 20.1%, agreed or strongly agreed

that their head teachers trust them. The majority of teachers, 41.35 and 33.9%, agreed or strongly agreed that their head teachers appreciate the teachers' good work. Most of teachers, 43.4% and 33.3%, agreed and strongly agreed that their fellow teachers focus on student learning outcomes. The teachers' response was moderate, with teachers and head teacher working cooperatively, i.e., 37% agreed, 29.6% strongly agreed, and 23.8% remained neutral. The teachers' opinions were also divided on point as student felt responsibilities about academics, i.e., 38.1% agreed, 12.2% strongly agreed, and 32.3% remained neutral. Most teachers, 64.6%, agreed that students had improved their results.

- ✓ Most of teachers agreed to discuss their problems with colleagues and share their ideas and experiences. Most teachers agreed they help each other in teaching-learning process & work as a team.
- ✓ The majority of teachers agreed that they use online tools. A few teachers agreed that their head teachers involved them in decision-making process & agreed that their head teachers value their opinions.
- ✓ The majority of the teachers agreed that their head teachers trust them. The majority of the teachers agreed that their head teachers support them in problem-solving and appreciate their good work.

DISCUSSION

A noteworthy discovery shows that substantial number of educators (43.4% agree, 30.2% strongly agree) either agree or strongly agree that they address issues with one another. This suggests the strong collaborative culture among the staff. According to studies, teacher collegiality is critical to student outcomes and professional development (Shah, 2023). More inventive problem-solving and unified educational approaches can result from teachers cooperating & sharing problems. Besides, 20.6% of the teachers strongly agree with the 46.1% of teachers who feel that their head teacher incorporates them in decision-making. Research has demonstrated that implementation of school policies is improved, and teacher morale is raised when school leaders engage teachers in decision-making processes, the practice known as distributed leadership (Leithwood, 2022). Additionally, recent research emphasizes how crucial school culture is to fostering fairness in student outcomes. As shared decision-making becomes more common in schools, it promotes the sense of ownership. Higher levels of academic achievement resulted from this emphasis on ongoing improvement and shared accountability for the students' academic success, especially those from diverse historically marginalized groups.

The percentage of instructors who strongly agree that they receive feedback on their work is just 33.3%, whereas 43.4% agree. This suggests that there may be a missing piece of information. For professional development, feedback is essential. According to recent research, teaching strategies and student learning can be greatly enhanced by providing structured and constructive feedback (Johnson et al., 2022). More work must be done to guarantee that regular, insightful input is given, as indicated by comparatively lower levels of strong agreement. Educational research has proven a strong correlation between school culture and student outcomes. Another noteworthy discovery is how student academic success is met. Only 14.3% highly agree, with 32.8% agreeing with teachers'

assessments of students' intellectual accomplishment. This suggests that many teachers may not be quite certain that pupils are doing well academically. Data-driven teaching techniques that target student learning gaps were more likely to be used in schools with strong collaborative cultures and distributed leadership.

This discrepancy can indicate that the students require more support services or effective teaching methods. In this linking, research shows a direct relationship between the level of academic help & differentiation offered in classrooms and instructors' assessments of students' progress (Tomlinson, 2021). Regarding student conduct, 12.2% of teachers strongly agree, and 33.8% agree that students cooperate. The relatively low proportion of the strong agreement may indicate the need for more structured cooperative learning opportunities in the classrooms, as cooperative learning has been demonstrated to boost student engagement and outcomes (Gillies, 2022). Distributed leadership promotes a sense of ownership and accountability among instructors and enables more inclusive decision-making processes, claim Harris and Spillane (2020). The school exhibits excellent norms about teacher leadership and teamwork, although areas likewise student outcomes and feedback procedures still need more work. The information points to the necessity of school-wide programs to enhance these elements to guarantee instructors' ongoing professional development and students' academic progress.

CONCLUSION

The results show that the District Sheikhpura's public secondary schools have an overwhelmingly good school culture. Most teachers agree that they regularly discuss issues, exchange ideas & support one another during the teaching-learning process, demonstrating strong teamwork. Instructors also exhibit successful teamwork, putting in a combined effort to improve teaching methods. Moreover, many educators have adopted Internet materials indicating their adaptability to the contemporary learning options. Regarding leadership, most teachers believe their ideas are appreciated, even though head teachers' participation in decision-making was considered moderate. This implies that while there is potential for the increased participation in leadership initiatives, head teachers are generally encouraging and receptive to their teachers' input. Trust and appreciation by the head teachers are also prominent. Overall, the findings reflect a school culture built upon collaboration, trust, and mutual support, with areas for further growth in shared decision-making and leadership effective involvement.

Recommendations

- ✓ Research may explore the impact of digital resources on the students' outcomes and teachers' professional development.
- ✓ Research may be conducted to investigate that how trust, teamwork, and leadership support impact job satisfaction, mental health, and overall teacher retention rates.
- ✓ Research may be carried out to assess specific leadership practices that promote teamwork among teachers and identify how head teachers can be trained to enhance these practices further.
- ✓ Future research may be carried out by enhancing the population size and involving some other districts of Punjab.

- ✓ Research may be conducted by adding more variables, such as other norms of all the school staff members.

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