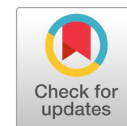




## Research Article

# A Comparative Analysis of Headteachers' Task-Oriented Leadership Behaviour and People-Oriented Leadership Behaviour at Secondary School Level



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## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received: July 30, 2023

Revised: Aug. 21, 2023

Accepted: Sept. 22, 2023

Published: Sept. 30, 2023

### Keywords:

Leadership grid

Headteachers

People-oriented leadership behaviour

Task-oriented leadership behaviour

## ABSTRACT

This study engages in a nuanced comparative analysis of the leadership behaviours of headteachers, with a specific focus on Task-oriented and People-oriented leadership styles, within public secondary schools across three distinct districts in South Punjab. Guided by Blake and Mouton's Leadership Theory, the research endeavours to classify these educational leaders as predominantly people-oriented or task-oriented. The study used a descriptive and quantitative research design and a survey methodology. Data collection was facilitated through a self-developed questionnaire administered to the teachers within the targeted South Punjab public secondary schools. The results indicated a stronger inclination among headteachers towards people-oriented leadership behaviours than task-oriented behaviours. The findings have profound implications for educational leadership, highlighting a potential path for headteachers in secondary schools to reevaluate and refine their leadership styles. Such a transformation may significantly enhance teacher motivation, improving student academic performance. Beyond its immediate context, this study is a foundational platform for future research in related fields, fostering a deeper understanding of leadership behaviours in educational settings.

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## INTRODUCTION

Leadership styles within educational institutions significantly influence organizational culture, employee satisfaction, and, ultimately, student performance. The comparative study of headteachers' leadership behaviours, particularly between task-

oriented and people-oriented approaches, is crucial in understanding their impact on secondary education. This research may dissect the attributes and outcomes of each leadership style and aim to identify which approach is more prevalent and influential in secondary schools. The study hoped its findings would provide empirical evidence to guide principals toward leadership styles that improve educational outcomes. It may also make policy recommendations to educational stakeholders to help them develop effective school leaders.

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### How to Cite:

Ramzan, N., & Khurram, A. F. A. (2023). A Comparative Analysis of Headteachers' Task-Oriented Leadership Behaviour and People-Oriented Leadership Behaviour at Secondary School Level. *International Journal of Trends and Innovations in Business & Social Sciences*, 1(4), 129–135.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.48112/tibss.v1i4.654>

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Over the years, experts have studied several

methods of leadership to determine the most authentic and appropriate leadership behaviour. There are numerous types of leadership behaviours. Before engaging in any leadership behaviour, it is critical to understand the organization's structure and socioeconomic context (Oubrich et al., 2021). This research paper compares Task-oriented Leadership Behaviour and people-oriented Leadership behaviour of headteachers at the secondary level. Leaders can adopt any behaviour required for a specific organization (Kim & Park, 2020). Leadership is a complex behaviour that reflects the leader's values, personality, experience, work, surroundings, and situational evaluation. The organization is led by effective (Miao & Cao, 2019). Leadership is the process through which one individual inspires a group of individuals to attain a common purpose. Leaders guide their followers toward common goals in an orderly and systematic (Bashir et al., 2022). Some leaders prioritize tasks, while others prioritize people. Leadership is an individual's quality of behaviour in which they guide people or their actions in organized efforts (Karsono et al., 2022). Leadership persuades individuals to work freely toward group goals (Sivarat et al., 2021). Different theorists have presented various leadership behaviours. Leadership behaviours differ depending on how they provide guidance, manage strategies, and motivate others (Collins, 2021). Task-oriented and people-oriented (relationship-oriented) are two of the most frequent leaders. Each type has advantages and disadvantages, and either can be ideal in any situation.

Blake and Mouton's Managerial (leadership) Grid was created in 1960 and has since been updated several times. This architecture was originally known as the Managerial Grid, but after significant advancement and renaming, it was renamed the Leadership Grid. This grid is fundamentally built on two concerns: one for production and the other for people. Concern for tasks entails achieving goals and objectives, making decisions, and managing internal and external resources. They are more concerned about meeting output targets. Concern for people implies that a leader is concerned with the requirements of his or her followers, providing them with the essential facilities, treating them pleasantly, discussing organizational goals with them, rewarding them appropriately, providing fair criticism, and so on. The behavioural approach to leadership focuses on the interactions between leaders and their followers in various contexts (Güntner et al., 2020). Research into behavioural methods has spanned three distinct epochs derived from multiple academic sources. Initial studies commenced at The Ohio

State University, followed by investigations at The University of Michigan and, subsequently. The Ohio State researchers developed the Leader Behaviour Description Questionnaire (LBDQ). Simultaneously, The University of Michigan's research elucidated two fundamental leadership dimensions: employee-centered and production-oriented. The employee-centered approach focuses on the followers' needs and well-being, whereas the production-oriented approach emphasizes task completion and productivity. Heiss (2023) posits that leaders who understand and attend to the needs of their followers are generally more effective than those who possess innate leadership traits and abilities. Proponents of behavioural leadership, such as Bharanitharan et al. (2021), contend that a behavioural approach can empower any individual to become a leader. According to Dirani et al. (2020), an adept leader assesses situational variables and adapts their leadership style to meet the moment's demands. The Leadership Grid, developed by Blake and Mouton (1981), employs two axes to depict a leader's priorities: the horizontal axis represents a concern for people, while the vertical axis represents a concern for the task. Each axis is marked from 1 to 9, indicating the extent of concern for individuals or tasks, with 1 signifying minimal concern and 9 indicating maximal concern.

This grid delineates five principal leadership styles: Authority-Compliance (9,1), Country Club Management (1,9), Middle-of-the-Road Management (5,5), Team Management (9,9), and Impoverished Management (1,1). Leaders demonstrate task behaviour by focusing solely on the completion of tasks and the achievement of objectives. Conversely, leaders who exhibit relationship behaviour prioritize the treatment of employees with respect, ensuring a conducive working environment, and providing necessary support to enable followers to reach their goals and objectives.



Leadership styles vary significantly, with

Blake and Mouton (1981) identifying five primary categories. Authority Compliance (9,1) features leaders who are task-centric, using subordinates as means to an end, focusing on efficiency and output without fostering personal relationships. Country Club Management (1,9) emphasizes leaders who prioritize interpersonal relationships, fostering a supportive and comfortable environment that values the feelings and needs of the team members. Whereas, impoverished Management (1,1) describes leaders who show little concern for both tasks and interpersonal relationships, adopting a hands-off approach and relying on autonomous staff and robust systems. Similarly, middle of the Road Management (5,5) captures leaders who strike a balance between task completion and people orientation, creating an environment that caters to both organizational objectives and the needs of the team. On the other hand, team Management (9,9) highlights leaders who equally value and support their team members while maintaining a strong focus on achieving organizational goals, ensuring a positive and productive working environment. Understanding these leadership styles is crucial as they directly influence organizational dynamics and effectiveness. Leaders must assess their approach and adapt it to the context and needs of their organization and team members for optimal performance.

### People-Oriented Leadership Behaviour

People-oriented leadership, also known as relational leadership, is characterized by a focus on supporting, developing, and nurturing employees within the organization. Leaders with a people-oriented approach prioritize interpersonal relationships and foster a collaborative, supportive work environment (Northouse, 2021). According to Yukl (2013), this leadership style can result in higher employee morale and retention, as individuals feel valued and perceive their work as meaningful to the organization's success. Despite its benefits, people-oriented leadership is not without its challenges. A leader's overemphasis on staff relationships can sometimes lead to task neglect, as noted by Robbins and Judge (2017). Employees may occasionally require more guidance and may feel directionless if there is a continuous focus on relationships over organizational goals. Such a dynamic can lead to inefficiency in decision-making, as decisions become centred around maintaining interpersonal harmony rather than meeting strategic objectives (g). Leadership effectiveness necessitates balancing the focus on people with the imperative of achieving

organizational goals. People-oriented leaders must provide both support and direction to their teams. They must be empathetic and understanding while also ensuring that employees are aware of their roles in the organization's success (Daft, 2014). Clear communication of expectations and consistent feedback can help maintain this balance (Goleman, et al., 2002). In conclusion, people-oriented leadership, when applied effectively, can enhance the overall functioning of an organization by ensuring that the workforce feels valued and motivated. However, leaders must strive to balance the nurturing aspects of their style with the necessary task-oriented behaviours that drive organizational performance.

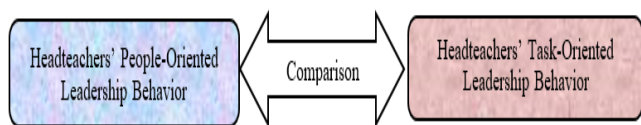
### Task-Oriented Leadership Behaviour

Task-oriented leadership, also referred to as transactional leadership, is principally concerned with the accomplishment of tasks and the achievement of goals. Leaders who adopt this style are proactive in planning, organizing, and systematizing work processes to enhance efficiency and meet organizational objectives promptly (Bass & Bass, 2009). This style of leadership is particularly beneficial in environments where order and precision are critical, and it can effectively guide teams that require clear direction and structure (Zaccaro, et al., 2001). The attributes of task-oriented leaders often include a strong focus on operational efficiency, setting clear objectives, and establishing detailed work plans. Such leaders excel at creating schedules, delineating expectations, and ensuring accountability through systematic monitoring and feedback mechanisms (Locke & Latham, 2002). This approach can yield high productivity and can be especially advantageous for team members who perform optimally under structured and unambiguous directives (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). However, the limitations of task-oriented leadership are notable in their potential to constrain employee autonomy and suppress innovation. A rigid adherence to task completion can engender a work environment with limited flexibility, which may hinder creative problem-solving and decrease job satisfaction. Excessive emphasis on task performance without acknowledging the interpersonal and emotional needs of employees can lead to diminished morale and potentially erode organizational culture (Bass & Bass, 2009). Moreover, highly independent and intrinsically motivated employees may find this leadership style stifling, leading to resistance or disengagement (Kerr & Jermier, 1978).

Thus, in task-oriented leadership, the primary focus

is on the efficient execution of tasks, adherence to organizational rules, and achievement of performance metrics. These leaders prioritize concrete outcomes and productivity, often adopting a directive approach that prioritizes results over relational dynamics (Bass, 1990). To harness the strengths of task-oriented leadership while mitigating its drawbacks, leaders may need to balance achieving task efficiency and nurturing employee engagement. Incorporating elements of transformational leadership, such as inspiring and motivating team members, can complement the task-oriented approach and contribute to a more holistic leadership strategy (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Every organization or group needs a leader, and several types of leadership exist. Among the most prevalent leadership styles are task- and people-oriented leadership. Both types have unique characteristics, and being aware of them can help managers choose the best way to lead their employees. This study examined the distinctions between task-oriented and people-oriented leadership, their advantages and disadvantages, and how to choose which strategy is most appropriate for school.



While both techniques have advantages, studies have shown that people-oriented leadership can improve work satisfaction, employee motivation, and overall team success. Workers who are appreciated and encouraged by their leaders are more likely to be interested in their work and devote their best efforts to team goals.

Number of Public Secondary Schools of Tehsil Rahim Yar Khan	Number of Public Secondary Schools of Tehsil Multan	Number of Public Secondary Schools of Tehsil DG Khan	Number of Public Secondary Schools of All Tehsil
Male Urban Female Urban Male Rural Female Rural	Male Urban Female Urban Male Rural Female Rural	Male Urban Female Urban Male Rural Female Rural	Overall SSTs
8x5x4=160 Public secondary schools of the Tehsil RY Khan	8x5x4=160 Public secondary schools of the Tehsil Multan	8x5x4=160 Public secondary schools of the Tehsil DG Khan	160x3=480 Public Secondary Schools of three Tehsils were the Study Sample

The study's objective was to compare teachers' perceptions of headteachers' task-oriented and people-oriented leadership behaviour at the secondary school level in South Punjab, Pakistan. The research question for this objective was whether

secondary school teachers' perceptions of their headteachers' people-oriented and task-oriented leadership behaviour differ significantly in South Punjab, Pakistan.

### Significance of the Study

The study was started believing that its findings may provide empirical evidence to guide headteachers toward leadership styles that enhance educational outcomes. It may also offer policy recommendations for educational stakeholders to support effective school leadership development. The study's findings may help secondary school headteachers revisit their leadership behaviour to improve teachers' motivation and students' academic achievement. This study's findings may open a new door for researchers to explore linked areas.

### METHODOLOGY

The study utilized a quantitative methods approach. A survey method was used for this study in which a self-developed questionnaire was used to collect data from teachers serving in Public Secondary Schools in South Punjab, Pakistan. All the teachers serving in South Punjab, Pakistan's public schools, were the population. To ensure representation, a multistage stratified random sampling of secondary schools nationwide was conducted.

Number of Public Secondary Schools of Tehsil Rahim Yar Khan  
Number of Public Secondary Schools of Tehsil Multan  
Number of Public Secondary Schools of Tehsil DG Khan  
Number of Public Secondary Schools of All Tehsil

Male Urban Female Urban Male Rural  
Female Rural Male Urban Female Urban Male Rural  
Female Rural Male Urban Female Urban  
Male Rural Female Rural Overall SSTs

8x5x4=160 Public secondary schools of the Tehsil RY Khan  
8x5x4=160 Public secondary schools of the Tehsil Multan  
8x5x4=160 Public secondary schools of the Tehsil DG Khan  
160x3=480 Public Secondary Schools of three Tehsils were the Study Sample

Data collection included quantitative surveys administered to secondary school teachers, assessing their perception of the headteachers' leadership style. The data were collected through a self-developed and validated questionnaire. Quantitative data were analysed using statistical methods to identify prevalent leadership styles and their comparison using SPSS version 26 for data processing in terms of Mean (M), Standard Deviation (SD), t-test, and

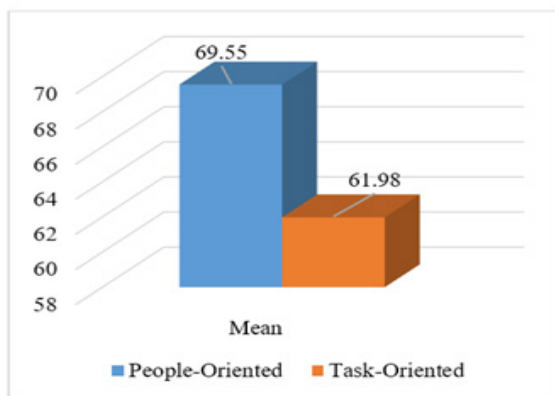
ANOVA.

### Comparison between People-Oriented and Task-Oriented Leadership Behaviour

	Mean	SD	df	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
People-Oriented	69.55	6.91	159	111.156	.000
Task-Oriented	61.98	7.83	159	114.729	.000

The one-sample t-test conducted to compare secondary school teachers' perceptions of their headteachers' people-oriented and task-oriented leadership behaviours revealed statistically significant differences in both dimensions. The data indicated that teachers perceive their headteachers to exhibit a higher degree of people-oriented leadership behaviours (M = 69.55, SD = 6.91) compared to task-oriented leadership behaviours (M = 61.98, SD = 7.83),  $t(159) = 111.156, p < .000$  for people-oriented, and  $t(159) = 114.729, p < .000$  for task-oriented leadership.

The results indicate that the people-oriented leadership behaviour of headteachers (M = 69.55, SD = 6.91) remained better as compared to task-oriented leadership behaviours (M = 61.98, SD = 7.83), signifies that headteachers are more likely to engage in behaviours that are considerate of their staff's personal and professional welfare rather than focusing solely on task completion and performance outcomes.



### CONCLUSION

This research paper conducts a comprehensive comparative examination of task-oriented and people-oriented leadership behaviours at the secondary level to comprehend their distinctions, similarities, and practical implications. A leader must analyse his or her followers' demands to attain corporate goals. Subordinates may demand more attention to meet corporate goals but might also need more direction to complete tasks. This leadership style provides a

detailed guideline for picking the best conduct for the circumstances. Effective and successful leaders always achieve an adequate balance between task-oriented and people-oriented leadership behaviour. Both approaches must perform tasks by either directing or caring for individuals. The leaders' primary responsibility is task completion, and they can employ any behaviour to get the desired results. Both strategies must finish tasks by coordinating or addressing people. The accomplishment of the given task is the supreme obligation of the leaders, and they may use whatever way to accomplish the specified goals. Both models rely on followers to provide orders and achieve corporate goals. Without the assistance of employees, it is hard to execute duties and reach targets. Both have a specific number of employees who require supervision and attention. The key is to combine the best parts of each leadership behaviour to create a personal approach that gets the tasks done while also cultivating positive working relationships. Different approaches work better in specific situations, but if you can keep our pros and cons in mind, you'll be well on your way to developing your own leadership behaviour.

### Recommendations

It is recommended that headteachers receive continuous professional development opportunities focused on balancing task-oriented and people-oriented leadership skills. The training could emphasize strategies for integrating high-performance expectations with supportive leadership practices. Schools might consider adopting more comprehensive performance evaluation criteria that encapsulate both people-oriented and task-oriented leadership behaviours. This ensures headteachers are recognized and encouraged to maintain a balance that promotes a healthy work environment while achieving academic objectives. Given the apparent preference for people-oriented leadership among teachers, schools should implement or enhance staff well-being programs that support the professional growth and personal welfare of teachers. Educational institutions may revise their policies to promote a leadership culture that values both the completion of tasks and the nurturing of human capital. Policies could explicitly state expectations for leaders to develop skills in both areas. The establishment of structured feedback mechanisms from teachers to headteachers can facilitate an open dialogue about leadership effectiveness and areas for improvement,

fostering a collaborative approach to leadership development. Additional research is recommended to explore the impact of each leadership style on various educational outcomes, including student achievement, teacher retention, and the overall school climate. Tailored leadership development plans should be considered for headteachers, taking into account the specific context and challenges of their respective schools, as the efficacy of leadership styles may vary across different environments and cultural contexts.

## Competing Interests

The authors has declared that no competing interests exist.

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