

## Compare the Levels of Wellness among Secondary School Head Teachers on the basis of their Gender in Challenging Work Environment

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### Abstract



The main focus of study was to identify the level of wellness according to the gender of secondary school head teachers in challenging work environment through self-evaluation and evaluation by their subordinates' staff. The main hypothesis of the study was that there was no significant difference between secondary school head teachers' wellness with respect to the gender. Population in this study was all the secondary school head teachers, teachers and non-teaching staff of government secondary schools of district Sargodha. Quantitative research approach with survey techniques were used for data collection. For the selection of participants from Government secondary school, multistage sampling technique was used. From 173 Government secondary schools of Tehsil Sargodha, 43 male and 43 female secondary schools were selected randomly. Within each school one head teacher, one SST, one Est and one non-teaching staff (both male and female) were selected by using stratified sampling. In total 256 subordinates' staff, 128 males and 128 females' subordinates' staff were randomly selected. Two self-developed questionnaires were used as relevant instruments to gather data from respondents. Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation were used in analyzing data and report the study results, while independent sample T-test was used to measure the difference between male and female secondary school head teachers' wellness. The main conclusion of the study was that there were no significant gender-based differences in wellness between secondary school head teachers; both male and female head teachers face similar challenges, with females being more conscious and males showing more confidence towards their wellness. On the base of this conclusion it was recommended that wellness programs should not be divided by gender but should address different coping styles while promoting equal opportunities, supportive environments, and integrated wellness policies for all head teachers.

**Keywords:** Secondary School, Head Teachers, Wellness, Gender, Challenging Work Environment

### Introduction

Head teachers play an important role in shaping the success of schools by ensuring departmental goals align with the broader objectives of the institution (attoh, sylvanus undiekeye, 2024). Their role extended from the academic and administrative managements including the creation of a positive school environment, the motivation of teachers, staff and the support of students and parents. In secondary school, these responsibilities may enhance because of challenging work environment that requires ideal leadership, adaptability and decision-making skills (bano, 2020).

In context of educational leadership, challenging work environment refers to the organizational and administrative conditions that create persistent pressures for head teachers. It is often defined by high job demands, time constraints, limited resources policy-implementation accountability, and the need to address expectations from stakeholders. For secondary school head teachers, this environment involves managing large student populations, ensuring curriculum delivery, addressing teacher performance, and maintaining discipline under resource and infrastructural limitations (Dhani Bux Shah et al, 2024). In addition, they also face strict time constrains, frequent policy changes, and high accountability, as they must meet government standards and respond to the needs of teachers, students, parents, and the community. Social and cultural factors, like gender roles

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and differences between rural and urban schools, add further challenges to their leadership role. All these conditions put continuous pressure on their physical, emotional and mental wellness making leadership and decision-making more stressful. This is why wellness and resilience are very important for head teachers to lead effectively in such environments (Ertem, 2024).

In this regard, an important element in productive output of secondary school head teachers is wellness. Usually wellness belongs to good in physical, emotional and mental health. It is not just the avoiding from illness but presence of practices and conditions that support a balanced healthy life style. For secondary school headteachers wellness accomplishes the foundation of their ability to face the pressure of their role. Wellness may maintain secondary school headteachers to be better equipped to lead, inspire and manage their responsibilities effectively in challenging work environment (nikki s.rickard & tan , 2024).

Moreover, it is to found that Male and female head teachers often experience different types of stress, coping strategies, and support networks, which in result affect their wellness levels (Ertem, 2024). For instance, female head teachers are more likely to experience work–family conflicts and emotional stress due to balancing professional and domestic roles, whereas male head teachers may face stress related to societal expectations of authority and performance (Wong & Shi, 2022).

Therefore, comparing the levels of wellness among secondary school head teachers on the basis of gender is important. Such an analysis not only highlights difference in levels of wellness but also provides practical insights for developing gender-sensitive policies that strengthen wellness, resilience, and sustainable school leadership in challenging work environment.

#### **Literature Review:**

As key figure in educational system, head teachers are responsible to create such type of school environment that supports in improving students out comes. They act as instructional leader to enhance quality of education, while also addressing social, emotional and community demands along with stakeholders' pressure (Mansueto et al., 2024). Academic achievement in schools depends largely on head teachers, who directly interact with the teachers, students and educational tasks. However, their sense of control over school operations has been reduced by rapid and ongoing educational changes (Oplatka, 2018). Challenges may arise from teachers, students, parents, stakeholders or the nature of the work itself (Wang, Pollock & Hauseman, 2018). For instance, policy changes and frequent inspectorate visits from education authorities contribute to stress (Tahir et al., 2018).

While, many head teachers report dissatisfaction with their work due to the constant pressure of implementing new programs (Wang et al., 2018). Insufficient support from school governing bodies (SGBs) and district officials further constrains effective leadership (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018; Denecker, 2019). Consequently, the role has become increasingly demanding, often leading to stress, burnout, and emotional exhaustion (Harris & Jones, 2021). Despite these challenges, head teachers are still expected to lead effectively under difficult conditions. According to Wang et al. (2018), the expanding responsibilities and roles of secondary school head teachers have significantly affected their ability to cope in challenging work environment.

To cope with such difficulties and stress, head teachers require wellness. Wellness refers to a way of living that promotes overall well-being of a person rather than simply recovering from illness (Holdsworth, 2019). Moreover, it reflects how well life is going for individuals (Marsh et al., 2020). Health, therefore, is not merely the absence of disease but a state of complete physical, mental, and emotional wellness. According to the WHO, mental health is a state of wellness in which individuals realize their abilities, cope with normal life pressures, and work productively within their communities. Consequently, wellness has become an important focus of research at national and international levels, particularly for policymakers aiming to promote it among head teachers, teachers, employees, students and community.

However, in challenging school environment, wellness becomes essential for head teachers because it is not only about completing tasks effectively but also about feeling positive toward their role and purpose (Wessels & Wood, 2019). When head teachers experience this sense of wellness, it strengthens both their leadership and their overall health.

Furthermore, with the help of (Hettler, 1976) wellness six-dimension model that provides us a practical foundation for building wellness during challenging work environment. It includes physical, emotional, mental, social, spiritual, and occupational dimensions. In context of secondary school head

teachers, three types physical, emotional, and mental wellness are significant due to the demanding nature of their role.

**Physical Wellness:**

Physical wellness means taking care of your body so it can work properly and support your daily routine. It's all about making healthy choices, activities and habits that strength your overall health. However, headteachers often neglect their physical wellness due their long hour's work, back-to-back meetings and stress related tasks. This reduces their focus, stamina and wellness.

While physical wellness supports body, emotional wellness strengthens the ability to handle the pressure and interpersonal demands of stakeholders.

**Emotional Wellness:**

Emotional wellness means understanding, managing, acting and expressing their feelings and passions in healthy way. It involves handling stress, building strong relationship and stayed calm during hard time. For secondary school head teacher emotional wellness is essential form maintaining professional relationship and helpful for making sound decisions in challenging work environment.

In addition to physical and emotional health, mental wellness plays critical role in enabling head teachers to think with clarity and act wisely.

**Mental Wellness:**

According to wellness six-dimension wellness model mental wellness means how you think, learn, focus, make decision and cope with challenges of life. A mentally well person can manage stress, solve problem and enjoy life when facing difficult situation. For secondary school head teachers, challenging school environment demands innovative thinking and continues growth. Mental wellness keeps headteachers mentally updated and confident in decision making.

Literature review highlights that secondary school head teacher is important element of education system but their responsibilities have become increasingly demanding due to stakeholder demands, and lack of resources, often resulting in stress, burnout, and emotional exhaustion. To meet these challenges, wellness is essential, as it promotes overall well-being beyond the absence of illness. based on Hettler's six-dimension wellness model, three key areas physical, emotional, and mental wellness are particularly important for head teachers. Physical wellness supports stamina and health but is often neglected due to workload; emotional wellness enables effective stress management and relationship-building; while mental wellness strengthens decision-making and problem-solving in challenging work environments. Together, these dimensions provide a foundation for head teachers to maintain their overall wellness and lead effectively.

**Objectives:**

1. To identify the level of wellness among female secondary head teachers.
2. To explore the level of wellness among male secondary school head teachers.
3. To Compare wellness level between male and female head teachers working in challenging environment.

**Methodology:**

The data was collected using survey technique with correlational study.

**Population and Sampling:**

According to the feasibility of time, resources, and financial constraints, this study was delimited to all Government Secondary Schools of District Sargodha. The population included all male and female head teachers, SSTs, ESTs, and non-teaching staff working in these schools. A multistage sampling technique was applied. Firstly, among all the tehsils of District Sargodha, Tehsil Sargodha was purposively selected as it had a larger number of Government Secondary Schools compared to other tehsils. Through random sampling, 86 Government Secondary Schools (representing 50% of the total population of 173 schools) were selected. From each selected school, one head teacher (total 86), one SST, one EST, and one non-teaching staff member were chosen on an availability basis, making a total sample of 256 participants.

**Research Instrument:**

For data collection, two questionnaires were developed one for head teachers and the other for their subordinate staff. Both questionnaires, designed to assess head teachers' wellness through self-evaluation and subordinates' perspectives, consisted of 21 items covering three dimensions: physical wellness (7 statements), emotional wellness (7 statements), and mental wellness (7 statements). The instruments were validated through expert opinions and a pilot study. After incorporating the experts'

feedback, the questionnaires were administered to 25 head teachers and 50 subordinate staff members who were not part of the actual sample. The collected data were analyzed to determine the reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha), which was found to be 0.72 for the head teachers' self-evaluation questionnaire and 0.886 for the subordinates' questionnaire.

**Collection of data and Analysis:**

Data were collected through head teachers' self-evaluation and the perspectives of their subordinate staff. Respondents were briefed about the purpose of the study, assured of the confidentiality of their responses, and informed that the data would be used only for research purposes. The collected data were tabulated prior to analysis. Since both questionnaires contained no negative statements, reverse coding was not required. The data were analyzed using SPSS software. Head teachers' wellness, based on both self-evaluation and subordinates' perspectives, was categorized according to average scores.

The criterion is as follows.

- Average score = less than 2.5 = low or poor
- Average score = 2.5 – 3 = Satisfactory
- Average score = 3.1 – 3.5 = Good
- Average Score = 3.6 – 4 = Very Good
- Average Score = 4.1 – 5 = Excellent

**Results:**

**Secondary School Head Teacher' wellness (Self-Evaluation)**

Analysis of the data about secondary school head teachers' wellness is given as:

**Cross tabulation of wellness with respect to their gender(self-evaluation)**

The analysis of cross tabulation of Secondary school head teachers' wellness with respect to their gender is given as:

Q: To what extent was the level of empowerment of wellness achieved according to their gender?

**Table 1:** Cross tabulation of Secondary school head teachers' wellness with respect to their gender (Self-Evaluation)

Gender	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Very good	Excellent	Total
Male	2	7	12	15	15	51
	2%	8%	14%	17%	17%	59%
Female	0	3	9	18	5	35
	0%	4%	11%	21%	6%	41%
Total	2	10	21	33	20	86
	2%	12%	24%	38%	23%	100%

This shows the trend that female head teachers have more motivation towards empowering their wellness in challenging environment than male head teachers at secondary level.

**Head Teacher' wellness levels (Self-Evaluation):** Secondary school head teachers' wellness levels were distributed in five levels. The range given to each level is as follows If,

- M.S = less than 2.5 = poor
- M.S = 2.5 – 3 = satisfactory
- M.S = 3.01 – 3.5 = Good
- M.S = 3.51 – 4 = very good
- M.S = 4.01– 5 = Excellent

Q: To what extent is the level of wellness achieved by secondary school head teachers through self-evaluation?

**Table 2:** Levels of secondary school head teachers' wellness

<i>Head Teacher' wellness levels (self-evaluation)</i>					
Level	Average Rang	Frequency	Percent	Weighted Average	SD
Poor	Less than 2.5	2	2%		
Satisfactory	2.51- 3.00	10	12%		
Good	3.01- 3.50	21	24%	3.7	
Very Good	3.51- 4.00	33	38%		1
Excellent	4.01- 5.00	20	23%		
Total		86	100%		

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This shows the trend that secondary school head teachers showed very good response towards empowering their wellness in challenging work environment through self-evaluation process.

### Statement analysis of head teachers' wellness (self-evaluation):

Table 3: Analysis of data collected from secondary school head teacher for their wellness working in challenging environment are analyzed as follow:

Sr	Construct	SAG F(%)	AG F(%)	NU F(%)	DA F(%)	SDA F(%)	Total F(%)	AVE	SD
1	Physical wellness	128 21%	284 47%	97 16%	49 8%	33 5%	602 100%	3.7	1
2	Emotional wellness	169 28%	162 27%	148 25%	68 27%	51 8%	602 100	3.5	1.2
3	Mental wellness	159 26%	145 24%	163 27%	77 13%	58 10%	602 100	3.5	1.3

Overall through self-evaluation, it was revealed that physical wellness (68%) is the most emphasized dimension of total wellness among secondary school head teachers, while emotional wellness (28%) is consistently recognized as essential, and mental wellness (27%) is considered as occasionally important. These findings revealed that all three dimensions significantly contribute to head teachers' overall wellness in challenging work environments.

**Secondary school head teacher' wellness (subordinates' staff perspective):** Analysis of the data about Head Teacher wellness viewed by teachers and non-teaching staff is given as:

### Cross tabulation of wellness with respect to gender (subordinates' staff perspective)

The analysis cross tabulation of Head Teacher' wellness viewed by teaching and non-teaching staff is given as:

Q: To what extent was the level of empowerment of wellness achieved by Head Teacher in challenging work environment?

**Table 4:** Cross tabulation of Head Teacher' wellness with respect to gender of teaching and non-teaching staff:

Gender	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Very good	Excellent	Total
Male	5 2%	11 4%	20 8%	23 9%	25 10%	84 33%
Female	4 2%	10 4%	48 19%	79 31%	9 4%	171 67%
Total	9 4%	21 8%	68 27%	102 40%	55 22%	256 100%

This reflects the trend that female subordinates' staff shows greater support towards empowerment of head teachers' wellness in challenging environment.

**Head Teacher' Wellness levels (subordinates' staff perspective):** Secondary school head teachers' resilience levels were distributed in five levels. The range given to each level is as follows If,

M.S = less than 2.5 = poor

M.S = 2.5 – 3 = satisfactory

M.S = 3.01 – 3.5 = Good

M.S = 3.51 – 4 = very good

M.S = 4.01– 5 = Excellent

**Table 5:** Head Teacher' Wellness viewed by teachers and Non-Teaching staff

Level	Average Rang	Frequency	Percent	Weighted Average	SD
Poor	Less than 2.5	9	4%		
Satisfactory	2.51- 3.00	22	8%		
Good	3.01- 3.50	68	27%		
Very Good	3.51- 4.00	102	41%	3.67	1.01
Excellent	4.01- 5.00	50	22%		
Total		256	100%		

This shows the trend that subordinates showed very good response towards empowering of secondary school head teachers' wellness in challenging work environment.

**Statement analysis of wellness (subordinates' staff perspective):** Analysis of data collected from secondary school teachers and non-Teaching staff to check the level of empowerment of wellness of Head Teacher working in challenging environment are analyzed as follow:

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Sr	Construct	SAG F(%)	AG F(%)	NU F(%)	DA F(%)	SDA F(%)	Total F(%)	AVE	SD
1	Physical wellness	332 19%	850 48%	269 15%	218 12%	114 6%	1792 100	3.58	1.22
2	Emotional wellness	616 37%	471 27%	381 22%	188 11%	140 8%	1792 100	3.64	1.3
3	Mental wellness	648 36%	405 23%	338 19%	183 10%	221 13%	1792 100	3.51	1.2

The results indicate that subordinates largely perceive physical wellness (67%) as essential for head teachers' overall wellness, while a considerable proportion emphasized the consistent need for emotional wellness (37%) and mental wellness (36%). This highlights that physical, emotional, and mental wellness are all viewed by subordinates as critical for the overall well-being of secondary school head teachers in challenging work environments.

### T-Test of difference

The following T-test is used between the level of wellness with respect to the gender of secondary school head teachers working in challenging environment, as assessed through self-evaluation and evaluated by subordinate staff is given below:

#### Head teachers' wellness (Self-evaluation)

H: There is no significant difference between secondary school head teachers' wellness with respect to their gender working in challenging environment.

**Table 6:** T-test results between head teachers' wellness w.r.t their gender (self-evaluation)

Sr	Variables	N	Average	SD	t	df	Sig (2-tailed)
1	Head teacher' wellness (male)	43	75.37	11.65	.009	84	.993
2	Head teachers' wellness(female)	43	75.35	13.46	.009	82	.993

Table shows that the p-value for wellness of secondary school teachers are  $.993 > 0.005$  indicating no difference. Thus, null hypothesis "There is no significant difference between secondary school head teachers' wellness with respect to their gender working in challenging environment" is accepted. It means that there is **no significant difference** in the wellness of male and female head teachers. Both groups have almost the same level of wellness.

Furthermore, these findings suggest that gender does not play a significant role in determining the wellness of head teachers in secondary schools, as both male and female head teachers reported nearly identical wellness levels.

#### Head teachers' wellness (Subordinates' perspective)

H: There is no significant difference between secondary school head teachers' wellness with respect to their gender of subordinates' staff working in their school.

**Table 7:** T-test results between head teachers' wellness w.r.t the gender (subordinates' perspective)

Sr	Variables	N	Average	SD	t	df	Sig (2-tailed)
1	Head teacher' wellness (male subordinates)	128	75.54	14.87	.513	84	.609
2	Head teachers' wellness(female subordinates)	128	76.39	11.43	.513	82	.609

Table shows that the p-value for wellness of secondary school teachers are  $.609 > 0.005$  indicating no difference. Thus, null hypothesis "There is no significant difference between secondary school head teachers' wellness according to the gender of subordinates working in their school" is accepted. It means that there is **no significant difference** in the wellness of male and female head teachers when assessed through subordinates' staff perspective.

Furthermore, female subordinates' staff reported a slightly higher average wellness score ( $M = 76.39$ ) as compared to the male subordinates' staff ( $M = 75.54$ ), this difference is very small and not statistically significant, indicating that gender does not play a meaningful role in the identifying wellness level of their head teachers.

### Discussion:

This study showed that gender does not significantly determine wellness levels among secondary school head teachers working in challenging environments. Both male and female head teachers reported almost the same levels of wellness. However, a slight variation was observed: female head teachers seemed to be more conscious about their wellness, while male head teachers expressed greater confidence about their wellness. This result was supported by Shelestov (2022) which reported

that female school head teachers often show more awareness about wellness and self-care practices, even when overall wellness is similar across gender. It is due to this fact that female head teachers tend to adopt self-care practices, manage emotional demands, and show greater sensitivity to stressors, reflecting a stronger wellness consciousness as compared to men. Similarly, Shah (2023) reported that female head teachers often face additional expectations from both professional and social roles, which encourages them to adopt active strategies such as stress management, emotional care, and building support networks.

Therefore, wellness programs should not be separated strictly by gender but should consider these differences in perception and coping style. Interventions that promote reflective practice, emotional awareness, and peer support may be more meaningful for female head teachers, while programs that strengthen leadership identity and confidence may be more effective for male head teachers.

**Conclusion:**

The study compared the level of wellness of male and female secondary school head teachers in challenging work environments. The results showed that there was no significant difference of wellness based on their gender. Both male and female head teachers reported the same levels of physical, emotional, and mental wellness. Some small differences were found. Female head teachers showed a slightly tendency towards improving their wellness, while male head teachers reported excellent response towards wellness level. However, these differences were very small and had not impact on overall performance of secondary school head teachers.

The views of subordinate staff also supported these results. Female subordinates reported that their head teachers' wellness was a little higher than male subordinates' head teachers, but the differences were not statistically significant.

Overall, the findings suggest that both male and female head teachers face similar challenges to their wellness in challenging work environment. Gender alone has not determined wellness levels, although female head teachers seem more conscious about their wellness, while male head teachers show more confidence.

**Recommendation:**

Based on the conclusion, it is recommended that wellness programs for head teachers should not be separated by gender but should recognize differences in coping styles. Female head teachers, who are often more conscious of their wellness, may benefit from self-care practices, stress management training, and peer-support networks. Male head teachers, who show more confidence, should be encouraged to develop greater self-awareness of their emotional and mental wellness alongside physical wellness.

For administrators, it is important to provide equal opportunities for wellness development, create supportive school environments, and include wellness training in professional development programs.

Policymakers should integrate wellness into school leadership frameworks by reducing workload, ensuring adequate resources, and designing flexible policies that address the needs of both male and female head teachers.

Teachers and subordinate staff should also play a supportive role by fostering positive relationships, collaborating in wellness initiatives, and contributing to a culture that promotes shared responsibility for wellness in secondary school.

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