© Journal of the Indian Academy of Applied Psychology
January 2025, Vol.51, No.1, 501-507

Gender and Age Differences in Organizational Behaviour among Heads of High School and Junior Colleges

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The current study investigates the relationship between gender, age, and organizational behavior among the heads of high schools and junior colleges. The study aims to address the gap in the literature regarding the educational realm, particularly concerning these leaders. The research focuses on the interplay of gender and age differences in leadership practices within the unique context of educational institutions catering to diverse student populations. The study employs a comprehensive examination of existing literature and empirical research methods to contribute to the scholarly discourse surrounding educational leadership. The findings promise to inform educational policymakers, practitioners, and scholars, offering practical insights for fostering inclusive and effective leadership practices within the ever-evolving landscape of high school and junior college administration.

Keywords: Gender, Age, Organizational Behavior, Educational Leadership, High Schools, Junior Colleges

In the competitive landscape of educational institutions, effective leadership plays a vital role in shaping the organizational culture and fostering a conducive learning environment. The principals of high schools and junior colleges are at the forefront of guiding their institutions toward success. Understanding the complexities of organizational behavior among these leaders is essential for enhancing educational outcomes and institutional effectiveness. This study aims to investigate the intricate interplay of gender and age differences in the organizational behavior of Heads of High Schools and Junior Colleges, shedding light on the unique challenges and opportunities faced by diverse leadership profiles. The significance of this research lies in recognizing that educational leadership is not a universal phenomenon. Gender and age, as key demographic variables, can influence leadership styles, decision-making processes, and overall organizational dynamics. Examining these factors within the context of educational leadership can provide valuable insights into the complexities of organizational behavior, facilitating the development of targeted strategies for leadership development, succession planning, and institutional improvement.

Though several studies have explored leadership behaviors in various sectors, the educational realm is still not well-known, particularly concerning heads of high schools and junior colleges. By focusing on this specific group, we aim to comprehensively understand the gender and age-related dimensions that shape leadership practices within the unique context of educational institutions. Organizational behavior within educational institutions is a dynamic field of study, continually evolving with the changing landscape of educational administration. As educational leaders play a pivotal role in shaping the learning environment, understanding the factors influencing their organizational behavior is crucial for effective

management and institutional success. This research examines gender and age differences among heads of high schools and junior colleges, shedding light on the nuanced aspects of leadership within these educational settings.

Gender and age are two fundamental dimensions contributing to the diversity of leadership styles and behaviors in any organizational context (Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Zenger & Folkman, 2012). The educational sector is no exception, and investigating how these factors intersect with organizational behavior among school leaders provides valuable insights into the complexities of educational administration. Furthermore, this research addresses the gap in the existing literature by specifically exploring the experiences and challenges faced by heads of high schools and junior colleges, considering the unique organizational dynamics present in secondary and higher secondary education. Recent studies have highlighted the underrepresentation of women in top leadership positions in educational institutions (Blau & Kahn, 2007; Mishel, 2017). Similarly, age-related disparities in leadership roles have garnered attention, emphasizing the need to understand how generational differences may impact organizational behavior (Ng et al., 2010). Focusing on the heads of high schools and junior colleges, this research seeks to unravel the intricate interplay between gender, age, and organizational behavior in an educational context.

Through a comprehensive examination of existing literature coupled with empirical research methods, this study aims to contribute to the scholarly discourse surrounding educational leadership. The findings promise to inform educational policymakers, practitioners, and scholars, offering practical insights for fostering inclusive and effective leadership practices within the ever-evolving landscape of high school and junior college administration. As educational institutions strive for excellence and adaptability, understanding the diverse factors influencing leadership behaviors becomes paramount, ensuring the cultivation of environments conducive to both professional growth and optimal learning outcomes.

The heads of the institution play a vital role in understanding an individual's behavior to draw the best and heartfelt contribution to achieve the institutional goals. To achieve the intended goals, every school/ institution needs sound leadership at the top of the institution. Moreover, Leadership is a process that influences group activities toward achieving the institution's intended goals. As head of the school, he/she coordinates, keeps the balance, ensures harmonious institution development, and coordinates between teachers, students, and non-teaching employees. Hence, the head of the institution must be empathetic, emotionally balanced, socially intelligent, and able to convince staff, students, and parents, as well as be a good communicator. The effective communication skills of leaders create an understanding and trust among teachers, students, and parents. Given the above, communication skills help manage human relations and bring a healthy atmosphere to the institution. There is a need of school heads should possess leadership qualities like patience, social intelligence, team coordination, extracting work from teachers, results-oriented, inculcating values, emotional balance, adaptability to the situation, confidence, having a positive attitude towards conflicts, command of content, students and teachers, should possess good skill in resolving conflicts between students, parents, and teachers must be able to fulfill tasks involved in his/ her job successfully and also a good communicator with parents, teachers, and

students and school management. The heads of the high schools and junior colleges deal with the self-conscious but very dynamic students as they are in their teens and direct the faculty who constantly interact with them. Hence, any institution, if led by such efficient heads who are good at all these requirements, can bring development to the institution.

Method

Participants

The present study includes male participants are 126 (66%) males and females are 65 (34%). Forty-three (22.5%) participants in the age group 40-45 years, compared to 50 (26.2%) in the age group 46-50 years, 36 (18.8%) in the age group 51-55 years, and 62 (32.5%) in the age group of 56-60years.

Tools

The Leadership Behavior Scale (LBS) was developed by Asha Hinger in 2005, comprising thirty items to be rated on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from always (5) to never (1). The scale assesses both positive and negative leadership behaviors across six dimensions: leader as an emotional stabilizer, team builder, performance oriented, potential extractor, socially intelligent, and value inculcator. The LBS is useful for identifying these six dimensions of leadership behavior in different professional groups, with a total of thirty items, including twenty-four positive items and six negative items.

The Occupational Self-Efficacy Scale (OSE) was developed by Sanjyot Pethe, Sushama Chaudhari, and Upindar Dhar. The scale comprises 19 items, each with five response options ranging from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (5). The OSE dimensions encompass self-confidence, command, adaptability, personal effectiveness, positive attitude, and individuality.

The communication skills scale was developed by an investigator and is utilized to evaluate communication effectiveness among the participants. The scale comprises thirty items, which are measured using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from always (5) to never (1). The dimensions of communication skill effectiveness are focused on positive and negative aspects, with four dimensions, including teachers, parents, pupils, and non-teaching staff. Of the thirty items on the scale, nineteen are positive, and eleven are negative.

The Opinion Survey on Conflict Management Styles (OSCM) was designed to investigate participants’ conflict management approaches. Developed by Uday and Prateek, the OSCM includes 24 items that are rated on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The OSCM assesses four avoidance conflict management styles and four approaching management styles. The avoidance conflict management styles are resignation, withdrawal, diffusion, and appeasement, and the approaching management styles are confrontation, compromise, arbitration, and negotiation. The OSCM is useful for identifying the various dimensions of conflict management styles among different professional groups. The scale consists of 24 positive statements.

Procedure

Before the data collection, approval to carry out this study was obtained from respective District Education Officers and Mandal Education Officers from Krishna and Guntur districts. Once permission to carry out the study was granted, the researcher approached heads of the schools and junior colleges and requested their participation. The consent form and a questionnaire were given to participants, and they were asked to read the information provided in the consent form. They were asked to sign a

consent form, which assured the confidentiality of their responses and voluntary participation. The participants were asked to return the completed set of questionnaires to the researcher.

Results

A one-way between-groups multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was performed to investigate gender differences in organizational behavior skills (Table 1). Five dependent variables were used: leadership behavior, communication skills, occupational self-efficacy, avoidance, and approach conflict management styles. The independent variable was the gender group. Preliminary assumption testing was conducted to check for normality, linearity, univariate and multivariate outliers, homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices, and multicollinearity, with no serious violations noted. There was a statistically significant difference between male and female participants on the combined dependent variables, F (5, 185) = 493.59, p <.01; Pillai's Trace (V) = .93; partial eta squared (ç2) = .93.

When the results for the dependent variables were considered separately, all differences reached statistical significance, using a Boneferroni adjusted alpha level of .01. Leadership behavior, F (1, 189) = 24.79, p <.01, partial eta squared (ç2) = .11; Communication skills, F (1, 189) = 25.31, p <.01, partial eta squared (ç2) = .12; Occupational self-efficacy, F (1, 189) = 28.60, p <.01, partial eta squared (ç2) = .13; Avoidance conflict management, F (1, 189) = 506.19, p <.01, partial eta squared (ç2) = .72; Approach conflict management, F (1, 189) = 1980.57, p <.01, partial eta squared (ç2) = .91. An inspection of the mean scores indicated that females reported better leadership behavior (M = 111.12, SD = 9.07), than males (M = 99.34, SD = 17.81). Regarding communication skills, females had higher values (M = 106.57, SD = 9.00) than males (M = 95.26, SD = 16.91). Regarding occupational self-efficacy, females had higher values (M = 81.30, SD = 6.49) than males (M = 73.88, SD = 10.17). On the other hand, males with avoidance conflict management had higher values (M = 41.50, SD = 2.65) than females (M = 33.10, SD = 1.96). Regarding conflict management, females had higher values (M = 49.61, SD = 1.64) than males (M = 37.25, SD = 1.90). The significant differences in mean values between the groups were all small to large according to Cohen's (1988) guide to interpreting effect size. Partial eta squared (ç2) for these differences in leadership behavior, communication skills, occupational self-efficacy, and avoidance and approach conflict management were 0.11, 0.12, 0.13, .72, and 0.91, respectively.

Table 1. Mean scores for Male and Female group participants and the study variables

	Males (n=126)		Females (n = 65)				
	M	SD	M	SD	F	p	(η2)
LB	99.40	17.81	111.12	9.07	24.79	<.01	.11
CS	95.26	16.91	106.57	9.00	25.31	<.01	.12
OSE	73.88	10.17	81.30	6.49	28.60	<.01	.13
Avoidance	41.50	2.65	33.10	1.96	506.19	<.01	.72
Approach	37.25	1.90	49.61	1.64	1980.57	<.01	.91

Note: LB = Leadership Behavior; CS = Communication Skills; OSE = Occupational Self-efficacy; Avoidance = Avoidance Conflict Management Style; Approach = Approach Conflict Management Style

Perceptions of leadership behavior, communication skills, occupational self-efficacy, avoidance, and approach conflict management styles were measured in four age groups: 40-45, 46-50, 51-55, and 56-60 years. Preliminary assumption testing was conducted to check for normality, linearity,

univariate and multivariate outliers, homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices, and multicollinearity, with no serious violations noted. One-way MANOVA analyses confirmed that there was a multivariate effect: F (15, 555) = 5.63, p <.01; Pillai's Trace (V) = .39; partial eta squared (ç2) = .13. When the results for the dependent variables were considered separately (Table 2), two differences reached statistical significance, using a Boneferroni adjusted alpha level of .01. Leadership behavior, F (3, 187) = 16.93, p <.01, partial eta squared (ç2) = .21; and Occupational self-efficacy, F (3, 187) = 4.32, p <.01, partial eta squared (ç2) = .06; Tukey post-hoc test showed that 40-45 years group were significantly high on leadership behavior than 46-50 (p <.01), 51-55 (p <.01) and 56-60 years (p <.01). Tukey analyses showed that 40-45 years age group were significantly high on occupational self-efficacy than 51-55 (p <.01) and 56-60 years (p <.01). The significant differences in mean values between the groups were small according to Cohen's (1988) guide to interpreting effect size. Partial eta squared (ç2) for these differences in leadership behavior and occupational self-efficacy were .21 and 0.06, respectively

Table 2. Mean scores for various Age group participants and the study variables

	40-45 (n=43)		46-50 (n=50)		51-55 (n=36)		56-60 (n=62)				
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	F	p	(η2)
LB	117.11	15.01	97.10	15.85	100.83	13.47	100.41	13.94	16.93	<.01	.21
CS	103.41	15.15	94.38	16.52	100.50	14.55	99.12	15.14	2.78	.04	.04
OSE	80.53	8.06	76.82	10.82	73.72	9.62	74.77	9.15	4.32	<.01	.06
Avoidance	39.27	4.67	38.88	4.36	38.50	5.03	38.11	4.75	0.58	.62	.01
Approach	40.90	6.01	41.10	6.19	41.52	5.99	42.09	6.36	0.39	.76	.01

Note: LB = Leadership Behavior; CS = Communication Skills; OSE = Occupational Self-efficacy; Avoidance = Avoidance Conflict Management Style; Approach = Approach Conflict Management Style

Discussion

The findings of this study provide significant insights into the interplay of gender and age in influencing organizational behavior among heads of high schools and junior colleges in Andhra Pradesh. The results complement and extend the existing literature on educational leadership. Previous studies have highlighted the significant influence of gender on leadership behaviors, noting that women often excel in transformational leadership styles characterized by empathy, collaboration, and inclusivity (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Zenger & Folkman, 2012). Consistent with these findings, this study observed that the female heads demonstrated higher effectiveness in leadership behaviors, communication skills, and occupational self-efficacy. At the same time, a higher prevalence of avoidance conflict management styles among male heads aligns with existing literature suggesting that men may adopt less relationally focused approaches in organizational contexts (Eagly & Johnson, 1990). Conversely, female heads demonstrated a stronger preference for approach-oriented conflict management, emphasizing confrontation, negotiation, and compromise, which aligns with their higher communication and leadership effectiveness scores. This supports earlier research

highlighting the superior communication skills of women leaders and their capacity to manage interpersonal dynamics effectively (Halawah, 2005).

Age also emerged as a significant factor, with younger heads (40–45 years) displaying superior leadership behavior and occupational self-efficacy compared to older age groups. This is consistent with study by Ng et al. (2010) indicating that younger leaders may possess greater adaptability and openness to innovative leadership practices. These findings suggest that generational differences in professional training and exposure may impact leadership effectiveness. Older leaders, while experienced, might benefit from professional development programs tailored to address the evolving demands of educational leadership.

The intersectionality of gender and age in shaping leadership practices also highlights the importance of addressing underrepresentation in leadership roles. As previous studies have noted, women are underrepresented in top leadership positions in educational institutions, despite evidence of their leadership potential (Blau & Kahn, 2007; Mishel, 2017). This study underscores the need for inclusive policies that promote gender equity in leadership and provide platforms for women to excel.

Implications

The implications of these findings are multi-dimensional. Policymakers emphasize the importance of fostering gender balance in leadership roles and designing training programs that address age-specific needs. For practitioners, the study provides actionable insights into how leadership development initiatives can be tailored to enhance specific competencies, such as communication and conflict management skills. Moreover, these findings contribute to the broader discourse on educational leadership by highlighting the role of demographic factors in shaping leadership effectiveness.

Limitations

However, the study's scope is limited to heads of institutions in two districts, restricting the generalizability of its findings. Future research could expand the geographical scope and include other educational levels to validate these results further. Additionally, qualitative approaches could complement the quantitative findings to provide deeper insights into educational leaders' lived experiences and organizational behaviors. By addressing these demographic dimensions, educational institutions can move toward more inclusive, adaptive, and effective leadership models, ultimately benefiting students, teachers, and the broader educational ecosystem.

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