

A Multi-Dimensional Analysis of Educational Leadership: Teachers' Perceptions of Leadership Emphases in Selected Private Colleges of Rajshahi City, Bangladesh

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Abstract

Educational leadership plays a pivotal role in enhancing institutional effectiveness, teacher motivation, and student achievement. In Bangladesh's growing private higher education sector, leadership practices are evolving yet remain underexplored, particularly from the perspective of teachers. This study examines educators' perceptions of six key leadership emphases—trait, ability, skill, behavior, relationship, and process—in private colleges in Rajshahi City. Using a descriptive research design and quantitative method, data were collected from 78 teachers across three institutions through a structured Likert-scale questionnaire. The target population was 230 teachers and simple random sampling was employed. Composite Reliability (CR) values (0.799–0.915) and AVE values (>0.50) confirmed the instrument's reliability and convergent validity. Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlations, and PLS-SEM analysis revealed that all six leadership emphases were perceived at high levels, with skill ($M = 3.98$) and trait ($M = 3.91$) scoring highest. Significant positive interrelations were observed among most dimensions. Structural modeling indicated that Aspect of Educational Leadership (AEL) significantly predicts all six emphases, especially trait ($\beta = 0.786$) and process ($\beta = 0.737$). No significant gender differences were found. Findings support a multi-dimensional leadership model, offering implications for leadership training and policy in private tertiary education. Future research should include longitudinal and comparative studies across public and private institutions.

Keywords: educational leadership, trait emphasis, ability emphasis, skill emphasis, behavior emphasis, relation emphasis, process emphasis, trait theory

Introduction

Leadership is widely recognized as a central force in driving institutional development, teacher motivation, and educational quality. According to Northouse (2010), leadership is a process through which individuals influence others to achieve a common goal. In educational contexts, this influence extends beyond administrative tasks to shaping institutional culture and improving teaching and learning outcomes. Effective educational leadership is essential for attaining educational missions and visions, and ensuring quality education (Chowdhary et al., 2024).

In recent decades, leadership theory in education has shifted from hierarchical and trait-based models to more holistic, collaborative frameworks. These models emphasize traits, skills, behaviors, relationships, and dynamic processes. However, in the context of Bangladesh—particularly in private tertiary institutions—leadership often remains rooted in conventional, top-down structures. Chowdhary et al. (2023), for instance, discovered that principals and teachers have differing opinions on government colleges based on principals' leadership styles (autocratic, democratic, transformational, and laissez-faire). Despite increasing demands for innovation and adaptability, many leadership practices in private colleges continue to reflect outdated paradigms.

Understanding how teachers perceive different leadership emphases—traits, abilities, skills, behaviors, relationships, and processes—is critical. Teachers, as frontline stakeholders in education, experience the day-to-day impacts of leadership decisions. Their insights can guide reforms and professional development initiatives, ensuring leadership practices are aligned with institutional goals and educational outcomes.

This study addresses the gap in literature by exploring teachers' multidimensional perceptions of educational leadership in private colleges in Rajshahi City, Bangladesh.

Objectives

The primary objective of this study is to investigate teachers' perceptions of educational leadership across multiple emphases in selected private colleges in Rajshahi City. The specific objectives are to:

1. Examine teachers' perceptions of six leadership dimensions: trait, ability, skill, behavior, relationship, and process.
2. Analyze the correlations among these six leadership emphases.
3. Compare the perceptions of male and female teachers regarding these leadership dimensions.
4. Evaluate the influence of each leadership emphasis on the overall construct of the Aspect of Educational Leadership (AEL).

Literature Review

Trait Emphasis in Leadership

Trait-based leadership emphasizes inherent personal qualities such as confidence, intelligence, determination, and integrity (Zaccaro, 2007). Northouse (2021) asserts that effective leaders possess a combination of these enduring characteristics. Zaccaro (2007) further emphasized that successful leaders often exhibit a blend of emotional stability and social intelligence, enhancing their credibility and authority in educational settings. While trait theories have been critiqued for neglecting contextual variables (Yukl, 2013), in traditional academic institutions, such traits remain central in how teachers perceive leadership effectiveness.

Ability Emphasis in Leadership

Leadership ability refers to cognitive and strategic capacities, including decision-making, adaptability, and problem-solving. Katz (1955) highlighted that effective leadership requires both innate intelligence and acquired analytical skills. In educational settings, teachers often associate strategic ability with instructional leadership and institutional growth. For instance, Stein and

Wang (1988) found that leaders who assess pedagogical needs and respond innovatively enhance teacher development and organizational responsiveness.

Skill Emphasis in Leadership

Skill-based leadership focuses on competencies developed through training and experience. Key skills include communication, conflict resolution, instructional supervision, and time management. Katz (1955) categorized these into technical, human, and conceptual skills, all essential in the education sector. Northouse (2021, 2018) emphasized that leadership is not just about traits but about acquiring and refining skills. Skills-based leadership models support ongoing professional development and adaptability in dynamic institutional contexts (Day et al., 2016).

Behavioral Emphasis in Leadership

Behavioral theories focus on what leaders do rather than who they are. Blake and Mouton (1964) proposed a leadership grid distinguishing task-oriented and relationship-oriented behaviors. Teachers perceive effective leadership behaviors—such as clarity, consistency, and ethical conduct—as crucial for fostering morale and institutional culture (Webster and Litchka, 2020; Leithwood et al., 2008).

Relationship Emphasis in Leadership

The Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory, developed by Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995), underscores the importance of trust, respect, and mutual obligation between leaders and teachers. Positive leader-teacher relationships can enhance satisfaction, collaboration, and instructional quality. Relational leadership is especially significant in fostering a supportive and inclusive work environment.

Process Emphasis in Leadership

Spillane's (2005) Distributed Leadership Theory views leadership as an ongoing, shared organizational process rather than the actions of a single individual. Process emphasis focuses on

the dynamic, collective nature of leadership, where teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders contribute to institutional effectiveness. This view aligns leadership with systemic thinking and participatory governance in education.

Methodology

Research Design and Method

This study employed a descriptive research design with a quantitative method to explore teachers' perceptions of various leadership emphases. Descriptive research is appropriate for systematically capturing the current practices, attitudes, and trends in selected private colleges without manipulating variables (Creswell, 2014). The quantitative approach enhances objectivity and allows for statistical analysis of interrelationships among the leadership dimensions (Gay et al., 2012).

Target Population

The study targeted 230 teachers from three private colleges in Rajshahi City: Shamokdum College, Borandraw College, and Coat College. These institutions were purposely selected for their reputation and diversity in leadership practices, offering a representative cross-section of the academic workforce.

Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

A probability-based simple random sampling technique was used to ensure each teacher had an equal chance of being selected, thus reducing selection bias (Fraenkel et al., 2012). Using Kalton's (1983) sample size determination formula and assuming a 95% confidence level, a final sample of 78 respondents was drawn.

Data Collection Instruments and Procedures

Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire based on Northouse's (2018; 2021) leadership scale. The survey employed a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) to measure six leadership emphases. Data collection

occurred between November 2023 and February 2024 and was facilitated through both direct administration and institutional cooperation.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted using 10% of the total sample (not included in the final sample) to test the reliability and clarity of the instrument. Feedback informed minor revisions to enhance clarity. Reliability was confirmed via Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), both exceeding acceptable thresholds.

Validity of Instruments and Reliability of Data

Table 1

Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

<i>Variables</i>	Teachers' Perception (N=78)	
	<i>Composite Reliability (CR)</i>	<i>Average Variance Extracted (AVE)</i>
Trait Emphasis (TE)	0.844	0.577
Ability Emphasis (AE)	0.854	0.594
Skill Emphasis (SE)	0.815	0.529
Behaviour Emphasis (BE)	0.811	0.520
Relationship Emphasis (RE)	0.799	0.500
Process Emphasis (PE)	0.803	0.508

All CR values exceeded 0.70, and AVE values exceeded 0.50, demonstrating strong internal consistency and convergent validity (Hair et al., 2019; Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS 20 and SmartPLS 4. Descriptive statistics (mean, SD, frequency), Pearson correlation, and Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) were employed to test relationships and model significance (Chin, 1998).

Results

Demographic Characteristics

Out of 78 respondents:

- **Gender:** 62.8% male, 37.2% female
- **Position:** 87.2% lecturers, 12.8% assistant professors
- **Education:** 97.4% held master's degrees; 2.6% held PhDs
- **Age:** Majority aged 35–45 (43.06%)
- **Experience:** 47.4% had 1–5 years of experience

Teachers' Perceptions of Leadership Emphases

All six leadership emphases were perceived as highly emphasized:

- **Skill Emphasis:** Mean = 3.98 (SD=0.584)
- **Trait Emphasis:** Mean = 3.80 (SD= 0.590)
- **Process Emphasis:** Mean = 3.92 (SD= 0.534)
- **Behavior Emphasis:** Mean = 3.92 (SD= 0.0.488)
- **Relationship Emphasis:** Mean = 3.92 (SD= 0.585)
- **Ability Emphasis:** Mean = 3.57 (SD= 0.600)

Correlation Analysis

Significant positive correlations were observed:

- Trait ↔ Ability: $r = 0.379$ ($p < .01$)
- Trait ↔ Skill: $r = 0.295$ ($p < .01$)
- Trait ↔ Behavior: $r = 0.277$ ($p < .05$)
- Trait ↔ Relationship: $r = 0.264$ ($p < .05$)
- Trait ↔ Process: $r = 0.297$ ($p < .01$)
- Skill ↔ Ability: $r = 0.245$ ($p < .05$)
- Skill ↔ Relationship: $r = 0.259$ ($p < .05$)

- Most dimensions were positively related; no significant negative correlations were found. But only the ability to process has a negative, not significant, correlation (-0.154, $p > 0.5$).

Gender-Based Comparison

Independent samples t-tests revealed no significant differences between male and female teachers across all six emphases ($p > .05$), aligning with findings by Eagly & Carli (2003).

Influence of AEL on Leadership Emphases

Table 2

Aspect of Educational Leadership (AEL)

Leadership Emphasis	β	t	p-value	Significance
Trait	0.786	9.23	0.000	High
Process	0.737	6.32	0.000	High
Behavior	0.703	7.36	0.000	High
Skill	0.673	6.02	0.000	High
Relationship	0.563	4.39	0.000	Moderate
Ability	0.527	4.11	0.000	Moderate

R² Values for Leadership Dimensions

- Trait Emphasis: 0.617 (Very Strong)
- Process Emphasis: 0.543 (Strong)
- Behavior Emphasis: 0.494 (Moderate)
- Skill Emphasis: 0.452 (Moderate)
- Relationship Emphasis: 0.317 (Moderate/Low)
- Ability Emphasis: 0.277 (Low)

Discussion

This study aimed to investigate teachers' perceptions of educational leadership through six critical emphases—trait, ability, skill, behavior, relationship, and process—in selected private colleges in Rajshahi City, Bangladesh. The findings reveal that teachers perceive a high level of

emphasis across all six dimensions, indicating that effective leadership is viewed as multifaceted rather than singularly defined.

Trait emphasis ($\beta = 0.786$) emerged as the strongest predictor of the overall Aspect of Educational Leadership (AEL). This supports trait-based leadership theories, which posit that qualities such as confidence, intelligence, and integrity are foundational to effective leadership (Northouse, 2021; Zaccaro, 2007). Teachers' reliance on such inherent traits suggests a cultural context where personal credibility remains a critical leadership marker.

Process emphasis ($\beta = 0.737$) ranked second, underscoring the growing recognition of leadership as a dynamic, participative process rather than a static role. This aligns with Spillane's (2005) distributed leadership theory, which advocates for collaborative and context-responsive leadership models. Teachers appreciated involvement in decision-making and transparent communication—hallmarks of process-oriented leadership.

Skill ($\beta = 0.673$) and behavior ($\beta = 0.703$) emphases were also significantly correlated with AEL, reinforcing the importance of learnable competencies and observable behaviors in leadership. The findings support Katz's (1955) skills-based model and Blake and Mouton's (1964) behavioral theory. These results suggest that leadership training should focus not only on innate traits but also on cultivating actionable skills and behaviors.

Relationship emphasis ($\beta = 0.563$), while significant, was perceived with slightly less intensity. This may reflect institutional cultures in Bangladesh where hierarchical authority is more emphasized than collaborative relationships. However, research by Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) and Devos and Bouckenooghe (2009) highlights that high-quality leader-teacher relationships positively influence institutional climate, suggesting a need for further exploration and cultural adaptation.

Interestingly, ability emphasis ($\beta = 0.527$) received the lowest path coefficient among the six dimensions, indicating moderate recognition of strategic and cognitive leadership capabilities. This may suggest a perceived disconnect between strategic visioning and day-to-day educational leadership functions, especially in resource-constrained or tradition-bound institutions.

The Pearson correlation analysis confirmed positive interrelations among most leadership dimensions. The absence of strong negative correlations suggests that these emphases are not mutually exclusive but operate synergistically within effective leadership practice. Furthermore, gender-based analysis found no statistically significant differences, aligning with findings by Eagly and Carli (2003) on gender-neutral perceptions of leadership in certain professional contexts.

Conclusion

The study confirms that educational leadership in private colleges of Rajshahi City is perceived as multi-dimensional by teaching staff. All six dimensions—trait, ability, skill, behavior, relationship, and process—are present at high levels, with trait and process emphases most strongly associated with overall leadership effectiveness.

These findings validate the relevance of an integrated leadership framework in the context of private higher education in Bangladesh. Teachers value not only the personal attributes of their leaders but also their actions, collaborative processes, interpersonal relationships, and learned competencies. Leadership, as perceived by teachers, is therefore both an individual and institutional practice shaped by multiple interacting dimensions.

Recommendations

1. Leadership Training Programs

Institutions should implement training initiatives that develop a balance of trait, behavioral, and skill-based competencies, including communication, emotional intelligence, and collaborative leadership.

2. Policy Development

Policymakers should integrate multi-dimensional leadership models into institutional guidelines, emphasizing participative decision-making and distributed leadership structures.

3. **Performance Evaluation**

Leadership appraisal systems should move beyond administrative benchmarks and include relational, behavioral, and transformational criteria.

4. **Capacity Building**

Colleges should invest in leadership mentoring, peer coaching, and feedback mechanisms to support continuous professional development.

Theoretical Implications

This study reinforces several leadership theories—including Trait Theory, Skills Theory, Behavioral Theory, Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory, and Distributed Leadership Theory—within a South Asian context. It confirms that multiple theories can co-exist and complement each other in practice, providing a broader framework for analyzing leadership in education.

Practical Implications

Educational institutions can apply these findings to improve leadership recruitment, training, and evaluation. Leaders should be selected and developed not only based on personality traits but also on their ability to cultivate relationships, adapt to institutional needs, and lead through collaborative processes. The study also provides a foundational model that institutions may use for curriculum development in leadership education programs.

Limitations

- The study was limited to three private colleges in Rajshahi City, potentially affecting generalizability.
- The sample size was relatively small (N=78), which limits statistical power.
- The study relied exclusively on self-reported data, which may introduce social desirability bias.
- Only quantitative methods were used, omitting in-depth qualitative insights.

Future Research Directions

- Future studies should include public institutions to compare leadership perceptions across organizational types.
- Longitudinal research is needed to explore changes in leadership perceptions over time.
- Mixed-method designs could integrate qualitative interviews to capture nuanced interpretations of leadership dimensions.
- Further research could investigate how leadership emphasis affects student performance and institutional outcomes.

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