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Role of Communication Competence, Self-Control, and Professional Excellence in Enhancing the Performance of Academic Departmental Heads: An Evaluative Analysis

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Abstract

A paramount element in the overall education process is the leadership of educational institutions. Communication, professional excellence, and self-control help the departmental heads to interact with communities, teachers and parents of students for the formation of character education. The current study investigated the relationship between professional excellence, self-control, and communication competence among the heads of academic departments. It was assumed that communication competence and self-control correlate with professional excellence. It was also assumed that Self-control will probably predict professional excellence in academic departmental heads. It was hypothesized that there is expected to be a difference on the basis of demographics and professional excellence in academic departmental heads. Purposive sampling technique and correlational research design were used to gather data from the academic heads. Self-Perceived Communication Competence Scale (SPCC), the Desirability of Control Scale, and the Professional Excellence Scale were used as measurement tools for present study. The results discovered a noteworthy correlation between communication competence and professional excellence. Also, a positive relationship was found between self-control and professional excellence, showing the importance of self control for the departmental heads. The findings can be used to implement a policy for the recruitment/ appointment of competent departmental heads, in order to maintain conducive working environment.

Keywords: departmental heads, self- control, working environment, professional excellence, communication, competence

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Introduction

Leadership plays an important role in the success of any organization. The organization can range from multinational production units to academic institutions. The leader in educational institutes is the departmental head who work as a lead as well as a team member. This role demands too much for the healthy working of the employees as well as for promoting academic excellence (Rao & Gorfie, [2017](#)).

Significant attributes of the academic departmental head not only include leadership qualities, effective communication, emotion regulation, self-control, and professional excellence but also excellent academic excellence and career. If a person is able to talk in a skillfully gentle way, by having control on his/her own emotions and able to understand the emotions of others by showing empathy, can prove him/herself as a good leader. The confidence of the head increases itself with the excellence in the field and grip over the subject, with adherence to ethical standards, professional protocols and exemplary performance (Hourani et al., [2021](#)).

Academic departmental heads are not only responsible for administration of their respective department, but they are also involved in coordinating various academic activities, including teaching, research, and social services. For creating a conducive and encouraging workplace culture, they have a responsibility to look after the matters and issues of their employees (Usman, [2016](#)). In order to perform these duties skillfully, academic department heads must have all those qualities and traits, which must be present in a successful leader.

The appropriate use of language need to be practiced. Moreover, words, which hurt others' feeling, need to be avoided at workplace. Active listening, clear and concise messages, by using seven Cs of effective communication add on the positive workplace culture and increases the citizenship behavior among the employees. Research also shows a positive correlation between all these elements of good communication (Choi et al., [2022](#); Hargie et al., [2017](#)).

Academic head also plays an important role in budding up liaison between the academia and industry. The head also considers the importance of all the stakeholders, faculty, students, administrators, and external collaborators such as industry and government agencies, and try to take

them on one platform through communication competence (Chygryn et al., [2020](#); Cummings-Sauls et al., [2018](#); Yildirim et al., [2022](#)).

Likewise, effective communication, self-control is another trait required by the head of department. The person who can communicate effectively, but unable to have control over the emotion, cannot be considered as a successful head or leader. It means the person must be able to manage one's own emotions as well as able to understand others emotions, thoughts, and actions in different situations and conditions, especially in stressful situations, conflict resolution, and decision making (Kleptsova et al., [2018](#)). Self-control effects psychological well-being and health of the employees, and academic performance of the students (Li et al., [2021](#)). This professional behavior shows integrity, trust and confidence of the head (Sosik et al., [2019](#)).

Professional excellence allows the person to prove him/herself academically at different forums. Professional excellence is acquired through demonstrating competence in one's academic field, cultivating a culture of research and innovation, and providing competent leadership consistent with departmental and institutional goals, while facilitating other employees for their skill enhancement, job performance, productivity, and job satisfaction (Aruldoss et al., [2021](#); Semerikov et al., [2020](#)). This is completely based on their trust on the leadership (Sosik et al., [2019](#)). Therefore, it can be said that if a person wants to be a successful academic head, he/she should be professionally excellent with complete self-control, and an effective communication with competence. If all these qualities are within any person, it means that he/she can perform very well as an academic head (Halfmann & Rieger, [2019](#); Imperial et al., [2021](#); Johansson et al., [2014](#)).

The communication competence theory also focuses and pays attention on the proper use of language, selection of words and non-verbal gestures while talking with others. Communication is a skill and it can be improved by active listening, interpreting nonverbal cues positively, and communicate and convey ideas clearly and coherently. Within academic contexts, possessing effective communication skills is paramount for establishing and sustaining relationships with faculty members, students, staff, and external stakeholders. Inadequate communication skills can result in misunderstandings, diminished morale, and conflicts, all of which can detrimentally impact the productivity and reputation of the academic

department. If followed properly, communication can take the person to the heights of leadership (Kang et al., [2022](#); Sung & Kim, [2021](#)).

Self-control theory suggests that individuals who possess self-control are better equipped to manage their emotions, impulses, and desires which can lead to better decision-making and goal attainment (Baumeister et al., [2007](#); Osgood & Muraven, [2016](#)). It enables individuals to regulate their behavior, thoughts, and emotions in stressful or challenging situations. In academic environments, departmental heads must remain composed and level-headed when dealing with complex issues, conflicts, and crises. Lack of self-control can result in impulsive decisions, emotional outbursts, and interpersonal conflicts which can damage professional relationships and the department's reputation (Jooste, [2020](#); Li et al., [2021](#)). Self-control is a key for adjustment, better attachment, and healthy behavior in life of human beings. A person with the better self-control can adjust more brilliantly than those who do not have it. In emotional relationships too, self-control plays a vital role (Tangney et al., [2018](#)).

Social learning theory posits that individuals learn and acquire new behaviors by observing and imitating the behaviors of others (Bandura & Walters, [1977](#)). In academic environments, departmental heads serve as role models for faculty members, students, and staff and their behavior can positively influence others' attitudes and actions through effective communication. Conversely, departmental heads who display poor communication and self-control behaviors can negatively influence their team's behavior and performance (Tan, [2016](#)).

The Trait theory of leadership, as proposed by Thomas Carlyle in 1900, posits that individuals inherently possess specific personality traits that shape their conduct and decisions. Within academic settings, the personality traits of departmental heads can significantly impact their levels of communication competence, self-control, and professional excellence (Duckworth & Yeager, [2015](#); Turner, [2021](#); Warriier et al., [2021](#)).

Professional excellence, self-control, and communication competence stand as crucial pillars for the success of departmental heads within any organization (Sosik et al., [2019](#)). Academic heads hold a pivotal role in the advancement of any nation, serving as the cornerstone of educational institutions. Only a person with professional excellence can devise effective

educational policies, which can directly contribute to the future of the country.

Rationale

While communication competence has been investigated among diverse professions, including students, social workers, couples, lawyers, doctors, and engineers, less attention has been given to the teachers, who in future have to become academic head. To better understand the importance of these variables, this area needs to be investigated. Teachers are the ones who produce workforce of any country, therefore their competence is of immense importance for the future prosperity of Pakistan.

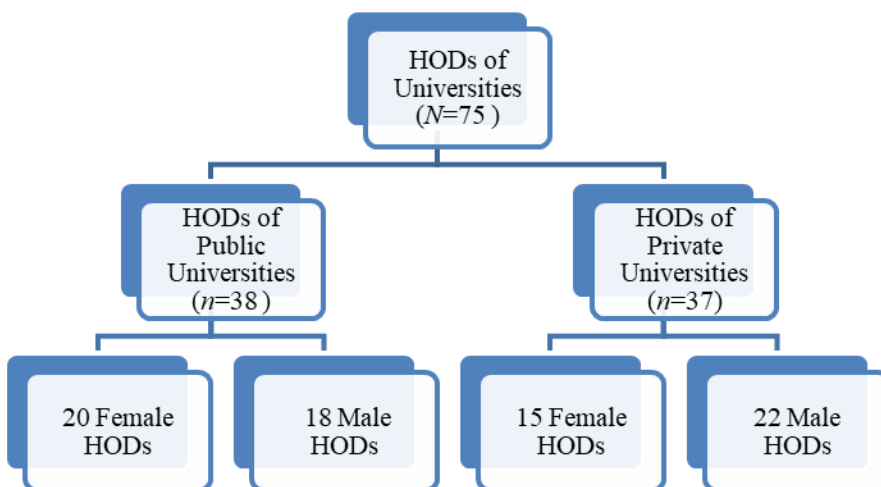
Furthermore, this study aims to contribute to the existing literature. This study also aims to plan some strategies for the teachers on the basis of the findings of this research.

Method

Correlational research design was used in the present study to assess the relationship between communication competence, self-control and professional excellence in academic departmental heads.

Sample

The Sample comprised of 75 HODs of public and private universities (40 males & 35 females). Data was collected by using purposive sampling technique.



Inclusion criteria for the participant was (a) currently working as head of department (b) both male and female participants were included.

Table 1
Demographics of the Sample (n=75)

<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>
Age			47.6(6.8)
Gender			
Men	40	46.7	
Women	35	53.3	
Education			38.0(21.8)
Marital status			
Single	2	2.7	
Married	72	96.0	
Widow	1	1.3	
Family System			
Nuclear	39	52.0	
Joint	36	48.0	
Monthly Income			61011.5(64439.2)
Years of Service			13.2(5.97)
Years of Headship			.65(.78)
No. of Publications			7.5(7.1)
University			
Private	38	50.7	
Government	37	49.3	

Assessment Measures

Demographics Information Questionnaire: This questionnaire was used to evaluate the demographic variables such as gender, grades, age, number of siblings, birth order, previous percentages, academic record, and family system (nuclear, joint) and so on.

Self-Perceived Communication Competence Scale (McCroskery & McCroskery, 1988): This measurement tool consists of 12 items that are used to measure communication competence. Higher SPCC scores indicate higher self-perceived communication competence with basic communication contexts like public, group, meeting, dyad, and receivers, for example strangers, acquaintance, or a friend. This tool has generated

strong alpha reliability (above .85) and owned strong face validity and notable predictive validity.

Desirability of Control Scale by Burger and Cooper (1979): This scale measures the desire to control personal scenarios and consists of 12 items. The scale was found to have a notable internal consistency of .80 and a test-retest reliability (.75) as well as the discriminant validity from the locus of control and social desirability measures.

Professional Excellence Scale: Professional excellence scale has 32 items. Six sub-scales measure different domains of professional excellence. Devoted to his work item 1-5-8-25-27, well-being items 21-31-32, relationships items 2-4-6, communication items 3-7-9-10-11-13-14-24, punctuality items 22-23-26-30, and leadership quality measures these items 15-16-17-18-19-20-28-29 (Tomar & Dhiman, 2013).

Procedure

A reference letter explaining the crux of the study was taken from the Institute of Applied Psychology, University of the Punjab, Lahore and presented to the authorities of the universities from where the sample was taken. After receiving permission from the authorities of the selected universities, appointments with the heads were booked to proceed with the questionnaire filling process. The questionnaires were administered on the sample of 75 heads of departments who qualified the inclusion criteria. The heads were reached out from various universities and colleges of Lahore to participate in the study. Each participant signed the consent form first. HODs were given step-by-step instructions. The questionnaires were administered in the presence of the researchers. It took a maximum of 15-20 minutes to fill out the complete questionnaire. After gathering the responses, the data were scored and analyzed quantitatively.

Results

Descriptive statistics were used and each scale's reliability analysis was found. Also, Cronbach's alpha for the scales was briefed. Correlation analysis and linear regression was conducted for the prediction. The findings thus, showed the significant results.

Table 2*Reliability Coefficients of the Measures used in the Current Study (N=75)*

Variables	k	α	Range	
			Potential	Actual
Communication Competence	12	.60	12-120	59-97
Self-control	20	.73	20-140	25-136
Professional Excellence	32	.60	32-128	32-120

Table 2 shows the reliability of the scales used. The communication competence scale has .6 value of reliability and desirability of control scale has .7 value which is considerably good. Similarly, the professional excellence scale shows the reliability value of .6. All the scales have acceptable and good reliability values.

Table 3*Pearson Product Correlations among Study Variables*

Variables	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1.Marital Status	.06	.07	-.03	-.07	-.18	-.11	.08*	.07	-.02	-.09*
2.Years of Headship		.01	-.03	.15	-.09	-.10	-.05	.18	-.08	.18
3.Meeting			-.07	-.09	.04	-.01	.05	-.15	-.16	-.03
4.Friend				-.09	.11	.04**	.12	.14	.08*	.18**
5.Self-control					.28*	.15	.02	.51**	.05	.45**
6.Devoted to Work						.20	.26*	.11	.38**	.24*
7.Relationship							.03	.07	.23	-.66**
8.Communication								.18	.22	.16
9.Professional Excellence									.14	.41**
10.Punctuality										.14
11.Leadership										

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Results of the Table 3 shows that marital status is negatively correlated with the communication between friends and leadership. Furthermore, the research revealed that communication competence is inversely related to various subscales of leadership professional excellence. Specifically, communication with the public, in meetings, and with strangers showed

negative correlations with leadership and well-being. Self-control is significantly positively correlated with the professional excellence.

Table 4

Regression Analysis Predicting Professional Excellence

Variables	β	Professional Excellence
		95%CI
Constant		
Public	-.140	(-.12,.03)
Meeting	-.183	(-.09,.01)
Group	.017	(-.07,.08)
Dyad	.260	(-.00,.11)
Desirability of Control	.401**	(.09,.32)
<i>F</i>	3.64*	
<i>R</i> ²	.21	

Note. $N = 75$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Above Table 4 of the regression analysis shows that the self-control is a strong predictor of the professional excellence. It reveals that the professional excellence can be predicted by the self-control of academic heads. To measure the differences in professional excellence, t-test was computed to report the significant results of the variables.

Discussion

Communication is the basic key to convey the message to anyone especially in social and professional life which cannot be lived without the effective communication skills. While we look around, it is found that people who are famous and successful in social life as well as are professionally acknowledged, are more likely considered as the role models than those who are not successful. It is entirely the matter of skillful communication. Therefore, the communication skill makes any person confident and competent in any task of life and above all their professional life becomes successful.

Another factor that is highly affective for the professional excellence is the self-control. Self-control is something that leads a person to a maximum of professional excellence. In academic heads, self-control plays a distinguished role as they are responsible for leading their staff and institutes. Every individual has his/her personal opinions, it is the duty of

the head to make them all agree to one point of view without giving room to anxiousness and dissatisfaction. Hence, the goal of academic heads is take necessary steps for the development and progress of their departments. This aim bring any head closer to the excellence and it is not possible without self-control (Lian et al., [2017](#)).

Communication has a no significant relationship with the professional excellence among the academic departmental heads. The results of this study revealed that some subscales of communication competence are negatively correlated with the professional excellence. Lan ([2020](#)) explored in an empirical study based on the communication competence of civil engineering graduates that for the career development, technical knowledge and communication skills are very important. It could be said that the results are not consistent with the past researches because there are culture differences. The scale that is used in this research is actually developed and frequently used in the West. However, in our country and cultural setting, communication with the friends and close ones have a lot of emotions and other factors involved in it. Therefore, in universities, academic heads do not focus on the communication as they are experienced enough that all other colleagues and friends acknowledge them without arguing (Ryan-Flood & Gill, [2010](#)). It is noteworthy that even individuals unfamiliar with these academic leaders in Pakistani universities seldom engage in discourse with them. The multifaceted nature of these contexts diminishes the emphasis on competence, as academic heads rely less on explicit communication skills. The results of the current study are adequate according to its culture and social setting and can be justified in various aspects.

As Solomonson and Retallick ([2018](#)) explored that managing school success, management plans communication and strategies are essential but not sufficient for the success. Perhaps most important are the personal qualities of the principal. It is observed in the Pakistani setting that communication becomes secondary when the high rank came in. It is true about the cases in our surroundings that some individuals are acknowledged just because they are at a higher rank.

Last but not the least, it could be revealed that communication competence is not important and effective in Pakistani setting. It is probable to have the significant positive association between self-control and professional excellence. The results are consistent with the hypothesis that

show a significantly favorable association with the professional excellence. Additionally, self-control also proved to be a predictor of dependent variable that is professional excellence. It means that the more one have self-control, the more likely he or she will achieve professional excellence. According to Hofmann et al. (2018), self-control enables a person to control his impulses that eventually results in professional excellence. The control over oneself helps the person in keeping its cool, staying calm and thinking wisely without getting aggressive over unfavorable or stressful situations. As, reacting impulsively imposes threat to the personal and professional reputation. Kinnunen (2016) found that self-control predicts the professional excellence. For all the new projects or strategies that plan for the progress of department cannot be succeeded until or unless all the colleagues come on the same point and work on it. For this aim, self-control is the most effective weapon of the heads that can take them a step forward in professional life.

Conclusion

In conclusion, our research underscores the pivotal roles of communication and self-control in driving professional excellence among academic departmental heads. While effective communication is widely recognized as essential for success, our findings reveal nuanced relationships between communication competence and professional outcomes, influenced by cultural and contextual factors. Conversely, self-control emerges as a significant predictor of professional excellence, enabling leaders to navigate challenges and foster departmental progress. Despite cultural differences, our study reiterates the importance of self-control in guiding academic leaders toward success, thereby providing valuable information for improving leadership effectiveness in educational settings. These ideas highlight the need for academic leaders in Pakistan to manage cultural differences while prioritizing self-control as a determining factor in professional success within their respective departments.

Limitations and Suggestions

A significant limitation of this study is the limited number of participants, principally given the range of high-ranking population. Suggestion on very top is prioritization of time management for data collection while increasing sample size to include broader geographical representation across the country. Additionally, it is recommended that

communication and interpersonal skills be used as much as possible in future data-collection efforts.

Implications

The identification of key components for effective leadership in academia through this study provides valuable information for the design of leadership development programs designed to help academic leaders improve their skill set, including communication competence, self-control, and professional excellence.

Additionally, this study helps identify potential areas for improvement among university department heads. Assessing communication competence, self-control, and professional excellence pinpoints areas where university leaders should improve their skills. The findings can guide to plan some training sessions to help academic heads to improve their skills and become more competent leaders.

Additionally, the results of this study will be beneficial for the future research in the area of academic leadership. This study will be a foundation or base for the understanding the required traits for the future leaders too. Academicians and future researchers can use these findings to conceptualize new academic theories and models of potential leadership, keeping in view all other important variables.

As the teaching and academic headship is an important facet of every society, globally, the implications of this research are extensive and can not be denied in every field. If properly implemented, the findings of this research can improve the success of educational institutions by enhancing the skill of their heads and making them able to produce best of their students for their society.

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