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Association between Soft Skills and Job Performance: A Cross-Sectional Study among Secondary School Heads in Kohat Division, Pakistan

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The study examined the association between soft skills and job performance among secondary-school-heads in Kohat Division, Pakistan. A sample of 117 out of 197 secondary-school-heads was used. A quantitative, descriptive, and correlative procedures were used for this investigation. To collect data from the research participants, two valid and reliable instruments were used. For measuring the participants' job performance, a standardized research tool "Job Performance Scale" was used while a self-developed structured questionnaire "Soft Skills Questionnaire" was used for measuring the soft skills of the participants. Personal visits were made for data collection. The statistical tools used in the study were mean, standard deviation, independent samples t-test, Pearson's product-moment correlation, and multiple linear regression. The findings explored that soft skills were found in both male and female heads. Also, their job performance was reported satisfactory. Comparatively, male heads were found more equipped with soft skills as compared to female heads. Similarly, in job performance, male heads were found better than female heads. Pearson's correlation analysis explored that there was a strong positive correlation ($r=0.898$, $p<0.01$) between soft skills and job performance. Regression analysis indicates that six subdimensions of soft skills were found significant predictors of job performance i.e., managing relations, positive attitude, decision-making skills, integrity, communication skills, and responsibility. The study suggests that the soft skills of secondary-school-heads may further be improved through training, seminars, workshops, and

conferences to enhance their job performance and subsequently, it will improve the institutional productivity and efficiency.

Key words: *Association; soft skills, job performance; secondary school heads, cross-sectional study*

INTRODUCTION

Effective leadership is perceived as highly domineering for the effective performance of the institutions by ensuring a conducive environment, providing sufficient assets, resources, and ensuring a good relations and students' performance (Kythreotis, Pashiaridis, & Kyriakides, 2010). A good leader can attain their goals professionally by providing a sense of road map to get both personal and shared goals while assigning and using the limited capitals and assets to ensure the fundamental needs of citizens. Leaders should be able to deal with all the unwanted circumstances with emotional stability and intelligently. It built a unique type of trust when the leaders are able to understand quickly to inspire their employees (Arinze, 2010). Variations in the social settings have improved the educational institutions into more vibrant and multifaceted institutions (Crow, 2006). In such an institution, while performing his responsibilities, a leader may not only possess judiciousness in decision making but also required to have soft skills for organizational management (Manullang, 2017). An extensive body of evidence perceives the significance of soft skills in anticipating enduring life products such as labor market products as well as social and wellbeing practices (Kautz et al, 2014).

In this progressively dynamic, multifaceted, and changing market competition, as skills have been proved as a requirement for organizational accomplishment and development, therefore, professionals must have the ability to deal with everyone in their inner life and others' attitudes in a particular setting. Individuals need soft skills to perform efficiently in the working place include the ability to deal with a person's time, to make plans, to identify priorities, the capability to think critically, to resolve conflicts and issues, to make good decisions, and to ensure a good working environment (Manullang, 2017). Research reveals that individuals having soft skills are increasingly employable and can progress in the workplace (Anderson, 2015). Therefore, soft skills and personal attributes are essential for an individual's success in the working place. It is not sufficient for the employees to have a high academic profile, but they need to work with different societies, communicate excellently, and be trustworthy and punctual (Gewertz, 2007).

In literature, soft skills have been described in different ways by a number of scholars and researchers (Anderson, 2015; Anggiani, 2017; Cinque, 2015; Kingsley, 2015). According to Anggiani (2017), skill refers to the personal traits that improve the interaction of individuals, and their job performance and soft skills are interpersonal and extensively applicable. Gibbons and Lange (2000) suggested the word 'soft skills' which is used synonym with core skills, personal skills, and basic proficiencies. Hence, soft skills are the non-intellectual capabilities

that are inborn in individuals and are essential for desirable social relationships in the working environment. Soft skills are hardly measurable skills closely related to an individual's attitude e.g. cooperation, communication, independence, leadership, and creativity (Balcar, 2014). Cimatti (2016) expressed that soft skills indicate all those capabilities which are not directly related to a specific task, but these are imperative in any position because these skills are mostly referred to the relationships with other individuals engaged with the organization. According to Laura et al (2015), soft skills indicate a wide-ranging collection of skills, capabilities, attitudes, behaviors, and personal attributes that empower individuals to successfully steer their environment, cooperate with others, perform excellently and accomplish the goals. These skills are extensively applicable and enhance other skills i.e., vocational, academic, and technical skills. Yassin et al (2008) referenced that generic skills are also called soft skills, common skills, key skills, employability skills, essential skills, competencies skills, basic skills, and transferable skills. The soft skills recognized as significant in the working environment are; communications, motivation, teamwork, enthusiasm, problem-solving, and trust (Ellis, Kisling, & Hackworth, 2014). Similarly, Stevens and Campion (1999) built up a scientific classification including five dimensions of soft skills i.e., communication, conflict resolution, problem-solving, goal setting and planning, and task coordination. Jhon (2008) described twenty-three personal soft skills indicator which are, flexibility, individual efficiency, managing, controlling, futuristic thinking, creativeness/invention, guidance, encouragement, goal alignment, decision-making, negotiation, constant learning, employee development/coaching, written statement, problem-solving, coordination, presenting, negotiation, empathy, conflict management, preparation/consolidating, relational, social skills, customer service, and self-management.

In this technologically developed scenario, the working environment has been modernized globally and therefore the requirement of soft skills has increased during the past 20 years (Balcar, 2014). Soft skills are increasingly becoming indispensable in the success of any profession. Employers are whining about the lack of required soft skills in the employees that hinder them to achieve excellence in employability skills (Sharvari & Kulkarni, 2019). However, a gap in soft skills has been pointed out by employers globally who reported that there is a lack of qualified candidates regarding soft skills in order to fill the available positions (Manpower Group, 2013). The acquisition of soft skills stimulates the selection of effective approaches, solutions, and innovations to enhance organizational productivity and prosperity (Massaro, Bardy, & Garlatti, 2016). In this highly competitive marketplace of the 21st century, having only technical skills is no longer adequate for employees (Lazarus, 2013) but there is a need for soft skills that have gained great importance (Seetha, 2014). In this way, the most important employees in any organization are those who possess the capability of having both technical as well as soft skills (Griffith & Hoppner, 2013). For the successful execution of careers and jobs, professional qualifications and technical skills are imperative for an employer and new employee but increasingly extra attention is focused on the acquisition of soft skills i.e., attributes that do not rely on acquired knowledge and are difficult to measure due to its

relationship with one's emotional intelligence and personality attributes. In the meantime, these attributes are very important as they encourage human relationships (Alabdulkareem et al., 2018). According to Kautz et al (2014), soft skills are extremely imperative for human capital development and employees' accomplishment. Soft skills empower the workforce to stimulate reforms, changes, and innovations in the organization (Massaro, Bardy, & Garlatti, 2016).

In this competitive environment, job performance has continuously remained an important issue in many organizations. The job performance of a leader indicates how well a leader accomplishes his job responsibilities in the working environment in order to achieve organizational goals and productivity (Campbell, 1990). Soft skills have a substantial influence on the accomplishment of job performance, and therefore soft skills are necessary for organizational success and wellbeing (Seetha, 2014). Several research studies have been carried out to examine the effects of soft skills on job performance in different fields i.e., education, medical, engineering, commerce, etc. Lippman et al. (2015) described five fundamental soft skills that stimulate employees' outcomes. They reported that soft skills are expected to increase the probabilities of individuals' success in various aspects such as self-control, social skills, communication, positive self-concept, and higher-order thinking skills. Anggiani (2017) examined the influence of skills on employees' performance and concluded that hard skills, as well as soft skills, have a significant influence on employees' performance. Similarly, Musembi et al. (2018) carried out a research study to determine the effects of employees' soft skills on project performance and they found that employees' soft skills have a positive effect on project performance. Manullang (2017) concluded that soft skills have a positive influence on the principal's leadership. Furthermore, he expressed that the principal's leadership will be developed through the enhancement of soft skills. Polnaya, Nirwanto, and Triatmanto (2018) found that there is a close relationship between soft skills and teachers' performance which clearly reflects that the performance of the teachers increases with the increasing of soft skills.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To assess and compare the soft skills and job performance of male and female secondary school-heads.

2. To examine the relationship between soft skills and job performance among secondary-school-heads.

3. To analyze the subdimensions of soft skills as predictors of job performance among secondary school-heads.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

H_o1. There is no significant difference between the soft skills of male and female secondary-school-heads.

H_o2. There is no significant difference between the job performance of male and female secondary-school-heads.

H_o3. There is no significant relationship between soft skills and job performance among secondary-school-heads.

H_o4. There is no significant effect of each subdimension of soft skills in predicting job performance among secondary-school-heads.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Participants

This cross-sectional study was carried out in Kohat Division located in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. According to the Annual Statistical Report of Government Schools published by Elementary & Secondary Education Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, there were total 197 secondary schools (male *n*=130; female *n*=67) in Kohat Division. In these schools, there were total 197 secondary-school-heads (male *n*=130; female *n*=67) performing their duties (EMIS, 2018). In each district, 20% of the total secondary-school-heads were reserved for pilot testing selected through stratified random sampling technique i.e., 16 secondary-school-heads from Kohat district (male *n*=10; female *n*=6), 07 secondary-school-heads from Hangu District (male *n*=5; female *n*=2), and 17 secondary-school-heads from Karak District (male *n*=11; female *n*=6). In order to select an appropriate sample size for this cross-sectional study, a stratified sampling procedure was adopted as the population was blended due to gender. Thus, a total 117 secondary-school-heads were selected in which males were 78 and females were 39 at the rate of 75% from each district (after excluding sample for pilot study) (see table 1).

Table 1. Study Population and Sample Size

Districts	Secondary-School-Heads					
	Population		Sample for Pilot Testing (@ 20%)		Sample for Study (@75%)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Kohat	49	29	10	06	29	17
Hangu	27	09	05	02	17	05
Karak	54	29	11	06	32	17
Total	**130**	**67**	**26**	**14**	**78**	**39**

Research Design and Measurements

The study was specifically envisioned to investigate the association between soft skills and job performance among the heads of secondary schools in Kohat Division, Pakistan. In this cross-sectional study, descriptive, and correlative research approaches were used. The survey research design was adopted to collect information from the participants as the subjects of the research study were widely scattered. Secondly, it is more advantageous, authentic, suitable, cost-effective, and time-saving. It includes getting information from one or more groups of individuals in terms of their opinions, attributes, mentalities, or past experiences through a series of questions and tabulation of their answers. The main goal is to assess the entire population by surveying its sample (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). The instruments for data collection are the procedures and tools used for measuring different variables in educational research (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2012). For this cross-sectional study, two self-reported questionnaires such as the Soft Skills Questionnaire (SSQ) and Job Performance Scale (JPS) were used for ascertaining the required information from the participants regarding soft skills and job performance. The instruments have been described in detail as under:

Soft Skills Questionnaire (SSQ)

To measure the soft skills of secondary-school-heads, the researchers developed a self-reported structured questionnaire "Soft Skills Questionnaire (SSQ)" in the light of research objectives after going through related scales (i.e., Emotional Intelligence Scale, LEAF Soft Skills Self-Evaluation) and literature. After going through the related body of literature, it was revealed that there are so many sub-dimensions of soft skills but in this cross-sectional investigation, only twelve sub-dimensions were selected which were the most relevant to the job position of the heads of secondary schools in Kohat Division. Therefore, SSQ has twelve sub-dimensions such as communication skills; decision-making skills; enthusiasm; integrity; positive attitude; problem-solving skills; flexibility; responsibility; teamwork; willingness to learn; managing relations; empathy, and self-awareness. There are total 48 items in SSQ and each sub-dimension is composed of four positive items designed on a five-point likert scale i.e., SA, A, UD, DA, SDA rated as 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively.

Job Performance Scale (JPS)

The job performance of secondary-school-heads was measured by using a self-reported valid and reliable scale i.e., "Job Performance Scale" developed by Carlos and Rodrigues (2015). It is used to measure individuals' job performance all over the world. It has two basic constructs including "Task Performance" and "Conceptual Performance". Task performance construct is additionally subdivided into three more sub-dimensions such as job knowledge, organizational skills, and efficiency. Likewise, the conceptual performance construct is further divided into four sub-dimensions i.e., cooperation, persistent effort, organizational conscientiousness, and

interpersonal and relational skills. Items on the JPS scale were designed on a seven-point Likert scale i.e., strongly disagree to strongly agree rated as 1 to 7 respectively. It has total 29 items of which 10 items are negative in nature. The negative items were scored reverse.

Pilot Testing of SSQ and JPS

The pilot testing was conducted to confirm the achievability of the planned main study, to find the possible problems with the planned study structure, to improve or refine the information collecting tools, and to give the investigators involved with the proposed respondents, the proposed location and the proposed approach (Burns & Grove, 2007). Without conducting pilot testing, the outcomes obtained through research instruments are not authentic. As the SSQ was a self-developed structured questionnaire and therefore, it was mandatory to validate it. Secondly, although JPS was a standardized scale but its validity was also confirmed for the current research environment, locality, and culture. Therefore, after obtaining informed consent from the heads of the secondary schools, pilot testing was conducted in 40 secondary schools. Both the scales such as SSQ and JPS were distributed among the heads and they were clarified with the purpose of the study and other related facts. Based on the findings, both the scales were found suitable and understandable.

Validity of SSQ and JPS

Measuring the soft skills of the secondary-school-heads, a self-reported and self-developed questionnaire "Soft Skills Questionnaire (SSQ)" was employed. SSQ was sent to four prominent experts of the relevant field for the confirmation of its validity. So, SSQ was formally checked by the experts and consequently, some inconsequential variations in the language of the items were made as per the direction of the experts. On the other hand, the Job Performance Scale (JPS) was found highly valid, authenticated, and standardized instrument. The scale was extensively used for the evaluation of job performance. It was essential to indorse validity of the scale with respect to sample and data collection locality. For the said purpose, the scale was shared with four other brilliant scholars of the related subject domain for validity confirmation. These scholars confirmed validity of JPS and recommended it to use in the current research.

Reliability of SSQ and JPS

The reliability is the repetition of the results while performing the equivalent and similar procedure under similar situations. In this cross-sectional study, the reliability was calculated through the test-retest reliability technique. For this purpose, instruments such as SSQ and JPS were distributed among forty secondary-school-heads and their response replies were documented. Likewise, fifteen days later on, the same instruments were distributed among the said secondary-school-heads again. Their responses were assessed and recorded for 2nd time.

After tabulating the information, Pearson's product-moment correlation was run on those responses of the heads recorded in pre-survey and post-survey (Liang et al., 2014).

Table 2 indicates the descriptive statistics as well as bivariate Pearson's correlation of Soft Skills Questionnaire (SSQ) and Job Performance Scale (JPS). In case of SSQ, a strong positive correlation (*r=0.969*) between pre-survey and post-survey scores was observed. Moreover, strong positive correlation was reported between all sub-dimensions of soft skills on both pre-survey and post-survey i.e., communication skills (r=0.959); decision-making skills (r=0.986); enthusiasm (r=0.987); integrity (r=0.988); positive attitude (r=0.987); problem-solving skills (r=0.986); flexibility (r=0.990); responsibility (r=0.987); teamwork (r=0.966); willingness to learn (r=0.949); managing relations (r=0.970); and empathy (r=0.976). It plainly shows that the SSQ has an excellent reliability. Similarly, in case of JPS, a strong positive correlation (*r=0.970*) was reported on pre-survey and post-survey scores. Moreover, a strong positive correlation was observed between all sub-dimensions of job performance on pre-survey and post-survey i.e., job knowledge (r=0.982); organizational skills (r=0.976); efficiency (r=0.989); persistent effort (r=0.964), cooperation (r=0.962); organizational conscientiousness (r=0.991); and interpersonal and relational skills (r=0.956). It clearly shows that the JPS is highly reliable instrument.

Table 2. Reliability Analysis of SSQ and JPS

Variables	*n*	Pre-Survey (Test)	Post-Survey (Retest)	Pearson's Correlation	Sig
		Mean±SD	Mean±SD		
Overall Soft Skills Questionnaire	40	3.78 ± 0.116	3.78 ± 0.122	0.969**	< 0.01
Communication Skills	40	3.71 ± 0.374	3.72 ± 0.368	0.959**	< 0.01
Decision-Making Skills	40	3.81 ± 0.406	3.81 ± 0.411	0.986**	< 0.01
Enthusiasm	40	3.78 ± 0.428	3.78 ± 0.415	0.987**	< 0.01
Integrity	40	3.96 ± 0.361	3.95 ± 0.363	0.988**	< 0.01
Positive Attitude	40	3.83 ± 0.497	3.81 ± 0.481	0.987**	< 0.01
Problem-Solving Skills	40	3.66 ± 0.472	3.68 ± 0.450	0.986**	< 0.01
Flexibility	40	3.68 ± 0.408	3.68 ± 0.408	0.990**	< 0.01
Responsibility	40	3.88 ± 0.357	3.88 ± 0.353	0.987**	< 0.01
Teamwork	40	3.74 ± 0.378	3.74 ± 0.373	0.966**	< 0.01
Willingness to Learn	40	3.86 ± 0.456	3.86 ± 0.449	0.949**	< 0.01
Managing Relations	40	3.62 ± 0.371	3.66 ± 0.370	0.970**	< 0.01
Empathy	40	3.83 ± 0.474	3.81 ± 0.472	0.976**	< 0.01
Overall Job Performance Scale	40	5.65 ± 0.164	5.66 ± 0.163	0.970**	< 0.01
Organizational Skills	40	5.63 ± 0.418	5.65 ± 0.427	0.976**	< 0.01
Job Knowledge	40	5.61 ± 0.474	5.60 ± 0.477	0.982**	< 0.01
Persistent Effort	40	5.61 ± 0.387	5.64 ± 0.384	0.964**	< 0.01
Efficiency	40	5.60 ± 0.642	5.59 ± 0.630	0.989**	< 0.01
Organizational Conscientiousness	40	5.80 ± 0.424	5.580 ± 0.422	0.991**	< 0.01
Cooperation	40	5.65 ± 0.505	5.65 ± 0.512	0.962**	< 0.01
Interpersonal & Relational Skills	40	5.69 ± 0.427	5.70 ± 0.402	0.956**	< 0.01

****Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)**

Reliability Strength: 0=No Reliability; <0.5=Unacceptable Reliability; ≥0.5<0.6=Poor Reliability; ≥0.6<0.7=Questionable Reliability; ≥0.7<0.8=Acceptable Reliability; ≥0.8<0.9 = Good Reliability; ≥0.9=Excellent Reliability; 1.0=Perfect Reliability

Data Collection and Analysis

Before the beginning of data collection, participants were explained the facts, implications, and consequences of this cross-sectional correlative study and thus obtained their informed consent. Then the process of the data collection was begun on December 15, 2018 and completed on July 10, 2019 successfully with 100% response rate. The researchers personally met the respondents to explain the purpose of the study. After explaining the purpose of the study, the researchers distributed the questionnaires among them with the remarks that their provided information will be kept in privacy and will be utilized only for research purposes. Thus, after the completion of the data collection process, the raw data scores were accurately and properly well-ordered and presented in tables. Different statistical tools i.e., mean, standard deviation,

Pearson's correlation, and multiple linear regression were used for the interpretation of the research results.

RESULTS

Descriptive Analysis of Soft Skills

Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics of the soft skills of male heads which shows that on the whole, the male heads possess the required soft skills (Mean=3.56, SD= 0.270). The maximum and minimum mean scores of overall soft skills among the male heads were found 4.15 and 3.04 respectively on the scale of 5. With respect to sub-dimensions of soft skills, the most rated sub-dimension was responsibility (mean=3.65, SD=0.410) followed by integrity (mean=3.61, SD= 0.406) and managing relations (mean=3.60, SD=0.391). The other sub-dimensions were rated as decision making skills (mean=3.59, SD=0.344), positive attitude (mean=3.59, SD=0.352), problem-solving skills (mean=3.57, SD=0.408), flexibility (mean=3.56, SD=0.527), teamwork (mean=3.54, SD=0.423), empathy (mean=3.54, SD=0.478), willing to learn (mean=3.51, SD=0.388), enthusiasm (mean=3.47, SD=0.446), and communication skills (mean=3.46, SD=0.440). It plainly portrays that the male heads of secondary schools possess the required soft skills.

In case of female heads, table 3 indicates that on the whole, the female heads possess required soft skills (mean=3.40, SD=0.330). The maximum and minimum mean scores of overall soft skills among the female heads were found 4.06 and 2.92 separately on the measure of 5. In case of sub-dimensions of soft skills, the utmost and highly rated sub-dimension was flexibility (mean=3.61, SD=0.479) followed by enthusiasm (mean=3.51, SD=0.387). The other sub-dimensions were rated as teamwork (mean=3.46, SD=0.446), responsibility (mean=3.42, SD=0.399), willing to learn (mean=3.42, SD=0.430), positive attitude (mean=3.39, SD=0.338), problem-solving skills (mean=3.37, SD=0.388), decision making skills (mean=3.36, SD=0.472), managing relations (mean=3.35, SD=0.388), empathy (mean=3.33, SD=0.386), integrity (mean=3.33, SD=0.386), and communication skills (mean=3.29, SD=0.443). It clearly shows that the female heads of secondary schools possess the required soft skills.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Soft Skills among Male Secondary-School-Heads

Variables	Male Heads			Female Heads		
	Min	Max	Mean ± SD	Min	Max	Mean ± SD
Overall Soft Skills	3.04	4.15	3.56 ± 0.270	2.92	4.06	3.40 ± 0.330
Communication Skills	2.50	4.50	3.46 ± 0.440	2.50	4.25	3.29 ± 0.443
Decision Making Skills	3.00	4.25	3.59 ± 0.344	2.50	4.25	3.36 ± 0.472
Enthusiasm	2.50	4.50	3.47 ± 0.446	2.75	4.25	3.51 ± 0.387
Integrity	2.75	4.50	3.61 ± 0.406	2.75	4.25	3.33 ± 0.386
Positive Attitude	3.00	4.50	3.59 ± 0.352	3.00	4.25	3.39 ± 0.338
Problem Solving Skills	2.75	4.50	3.57 ± 0.408	2.75	4.25	3.37 ± 0.388
Flexibility	2.75	4.50	3.56 ± 0.527	3.00	4.50	3.61 ± 0.479
Responsibility	3.00	4.50	3.65 ± 0.410	2.75	4.25	3.42 ± 0.399
Teamwork	2.75	4.50	3.54 ± 0.423	2.75	4.50	3.46 ± 0.446
Willing to Learn	2.75	4.50	3.51 ± 0.388	2.75	4.50	3.42 ± 0.430
Managing Relations	2.75	4.25	3.60 ± 0.391	2.50	4.25	3.35 ± 0.388
Empathy	2.50	4.50	3.54 ± 0.478	2.50	4.50	3.35 ± 0.515

Descriptive Analysis of Job Performance

Table 4 indicates that on the whole, the job performance of male heads of secondary schools was found satisfactory (mean=5.60, SD=0.133). The maximum and minimum mean scores of overall job performance among the male heads were measured as 5.89 and 5.19 respectively on the scale of 7. Statistical investigation of the sub-dimensions of job performance shows that the most rated sub-dimension was organizational conscientiousness (mean=5.67, SD=0.370) followed by interpersonal & relational skills (mean=5.65, SD=0.434), organizational skills (mean=5.62, SD=0.424), and persistent effort (mean=5.61, SD=0.441). The other sub-dimensions were rated as job knowledge (mean=5.59, SD=0.454), cooperation (mean=5.56, SD=0.458), and efficiency (mean=5.54, SD=0.629). Based on the statistical outcomes, it unambiguously reveals that the job performance of the male heads was satisfactory with respect to all the sub-dimensions.

In case of female heads, table 4 reveals that on the whole, the job performance of female heads of secondary schools was found satisfactory (mean=5.47, SD=0.202). The maximum and minimum mean scores of overall job performance among the female heads were found 5.78 and 5.10 separately on the measure of 7. In regard to the statistical investigation of the sub-dimensions of job performance, it was found that the most rated sub-dimension was cooperation (mean=5.77, SD=0.423) followed by organizational conscientiousness (mean=5.55, SD=0.520) and interpersonal & relational skills (mean=5.52, SD=0.488). The rest of the sub-dimensions were rated as persistent effort (mean=5.41, SD=0.515), job knowledge (mean=5.40, SD=0.512), organizational skills (mean=5.32, SD=0.563), and efficiency

(mean=5.30, SD=0.600). It explicitly indicates that the job performance of the female heads was also satisfactory.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Job Performance of Male and Female Secondary-School-Heads

Variables	Male Heads			Female Heads		
	Min	Max	Mean ± SD	Min	Max	Mean ± SD
Overall Job Performance	5.19	5.89	5.60 ± 0.133	5.10	5.78	5.47 ± 0.202
Job Knowledge	4.75	6.25	5.59 ± 0.454	4.25	6.25	5.40 ±0.512
Organizational Skills	4.80	6.40	5.62 ± 0.424	4.40	6.20	5.32 ± 0.563
Efficiency	4.33	6.33	5.54 ± 0.629	4.33	6.33	5.30 ± 0.600
Persistent Effort	4.80	6.20	5.61 ± 0.441	4.60	6.20	5.41 ± 0.515
Cooperation	4.80	6.20	5.56 ± 0.458	4.80	6.60	5.77 ± 0.423
Organizational Skills	4.80	6.20	5.67 ± 0.370	4.80	6.40	5.55 ± 0.520
Interpersonal & Relational Skills	4.75	6.25	5.65 ± 0.434	4.75	6.25	5.52 ± 0.488

Inferential Statistics and Hypotheses Testing

Independent Samples t-Test Analysis

Hypothesis 1.

There is no significant difference between the soft skills of male and female secondary-school-heads.

As presented in table 5, a significant difference ($p<0.05$) was reported between the overall soft skills of male (mean= 3.56, SD=0.270) and female (mean=3.40, SD=0.330) secondary-school-heads because the calculated t-value (2.802) was found greater than the table t-value (1.9808) at 0.05. It plainly shows that male heads possess more soft skills as compared to female heads on the whole. While comparing the sub-dimensions of soft skills between male and female heads, the calculated t-values for six domains were reported high as compared to tabulated t-value (t=1.9808) at 0.05 i.e., decision-making skills (t=3.000), integrity (t=3.574); positive attitude (t=2.935); problem-solving skills (t=2.540); responsibility (t=2.886); and managing relations (t=3.269). From the comparison of the calculated and tabulated values, it is obvious that there is a substantial variation between these sub-dimensions of soft skills of male and female heads. As a whole, male participants of the study have more soft skills than female participants. No significant difference between six dimensions of soft skills was found i.e., communication skills (t=1.966); enthusiasm (t=0.477); flexibility (t=0.498); teamwork (t=0.947); willing to learn (t=1.141); and empathy (t=1.975) as in all these cases, the calculated value of ‘’t’’ was less than tabulated value of “t” (1.9808) at level of 0.05. From the above-mentioned calculated and tabulated values, it is obvious that both male and female heads have

the same capability in these six dimensions of soft skills. Therefore, the proposed hypothesis was accepted partially.

Table 5. Independent Samples t-test of Soft Skills of Male and Female Secondary-School-Heads

Subdimensions of Soft Skills	Male Heads	Female Heads	SE_d	t-value	p-value
	Mean ± SD	Mean ± SD			
Overall Soft Skills	3.56 ± 0.270	3.40 ± 0.330	0.06	2.802*	0.006
Communication Skills	3.46 ± 0.440	3.29 ± 0.443	0.09	1.966	0.052
Decision Making Skills	3.59 ± 0.344	3.36 ± 0.472	0.08	3.000*	0.003
Enthusiasm	3.47 ± 0.446	3.51 ± 0.387	0.08	0.477	0.634
Integrity	3.61 ± 0.406	3.33 ± 0.386	0.08	3.574*	0.001
Positive Attitude	3.59 ± 0.352	3.39 ± 0.338	0.07	2.935*	0.004
Problem Solving Skills	3.57 ± 0.408	3.37 ± 0.388	0.08	2.540*	0.012
Flexibility	3.56 ± 0.527	3.61 ± 0.479	0.10	0.498	0.619
Responsibility	3.65 ± 0.410	3.42 ± 0.399	0.08	2.886*	0.005
Teamwork	3.54 ± 0.423	3.46 ± 0.446	0.08	0.947	0.346
Willing to Learn	3.51 ± 0.388	3.42 ± 0.430	0.08	1.141	0.256
Managing Relations	3.60 ± 0.391	3.35 ± 0.388	0.08	3.269*	0.001
Empathy	3.54 ± 0.478	3.35 ± 0.515	0.10	1.975	0.051

*** Significant; df = 115; table value of *t* at 0.05 =1.9808**

Hypothesis 2.

There is no significant difference between the job performance of male and female secondary-school-heads.

As shown in table 6, a notable difference ($p<0.05$) was reported between the total job performance of male (mean=5.60, SD=0.133) and female (mean=5.47, SD=0.202) participants because the calculated t-value (4.165) was reported higher than the tabulated t-value (1.9808) at the level of 0.05. It plainly shows that the job performance of male participants was better than that of female participants. To check association among sub-dimensions of job performance between male and female participants, the calculated t-values for four sub-dimensions were greater than the tabulated t-value (t=1.9808) at 0.05 i.e., job knowledge (t=2.044); organizational skills (t=3.224); persistent effort (t=2.185); and cooperation (t=2.397). The statistical outcomes indicate that the job performance of male heads in three dimensions i.e., job knowledge; organizational skills; and persistent effort was better than female heads while the job performance of female heads was better than male heads with respect to cooperation. Conversely, there is no substantial difference among the three sub-dimensions of soft skills and job performance i.e., efficiency (t=1.975); organizational conscientiousness (t=1.438); and interpersonal & relational skills (t=1.465) because the

calculated t-values were found less than the table t-value (1.9808) at 0.05 in these three cases. Therefore, the null hypothesis was partially accepted.

Table 6. Independent Samples t-test of Job Performance of Male and Female Secondary-School-Heads

Subdimensions of Job Performance	Male Heads Mean ± SD	Female Heads Mean ± SD	SE_d	t-value	p-value
Overall Job Performance	5.60 ± 0.133	5.47 ± 0.202	0.03	4.165*	0.000
Job Knowledge	5.59 ± 0.454	5.40 ±0.512	0.09	2.044*	0.043
Organizational Skills	5.62 ± 0.424	5.32 ± 0.563	0.09	3.224*	0.002
Efficiency	5.54 ± 0.629	5.30 ± 0.600	0.12	1.975	0.051
Persistent Effort	5.61 ± 0.441	5.41 ± 0.515	0.09	2.185*	0.031
Cooperation	5.56 ± 0.458	5.77 ± 0.423	0.09	2.397*	0.018
Organizational Consciousness	5.67 ± 0.370	5.55 ± 0.520	0.08	1.438	0.153
Interpersonal & Relational Skills	5.65 ± 0.434	5.52 ± 0.488	0.09	1.465	0.146

*** Significant; df = 115; table value of *t* at 0.05 =1.9808**

Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Analysis

Hypothesis 3.

There is no significant relationship between soft skills and job performance among secondary-school-heads.

Table 7 indicates the Pearson's product-moment correlation analysis and the results revealed that there is a strong positive relationship ($r=0.898$, $p<0.01$) between soft skills and job performance. Regarding the relationship between the sub-dimensions of soft skills and overall job performance, table 7 reports a strong positive correlation between five sub-dimensions of soft skills and job performance i.e., decision-making skills (r=0.777), integrity (r=0.841), positive attitude (r=0.824), willing to learn (r=0.748), and managing relations (r = 0.794). In addition, a moderate positive correlation was found among six subscales of soft skills and job performance i.e., communication skills (r=0.625), problem-solving skills (r=0.362), flexibility (r=0.483), responsibility (r=0.599), teamwork (r=0.635), and empathy (r=0.623) whereas only there is a weak relationship between enthusiasm (r=0.296) and job performance. Therefore, the proposed hypothesis was not verified. It reveals that better the soft skills of heads then better will be their job performance and so on.

Table 7. Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation between Soft Skills and Job Performance

Variables	CS	DMS	E	I	PA	PSS	F	R	TW	WL	MR	EMP	OSS	JP
CS	1.000													
DMS	0.526**	1.000												
E	0.228*	0.195*	1.000											
I	0.520**	0.764**	0.352**	1.000										
PA	0.561**	0.634**	0.229*	0.776**	1.000									
PSS	0.101	0.299**	0.034	0.306**	0.333**	1.000								
F	0.404**	0.386**	0.280**	0.526**	0.437**	0.136	1.000							
R	0.495**	0.480**	0.222*	0.515**	0.594**	0.124	0.260**	1.000						
TW	0.391**	0.600**	0.166	0.606**	0.642**	0.274**	0.355**	0.370**	1.000					
WL	0.531**	0.639**	0.311**	0.772**	0.699**	0.316**	0.491**	0.512**	0.628**	1.000				
MR	0.416**	0.654**	0.267**	0.758**	0.706**	0.382**	0.415**	0.387**	0.588**	0.691**	1.000			
EMP	0.560**	0.605**	0.306**	0.637**	0.556**	0.219*	0.420**	0.460**	0.477**	0.530**	0.491**	1.000		
OSS	0.686**	0.801**	0.430**	0.891**	0.841**	0.410**	0.623**	0.639**	0.719**	0.840**	0.794**	0.754**	1.000	
JP	0.625**	0.777**	0.296**	0.841**	0.824**	0.362**	0.483**	0.599**	0.635**	0.748**	0.794**	0.623**	0.898**	1.000

**. Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Correlation Strength: r≥0.70=Strong; 0.30≤r≤0.69=Moderate; 0.01 ≤r≤ 0.29=Weak

Keys: CS=Communication Skills; DMS=Decision Making Skills; E=Enthusiasm; I= Integrity; PA=Positive Attitude; PSS=Problem Solving Skills; F=Flexibility; R=Responsibility; TW=Teamwork; WL= Willing to Learn; MR= Managing Relations; EMP= Empathy; OSS= Overall Soft Skills; JP= Job Performance

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Hypothesis 4.

There is no significant effect of each sub-dimension of soft skills in predicting job performance among secondary-school-heads.

Table 8 denotes the value of ANOVA calculated as 52.735 means it is statistically significant at the level of 0.05. It clearly indicates that the regression model is statistically significant. Moreover, the table depicts that the value of R square is 0.859 which demonstrates that 86% of the variance in job performance is significantly represented by the independent variables in the model such as communication skills; decision-making skills; enthusiasm; integrity; positive attitude; problem-solving skills; flexibility; responsibility; teamwork; willing to learn; managing relations; and empathy. The multiple linear regression analysis shows that among the sub-dimensions of soft skills, only six sub-dimensions can play the role of predictors and they have a positive influence on job performance. Among these predictors, managing relations (*Beta=0.246*) was found to be the strongest predictor followed by positive attitude (*Beta=0.213),* decision-making skills (*Beta=0.186*), Integrity *(Beta*=0.173*)*, communication skills (*Beta=0.135*), and responsibility (*Beta=0.107*) in defining job performance positively. In contrast, enthusiasm (*Beta=0.017*), problem solving skills (*Beta=0.051*), flexibility (*Beta=0.022*), teamwork (*Beta=0.015*), willing to learn (*Beta=0.009*), and empathy

(Beta=−0.002) have no significant positive influence on job performance. Thus, the proposed hypothesis was partially accepted. It plainly shows that managing relations, positive attitude, decision-making skills, Integrity, communication skills, and responsibility predict job performance positively among heads of secondary schools. With the increasing level of these sub-dimensions, the job performance of the heads will be positively affected.

Table 8. Multiple Linear Regression to Analyze the Contribution of Each Sub-dimension of Soft Skills in Predicting Job Performance Among Secondary-School-Heads

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	*t*	*Sig.*	R^2	*F*	*Sig.*	*Durbin-Watson*
	B	*SE*	*β*						
(Constant)	3.818	0.089		42.684	0.000*	0.859	52.735	0.000	2.019
CS	0.052	0.020	0.135	2.655	0.009*				
DMS	0.079	0.027	0.186	2.933	0.004*				
E	0.007	0.016	0.017	0.424	0.672				
I	0.071	0.035	0.173	2.033	0.045*				
PA	0.102	0.034	0.213	2.986	0.004*				
PSS	0.021	0.017	0.051	1.254	0.213				
F	0.007	0.015	0.022	0.481	0.632				
R	0.044	0.020	0.107	2.183	0.031*				
TW	0.006	0.021	0.015	0.279	0.781				
WL	0.004	0.028	0.009	0.136	0.892				
MR	0.104	0.027	0.246	3.910	0.000*				
EMP	-0.001	0.018	−0.002	−0.035	0.972				

* Significant Predictors

Dependent Variable: Job Performance

Independent Variables: CS= Communication Skills; DMS=Decision Making Skills; E=Enthusiasm; I= Integrity; PA=Positive Attitude; PSS= Problem Solving Skills; F= Flexibility; R= Responsibility; TW=Teamwork; WL= Willing to Learn; MR= Managing Relations; EMP= Empathy

DISCUSSION

The current cross-sectional research was carried out to assess the association between soft skills and job performance among the heads of secondary schools in Kohat Division, Pakistan. The findings revealed that both male and female heads possess the required soft skills. They both were found to have the various sub-dimensions of soft skills i.e., positive attitude, flexibility, teamwork, willing to learn, enthusiasm, responsibility, integrity, skills for decision-making and problem-solving, empathy, communication skills, and managing relations. With the aim to check relationship between soft skills of male and female secondary-school-heads, the independent samples t-test results show that there is a substantial alteration between the soft skills of male and female heads which clearly indicates that male heads possess more soft skills than female heads. In case of sub-dimensions, a significant difference was reported between six sub-dimensions of soft skills including skills in decision-making, integrity, positive attitude, skills for problem-solving, responsibility, and managing relations. In all these cases, male

heads have more soft skills than female heads. Conversely, no substantial difference was found between the six dimensions of soft skills of male and female heads i.e., communication skills, enthusiasm, flexibility, teamwork, willing to learn, and empathy. It evidently indicates that both male and female heads have the same capability in these dimensions of soft skills. Thus, the proposed hypothesis was partially accepted.

To assess the job performance of heads, it came to light that job performance of all participants including male and female was found satisfactory as a whole as well as with respect to sub-dimensions i.e., organizational conscientiousness; interpersonal & relational skills; persistent effort; job knowledge; organizational skills; cooperation; and efficiency. From a comparative perspective, the independent samples t-test result shows a significant difference between the overall job performance of participants and the job performance of male participants was higher than their female counterparts. With respect to sub-dimensions of job performance, this cross-sectional study revealed that there was a significant difference between the four sub-dimensions of the job performance of male and female heads i.e., job knowledge; organizational skills; persistent effort; cooperation; and interpersonal & relational skills. The job performance of male heads in three dimensions i.e., job knowledge; organizational skills; and persistent effort better than female heads while the job performance of female heads was better than male heads with respect to cooperation. Therefore, the null hypothesis was partially accepted.

A relationship between soft skills and job performance has been investigated through a number of research studies (Anggiani, 2017; Homer, 2001; Kantrowitz, 2015; Manzoor et al., 2011; Polnaya, Nirwanto, & Triatmanto, 2018). With the aim to examine the link between soft skills and job performance, Pearson's product-moment correlation was put into practice, and the results revealed that there a strong significant positive relationship between soft skills and job performance which clearly indicates better the soft skills of heads then better will be their job performance and so on. Similarly, with the aim to explore the relationship among the sub-dimensions of soft skills and job performance, the findings uncovered that there was a strong positive correlation between five sub-dimensions of soft skills and job performance i.e., decision-making skills, integrity, positive attitude, willing to learn, and managing relations while there was a moderate positive correlation between six subscales of soft skills and job performance i.e., communication skills, problem-solving skills, flexibility, responsibility, teamwork, and empathy. Furthermore, there was a weak relationship between the cooperation dimension and job performance. The findings are consistent with the findings of Homer (2001) and Kantrowitz (2015) who investigated that if soft skills are attained and utilized by workforces then their work performance will be substantially increased. Similarly, Anggiani (2017) found that hard skills and soft skills have a substantial influence on employees' performance. The soft skill variable was found as the dominant variable for its influence on employees' performance. Polnaya, Nirwanto, and Triatmanto (2018) affirmed that soft skills have a positive relationship with individuals' job performance.

Khuong et al. (2016) found that communication skills directly influence employees' job performance. Similarly, Rahman and Taniya (2017) noted that communication skills affect employees' performance moderately. The findings of this cross-sectional study regarding teamwork are consistent with the findings of Manzoor et al. (2011) who concluded that teamwork has a significant positive effect on employees' performance. Teamwork was observed to be the most substantial variable having a strong relationship with the employees' performance. Likewise, Phina et al. (2018) found that teamwork has a significant positive influence on employees' performance which ensures higher productivity, competitive advantages, excellent organizational performance, and improved quality and quantity of products.

Assessing the contributing role of each sub-dimension of soft skills in predicting job performance, a multiple linear regression was employed and the results revealed that among the sub-dimensions of soft skills, six sub-dimensions were found substantial predictors and have a significant positive effect on job performance. Among these predictors, managing relations was found to be the strongest predictor followed by a positive attitude, decision-making skills, Integrity, communication skills, and responsibility in defining job performance positively. Conversely, enthusiasm, problem-solving skills, flexibility, teamwork, willing to learn, and empathy have no significant positive influence on job performance. Hence, it is evident that managing relations, positive attitude, decision-making skills, Integrity, communication skills, and responsibility predict job performance positively among heads of secondary schools. With the increasing level of these sub-dimensions, the job performance of the heads will be positively affected. The findings of the study are supported by the findings of Ibrahim, Boerhannoeddin, and Bakare (2017) who found that the attainment of soft skills outstandingly predicts employees' job performance. With respect to managing relations, Rahman and Taniya (2017) found that employees' relationship management elements such as human resources practices, leadership styles, and shared goals or values have a more significant influence on employee's performance. In case of decision-making skills, Yasodara, Jayarathna, and Weerakkody (2016) concluded that decision-making skills have a positive significant effect on job performance. Leonard, Scholl, and Kowalski (1999) claimed that decision-making is a basic function in organizational development and the excellence of the decisions made by managers affects their efficiency as managers, and the success of managers, thus, influences organizational achievement or failure and employees' performance. In case of communication skills, Jones et al. (2016) claimed that the workforce requires the capability to communicate efficiently and instantly. Communication skills have been proven significant in employees' performance and organizational productivity by several research studies in the past decade (Baker & Thompson, 2004; Gray, 2010). Ones and Viswesvaran (1998) found a substantial validity of integrity scores for managerial ratings of job performance. Bianca (n.d) claimed that employees having positive attitudes contribute to a productive workplace and positively influence workplace morale which causes excellent job performance.

CONCLUSIONS

Conclusively, both male and female secondary-school-heads possess the required soft skills i.e., positive attitude, flexibility, teamwork, willing to learn, enthusiasm, responsibility, integrity, decision-making skills, empathy, problem-solving skills, communication skills, and managing relations. Comparatively, male secondary-school-heads were found more equipped with soft skills as compared to female secondary-school-heads. Similarly, in case of job performance, male secondary-school-heads were found better than female secondary-school-heads.

As a result of correlation analysis, a strong positive relationship was found between soft skills and job performance. It plainly shows that if the soft skills of the heads are good then their job performance will be better. The study also exposed that six sub-dimensions of soft skills were found substantial predictors and have a substantial positive influence on job performance i.e., managing relations, positive attitude, decision-making skills, Integrity, communication skills, and responsibility. It explicitly indicates that these sub-dimensions predict job performance positively among secondary-school-heads. Therefore, it is suggested to further improve the different soft skills of secondary-school-heads through training, seminars, workshops, and conferences to enhance their job performance and subsequently, it will improve the institutional productivity and efficiency.

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