

- Vol. VIII, No. II (Spring 2023) ▪ p- ISSN: 2708-2091 ▪ e-ISSN: 2708-3586 ▪ L-ISSN: 2708-2091
- **Citation:** Noorani, Z., & Lashari, A. A. (2023). Narratives on the Digital Leadership Practices in Pakistan- Issues, Challenges, Opportunities, Needs and Constraints in the Changing Paradigm through the Lens of Marginalized Community Members. *Global Sociological Review*, VIII(II), 63-69. [https://doi.org/10.31703/gsr.2023\(VIII-II\).08](https://doi.org/10.31703/gsr.2023(VIII-II).08)

Narratives on the Digital Leadership Practices in Pakistan- Issues, Challenges, Opportunities, Needs and Constraints in the Changing Paradigm through the Lens of Marginalized Community Members



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Pages: 63 – 69

DOI: 10.31703/gsr.2023(VIII-II).08

URL: [http://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gsr.2023\(VIII-II\).08](http://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gsr.2023(VIII-II).08)

Abstract: *The research paper aims to identify the challenges, issues, needs, and constraints faced by digital leaders of marginalized community members. The study's overall strategy is based on a phenomenological case study research design. The methodology of this research paper is qualitative, and through criterion sampling, the data was collected from the school working for physically disabled children. The total sample size is fifteen, consisting of senior students and teachers. The semi-structured interviews were conducted with physically challenged students and teachers. It was derived that students need to be educated about digital literacy. The world is going towards digitalization, so students must know how to use gadgets, apps, etc. The teachers face challenges as they teach visually impaired and deaf children. The students concluded that they want inclusivity in society, providing them opportunities by providing various workplace and societal facilities. The teachers suggested that opportunities must be provided to students at the state level so that they can be considered valuable members of society.*

Key Words: Digital leadership, Challenges, Marginalized Community Members

Introduction

Digital leadership means using technology, the Internet, mobile apps, social media, etc. In a rapidly changing world, technology is increasing day by day. In the education sector, the use of technology is indulged very rapidly. Teachers add technology to their lessons in the teaching and learning process, and students quickly grasp the lessons and concepts. They enjoy lessons and take an interest in studies, and it's also reduced the teacher's workload. Teachers must have command and should know how to use technology effectively.

Advanced authority considers later changes like pervasive networks, open-source innovation, cell phones, and personalization. It addresses a sensational shift from how schools have been run and organized for the past century. What began as an individual

utilization of innovation has become fundamental to each authority aspect. In this manner, advanced authority can be characterized as setting up bearing, affecting others, starting good change through data access, and building connections to expect changes significant to school achievement later on. It requires a potent mix of outlooks, practices, and abilities that are utilized to change and improve school culture through the help of innovation (Sheninger, 2014).

The Social Change Model gives a system for creating pioneers who are positive social change specialists. Pioneers have the instruments to have an advanced effect by taking this model and applying Research on computerized proficiencies and advanced citizenship. The idea known as "advanced proficiency" is at the foundation of automated abilities." (Ng, 2012) depicted mechanical skill levels as having the option to "adjust to new and arising innovations rapidly and

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get effectively new semiotic language for correspondence as they emerge" (p. 1086). This proficiency incorporates a crossing point of specialized (online issues of interaction, applications), intellectual (basically thinking), and socially-passionate (netiquette, wellbeing) aspects in computerized education (Ahluqist, 2014).

Digital Leadership in instruction indicates the mix of advances, devices, and instruments like the Internet of Things (IoT), e-stages (online classes), web-based media, Artificial Intelligence, Big Data, and Machine Learning. Advanced education is, without question, a kind of association that can be advanced by digitalization with the mix of innovations and the change of conventional working environments into computerized work environments (Antonopoulou et al., 2020).

Digital leadership can be valuable for instructive settings. It is an essential boundary that must be advanced among instructive pioneers in advanced education (Antonopoulou et al., 2019) and specifically among heads of college divisions (Antonopoulou et al., 2020).

Pakistan is likewise attempting to build the degree of schooling. In this Covid-19 pandemic, Pakistan has embraced a web-based instruction model. At the same time, online education was not regular in Pakistan before Covid19. In Pakistan, HEC (2020) permitted instructive establishments to keep educating and learning through various distance learning draws near (Akram, Anjum, & Batool, 2020).

Research Objectives

- To identify the Issues, Challenges, Opportunities, Needs, and Constraints in the changing Paradigm faced by the digital leaders teaching or associated with marginalized community members in Pakistan.
- To highlight the Issues, Challenges, Opportunities, Needs, and Constraints in the changing Paradigm faced by the digital leaders teaching or associated with marginalized community members in Pakistan.

Research Question

- What are the difficulties, Issues, Challenges, Opportunities, Needs, and Constraints in the Changing Paradigm faced by the digital

leaders teaching or associated with marginalized community members in Pakistan?

Literature Review

Using technology to solve problems and extend human capabilities is the application of knowledge, tools, and skills. Technology plays a critical role in business leadership and governance. In recent years, technology has revolutionized both the way organizations operate and their employees' interactions with them. (Zhang, 2016) Technology can help leaders make informed decisions, improve communication, and increase productivity (Bukhari, 2023).

Additionally, there are elements that contribute to digital competency among leaders that demonstrate the relationship between digital leadership and educational supervision. Alexander [8] asserts that educators must become learning facilitators in order to perform effectively in light of the increase in digital learning currently occurring in schools. (Aldawood et al., 2019).

In education, digital leadership is characterized by the integration of technologies, tools and instruments, including the Internet of Things (IoT), e-platforms (webinars), social media, artificial intelligence, big data, and machine learning. There is no doubt that higher education is a type of organization that will benefit from digitalization, not only through the integration of new technologies but also by transforming traditional workplaces into digital ones. (Antonopoulou et al., 2020).

Research demonstrates that digital leadership enhances and stimulates digital teaching and learning. Principals' attitudes toward technology impact teachers' ability to integrate technology into their teaching (Zhong, 2017).

Because of the radical changes it seeks to bring about in the field of education, digital leadership is an incredibly bold form of leadership. In addition to inspiring educational change, digital leadership seeks to engage learners, teachers and all other stakeholders. Leadership practices in the digital age are closely aligned with those of transformational and transactional leadership styles that emphasize emotional intelligence (Aldawood et al., 2019).

Leaders in the educational sector, including teachers and principals, have been acknowledged to have a major impact on the performance and

effectiveness of schools as well as students' outcomes. (Arham et al., [2022](#)).

Research Design

This Research is fundamental to identifying the views and perceptions of the digital leaders who are teaching students who are physically disabled. The phenomenological case study research design approach is employed. Qualitative Research mainly focuses on the experiences of individuals about a particular phenomenon. In the interviews, the teachers and students of one institution's marginalized community members shared their experiences.

Methodology

This study is qualitative Research, based on the idea of Vallance (1980) that qualitative Research is the most appropriate tool for studying hidden curricula. The rationale for adopting the qualitative research method is that the qualitative data collection and analysis will refine, extend and explain the general picture (Creswell, [2012](#)). Based on the idea of Creswell ([2007](#)), the researcher has selected a phenomenological approach for the study; the phenomenological approach seeks a description of the universal essence of experiences in education (p. 58). According to Creswell ([2007](#)), Phenomenologists describe what all individuals have in common when they perceive the occurrence" (p. 58). Merriam (2009) said that phenomenological study "is to get to the essence or fundamental underlying structure of the meaning of an experience" in a similar manner (p. 25). A case study provides a holistic description of the problem under study (Merriam, 2009), and this descriptive nature of a case study makes a case more illustrative by describing the complexities of the situation in a variety of ways; by presenting varied viewpoints and from a wide range of sources (Merriam, 2009).

A phenomenological research study gives a profound comprehension of a peculiarity experienced by a few people. Realizing a few ordinary encounters can be essential for gatherings like advisors, educators, well-being faculty, and policymakers. Phenomenology can include a smoothed-out type of information assortment by including single or numerous meetings with members (Creswell, [2007](#)).

Population

The target population of interest of the current study is the digital leaders teaching the students of

marginalized community members and senior students from the same community.

Sampling

The sampling consists of fifteen participants (nine teachers and six students) from the Ida Rieu welfare association for the blind and deaf. The criterion sampling technique was employed for this study because the data were collected from digital leaders and students of marginalized community members.

Data Collection Strategies

The data was collected through semi-structured interviews. Interviews were audio-recorded, and after taking interviews from all fifteen participants, interviews were transcripts for analyzing the data.

Research Instruments

Semi-structured interview questions were designed to collect data from teachers and senior students of one institution for blind and deaf students.

Data Analysis

As per the research topic, the sampling I chose for the research project was the school of physically disabled children named Ida Rieu Welfare Association. I met a member of the board of studies who gave me details about the institution and shared the required information for research purposes. She shared knowledge and documents about the institution's history, objectives, and work for blind and deaf children.

For over a hundred years, Ida Rieu Welfare Association (IRWA) has worked for the Social and economic empowerment of Deaf & Blind Persons through education, health, vocational training, outreach, and advocacy initiatives. IRWA, established in 1922, is Pakistan's premier organization for the education & training of visually impaired & deaf individuals. Since its inception, IRWA has evolved as a forward-looking right-based NPO, focused on attaining targets set by the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals, priorities set by the Government, adherence to relevant compliances, and ensuring transparency. IRWA is registered under The Voluntary Social Welfare Agencies Ordinance 1961 and is an approved Non-profit Organization (NPO) under the Income Tax Ordinance 2001. IRWA's education system focuses on supporting students to

become literate, independent, and productive citizens capable of supporting themselves and contributing to their communities. IRWA currently has around 700 students enrolled from ECE to Master's level (The graduate and Master's program is registered with the University of Karachi). The institution provides free education, books, uniforms, healthcare, vocational training, orientation & mobility training, transport, and other services, including but not limited to occupational/physical therapy, boarding & lodging facilities (if required). All the activities mentioned earlier are funded through the support of contributors and corporate donors.

The required sampling for the study was 25 participants. The institution allowed me to conduct interviews with 15 participants, of which five were senior students of school and college and ten teachers of visually impaired and deaf students.

Interviews from Students

The interviews were conducted with senior students of the institution. They shared their experiences, feelings, hopes, difficulties, and achievements and gave suggestions for the betterment of physically disabled children in Pakistan. The students were intellectual, had skills, and we were very confident and optimistic about life. They are not taking disability as an unfortunate, but they are satisfied and struggle very much to succeed. They were very much positive towards their lives and took their disability as an opportunity and did not take it as a weakness but as a strength.

The students were taking an online course from LUMS. They all knew how to operate computers and laptops. I was amazed when I saw these children and took an interview. In school and college, they study various subjects. The curriculum is aligned with the national curriculum, focusing on nine expanded core curriculum components, referred to as "specific disability skills." The institution also provides sports, music, and mobility training to blind and deaf children.

The institution provides free education per HEC policy for disabilities 2021 clause 4.3 (a), which states that all needy students will be studied free and waived.

The first interview the researcher took was with a student who is the topper of the institution. He is very brilliant and optimistic about life. He shared his experiences and challenges. He said that they used JAWS and a screen reader

One visually impaired senior student said, "This is a screen reader. Suppose your icon is on my computer, so it will read you through this; we use the computer and on mobile. We have software called Talk bytes, also a screen reader like JAWS".

The students were very confident and optimistic. They take their disability not in an unfortunate way but as a strength, and they are doing well in their studies. When I visited the institution, the visually impaired students were trying to sign in for taking online sessions with LUMS students.

The students who gave interviews were brilliant examples for the other physically disabled student. They believe in themselves and think very positively about life. They also asked how they study and which software they use on laptops and mobiles for study. They said that digital literacy is essential and needs time. The students and teachers must be aware and can teach in their teaching.

They further expressed their feelings and said that society should promote inclusivity. We should not treat them as excluded members of society but as a part of society. He emphasized, "I would say that we should convert our society towards inclusivity. You know, if blind people go to a restaurant, they cannot be able to read the menu here; they need to be sighted if we include inclusivity, and if we have a braille menu so they can order if we go to an ATM, we should have a braille number mentioned in ATM because then we able to do our work so easily as well".

One female student responded about inclusivity, "We are comfortable here. We want inclusivity. We face a barrier in our society. Society accepts this that we can learn. We need opportunities to do everything".

The senior students who are learning, as some teachers, also know about digitalization. They said they have many opportunities as their institution trains them in digital learning. They used to take online sessions, and for the visually impaired, various software is available for learning.

Interviews from Teachers

The interviews were taken with ten teachers, one a physical trainer and two being blind teachers. The teachers teach different subjects and have vast experience teaching visually impaired and deaf children. Few are served institutions for very long, and

one who is also blind is an alumnus of the same school. The teachers consider them blessed people with this opportunity to teach physically disabled children. One of the teachers said that this is how teachers teach children. Suppose teachers face challenges and difficulty teaching, so it lacks teachers' competency and knowledge, not the students. She commented, "To be honest, digitalization and advancement are created for ease; students are bright and intelligent. Until now, I have not seen any difficulty teaching them because they enjoyed it.

The physical trainer asked that the students win the black belt and participate in cricket, karate, football, etc. The teacher himself is a founder of the blind cricket team in Pakistan.

The teachers shared their experiences and teaching styles. They said that the visually impaired students used braille with dots for writing, and the deaf used sign language. One of the teachers expressed their feelings and said, "We have not faced problems, but society's image regarding special children issues, whatever positive or negative we as teachers faced the problem. People think those blind and deaf children cannot do anything; we do not show sympathy for them and do not expect so much from them. The syllabus is designed as per their needs and requirement. They are doing work in many fields, and they do graphics designing in our school students of class ninth design flyers, graphics, etc. They have artistic skill also".

The Ida Rieu Panjwani section in charge of Early Child Education shared her experience and asked that "I, as a Panjwani section in charge ECE class KG 2. Our visually impaired students study braille; we teach them reading and writing on braille. We focused on braille based on early childhood education so they can easily read and write. We try to focus based on braille". She further said that as a teacher, she faces challenges and difficulty training the students at a basic level at a very young age. Still, by making an effort, the children finally learn, and she feels pleased and feels that it is a very achievement for her.

One of the senior teachers of Ida Rieu has been serving the institution since 2006 and teaches grade 9 to B.A. students. She said, "Provide technology to them they participate in singing, debate, attend the program, dramas win prizes. Government should facilitate them, provide facilities as they provided to normal children and provide them job opportunities".

The alumni of Ida Rieu and working currently as a teacher, expressed his feeling regarding digital learning "Yes, this is difficult for students because this is new for them and the conditions which we have an example, electricity problems, internet issues, financial problems also, the financial condition of parents is not stable to support children to buy smartphones."

The teachers are very dedicated and hopeful that these children have many capabilities. These are not special children; they have some deficiencies naturally but should not be treated as excluded members of society. Allah has given them abilities, and they are very intellectual. They have learning skills and use digital apps and laptops to study well. Initially, the students faced difficulty handling the gadgets but gradually learned.

Results/Findings

This study aims to know the challenges, constraints, and opportunities digital leaders face of marginalized community members.

The Ida Rieu welfare association has worked since 1922 to improve the condition and well-being of blind and deaf children. The institution provides free education with digital facilities and helps them self-grooming and learn. The teachers are well-trained and competent, and they want to see these children in a very high position in life.

The study reveals that the leaders of marginalized community members are struggling and have challenges in teaching them. They are physically disabled students. They need exceptional guidance and supervision. It is difficult for teachers to train them in the early stages of their learning. The teachers must have command of their skills to train children. For visually impaired children, braille and how to read and write on it and deaf teachers must know sign language. The teachers asked that they take sessions and training for their professional grooming.

The teachers were so hopeful that they were teaching students that they could compete in society and prove themselves as effective and valuable members of society in the future.

The senior students expressed their feelings and said they wanted inclusivity in society. Provide the facilities and introduce the facility in schools, outside the school so that it does not feel the complexity and can work as ordinary people.

The assessment system should meet their needs and requirements to pass their exams without difficulty quickly.

The institution should be open to training them in computer skills and the English language.

Discussion

The Ida Rieu welfare association has been working for blind and deaf children for a long time. The purpose is to educate them and treat them as members of society. The institution is providing and making selfless efforts for these physically disabled children. The students are given training and knowledge about digital literacy. The students know how to use it effectively and appropriately. The teachers are competent enough to fulfil their responsibilities selflessly and with a positive approach. The teachers do not treat the students with the thinking that they are special children but educate them as normal children. The teachers know how to make them digital-friendly. The teachers shared their points of view regarding difficulties and challenges, that nothing is complicated in life. Suppose you have passion so you can do everything. The leaders explained that they feel problems and constraints when teaching these children early, but gradually, they learn by trial and error and by practising more and more. The teachers must have patience, and they should understand the problems of these children. The teachers commented that these children are so sharp and intelligent if Allah has not given them vision and listening ability, but He gives them other senses very strong. These children are brilliant and can quickly learn how to operate a laptop or mobile with the help of different software specially made for physically disabled children. The senior students suggested that software and apps like JAWS and the screen reader are too expensive; they should be in range so we can easily do our work. The teachers said that opportunities should be given to visually impaired and deaf children at the state level, providing them with more jobs and facilities in assessment and daily life to survive easily. The world is changing, and the paradigm shifts toward digital literacy, so we must

support and motivate these students to benefit from life.

Recommendations

1. Opportunities and facilities should be provided to strengthen marginalized community members in digital literacy and learning.
2. Inclusivity must be promoted in the educational system and the curriculum so that physically disabled children are treated equally in society.
3. As teachers suggested in interviews, the assessment system at the board level should be according to physically disabled children's needs and requirements.
4. More apps and soft wares must be introduced for blind and deaf children, and these should be freely accessible to all physically disabled learners.
5. Training in sign language and software and apps should be given to teachers so that they cater to the needs of the learners.
6. Teachers also suggested that disabled learners do not feel unique but treat as ordinary learners. By doing this, they develop confidence and feel like ordinary people.

Conclusion

The marginalized community members are those people who are non-existing and excluded from society. As I conducted the study and interviews with physically disabled students and their teachers, I found that Allah has given abilities and competencies to everyone. As the world is changing and shifting toward digitalization, providing facilities for students and teachers to upgrade themselves is necessary. As members of society, we should not show them empathy but help them overcome their deficiencies and educate them as needed. Introduced more digital facilities and teach teachers about using different software and apps for physically disabled students. Society must provide them with opportunities so that they also compete with various challenges of life.

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