

FEMALE SCHOOL PRINCIPALS: CHALLENGES AND COPING STRATEGIES


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The principal happens to be the central figure in any school, an individual who has the greatest influence on the quality of teaching and learning. However, principals face various challenges that could weaken their performance or trap them in a depressive state. Fortunately, inventing and using smart strategies allows female school principals to cope with the challenges that they face, as this study demonstrates. The study aimed to identify the challenges faced by women school principals and the strategies that they apply to overcome or at least reduce the effects of these challenges. The findings of this study can help in improving awareness among policymakers regarding the experiences of female principals in Saudi Arabia and in prioritising the challenges that they face.

KEYWORDS: School Principals, Leadership, Challenges, Coping Strategies.

INTRODUCTION

The role of school principal in the 21st century has become more demanding than ever. It necessitates the ability to embrace new ideas while standing for values and keeping a concrete vision (Ferrandino, 2001). Principals have a responsibility to lead their staff to a new level of effectiveness (Hess & Kelly, 2007). They need to use various strategies and skills to arrive at appropriate decisions. In addition, they require the interpersonal skills to create a motivational working environment. Beyond that is the growth of the students and the need to provide an effective learning environment for their development and well-being. Furthermore, the rapid changes in education add more pressure on today's school leaders. They are in the front line to implement educational changes. Accordingly, they may feel frustrated by the

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endless demands from various elements in the school system or they may become trapped in a depressive state. However, a deeper understanding of the challenges that principals face may motivate policymakers to implement new approaches that could facilitate principalship. In addition, investigating the strategies that principals use can raise awareness of coping strategies.

Although a number of studies and writings have focused on principalship, these are not specific to female principals in Saudi schools. Accordingly, asking school leaders to lead in today's demanding world, raises the question: What are the challenges that face women principals, and what strategies do they use to confront the challenges? The present study inquired into these two questions.

EDUCATION IN SAUDI ARABIA

The government has recognized the crucial necessity of improving education as a key to national advancement. Education is free at all levels with a monthly allowance for university students to encourage young people to undertake tertiary education. Possessing approximately 20% of world oil reserves has enabled the country to invest oil revenue to diversify and advance the educational sector (Energy Information Administration, 2014). In February 2007, the King Abdullah Public Education Development Project was approved by the Saudi Cabinet, representing a commitment of \$3.1 billion over a five-year period to advance the Saudi education system at all levels (King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Public Education Development Project, 2012). The project incorporates improving teacher training, upgrading curriculum and improving the educational environment (Abdul Ghafour, 2007).

The new vision of 2030 in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has been influencing every sector in the country. The government's goal is not merely to expand the educational sector but to enhance the quality of education. To improve the quality of education, the Ministry of Education (2018) focuses on:

1. Developing philosophy, goal, curricula and link all of these with teachers' preparation programmes.
2. Developing personalities and promoting a sense of creativity.
3. Improving the school environment and connecting it with the general system.
4. Provide educational opportunities for all categories such as people with disabilities.
5. Developing the operational performance and reducing the waste cost.

6. Developing the administrative environment in the Ministry of Education and in the school by providing administrative and leadership training opportunities.

Saudi Culture And Leadership

Understanding the context of leadership is a significant step towards understanding the leader's practices and how they confront different challenges. Further, culture and leadership cannot be separated, as leadership is a social construct. Throughout history, culture has shaped the art of leadership because each culture affects people, leaders and how organizations function (Hofstede, G. H., Hofstede, G. & Minkov, 2010; House, 2004; Schein, 2004; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2000). Therefore, a substantial body of research has been conducted on national culture and human behaviour. As leadership is part of human behaviour, these studies assist in analysing the relationship between culture, leadership and organization. The Hofstede's study (1960-1970) is one of the studies that focused on understanding national cultures.

Hofstede's five dimensions of culture is a valuable tool for understanding national cultures, which helps in describing the differences and similarities between cultural groups. Therefore, Hofstede's (2010) five dimensions of national culture are used as a framework for introducing Saudi culture and leadership. The five dimensions are:

1. Power Distance (PDI).
2. Individualism/Collectivism (IDV).
3. Masculinity/Femininity (MAS).
4. Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI).
5. Long/Short Term Orientation (LTO).

Power Distance (PDI)

The power distance dimension can be defined as the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010, p. 61). It represents how people communicate and either accept or give authority. Saudi Arabia is considered a high-power distance society, with a score of 90 in this dimension. This high score shows that Saudis accept an unequal division of power. They accept their superiors telling them what to do without further justification. Politically, Saudi is a classic monarchy ruled by a king who inherits the crown without election. Most organizations are

hierarchical in structure and centralized authority is popular.

Individualism Versus Collectivism (IDV)

The IDV dimension refers to the way people balance their personal interests against those of groups such as their family, tribe, company, or country. Saudi Arabia is considered a collectivist culture with a high score on the IDV dimension. In Saudi society, the interests of the group are predominant over individual interests. The group provides values, recognition and rewards; people seek harmony and loyalty. In collectivist cultures, the relationship of mutual dependence between the individual and the group manifests itself in both practical and psychological ways. In the workplace, the relationship between managers and subordinates is based on ties of obligation (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010).

Masculinity Versus Femininity (MAS)

This dimension refers to gender, and gender roles. It indicates the degree to which dominant values in a society tend to lean towards either masculinity or femininity. In masculine cultures, the dominant values are achievement, success, heroism, assertiveness, and material reward for success. In contrast, in feminine cultures the dominant values are quality of life, cooperation, modesty, and caring for others (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). Saudi culture has a high score in this dimension, which is considered a high masculinity society. Saudi society is a masculine society that encourages competition and performance.

Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI)

Hofstede's dimension of uncertainty avoidance reflects the extent to which a society accepts ambiguity and uncertainty. It is about how society deals with the future that can never be known. Uncertainty avoidance can be defined as the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous and unknown situations (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010, p. 191). Saudi culture exhibits uncertainty avoidance, scoring also high in this dimension. In this culture, people hold strong beliefs and avoid abnormal behaviour and ideas. Saudi Arabia is a rule-oriented society with many rules, regulations, central control and instructions to reduce uncertainty and ambiguity. For instance, the entire kingdom is based on an absolute monarchy. The authority and control of all the ministries are in the government's hands. Most official decisions have to be enacted by royal decree. Hence, a centralized structure, authoritarianism, and a transactional style of leadership are the norm in most organizations (Drummond & Al -Anazi, 1997).

Long-Term Orientation (LTO)

Long-Term Orientation (LTO) refers to the fostering of virtues oriented toward future rewards (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010, p. 239), whereas short-term orientation refers to the fostering of virtues related to the past and present, in particular, respect for tradition, preservation of face. Saudi Arabia is considered a short-term oriented society with a low score in this dimension. People who score low in this dimension are keen to achieve fast results.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

School principals face various challenges worldwide. However, the nature of their challenges varies across cultures, as every culture influences people's practices. Hofstede's study (2010) is a valuable tool that describes differences and similarities between different cultural groups. It assists in understanding and analysing leaders' behaviours and what is acceptable in each context. It clarifies the impact of cultural beliefs and ideology on behaviours and practices. In addition, since school is an open system which has a reciprocal relation with the surrounding environment, the difficulties that face school principals emerge from the cultural context. Regardless of cultural differences, several common challenges were identified in the literature worldwide. For instance, increased class size was a frequent challenge that presented in the literature (Ferrandino, 2001). In contrast, issues such as drugs, violence, immigrant students, ethnic tensions and homelessness are difficulties facing American school principals (McWilliams, 2012) that might not concern principals in other cultures.

Sincar (2013) found in his study of school principals in Turkey that they face various challenges such as bureaucracy, lack of resources, resistance to innovation and lack of service training. Experienced principals face challenges, so do new ones. In Gillian's (2003) study to identify the concern of new school principals, he finds that the qualification of teachers, financial decline and overcrowded classrooms are the major concerns of new principals. Alahmadi (2011), in her study of the challenges facing women principals in Saudi Arabia, declared that empowerment, in terms of leadership training opportunities and freedom in decision making, is not fully achieved in women's sectors. The predominant feature of education in Saudi Arabia is the centralized regulation by the government and the hierarchical decision-making structure (Alamri, 2011; Alkhazim, 2003). Furthermore, women in Saudi Arabia work under the male umbrella, and this restricts women's freedom in decision making and their opportunities to prove their competence.

Preparing candidates for the role of principal has a significant impact in

equipping them to confront challenges. Hale and Moorman (2003) asserted the need to develop a university-based program for prospective new principals, incorporating practical experience. Aside from preparation programs, partnerships between school principals and universities promotes professional effectiveness. For instance, the University of Kentucky is working collaboratively with school principals to improve the learning outcomes of minority students (Hale & Moorman).

Different leadership strategies can help school principals cope with the challenges they face. In Duke, Tucker, Salmonowicz and Levy's (2007) study of 19 school principals assigned to low performing schools, they found that advance preparation of incoming school principals assists them to find an appropriate leadership style that can alleviate the severity of the school's condition (as cited in Hale & Moorman, 2003). In addition, Leithwood and Duke (1998) suggested that the contingent leadership model allows principals to respond to their school's unique needs and circumstances. Transformational leadership, which for decades has prevailed in leadership discourse, can assist principals to confront challenges. Yet Izhaq (2016) pointed out the concern that has arisen around transformational leadership and the dispute regarding its effectiveness for educational administration. He concluded that transformational leadership is needed, but the practitioner must address the shortcoming of the theory and apply it to confront today's challenges.

DATA COLLECTION

Research methods are tools that guide researchers to illuminate their inquiries. The pivotal reason of choosing one method over others is to use the method which allows the researcher to obtain profound information and could make the work effective (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Crotty (1998) asserted that individuals construct realities based on their experiences; reality does not exist outside the individual's perceptions. The constructivist believes that the mind is active and constantly constructs and reconstructs knowledge to fit the person's conception. Cultural, linguistic and contextual frames influence human perception; the three elements differ based on different location and historical transformations (English, 2008). Since the nature of leadership is socially constructed, it was suitable for this study to be situated within the constructivist paradigm, and a qualitative approach was used to obtain a deep understanding of the principals' points of view. Guba and Lincoln stated, "Qualitative data, it is asserted, can provide rich insight into human behaviour" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 106).

Knowledge is not only theories and scientific facts; it includes observing

others and learning from their experiences. Therefore, for acquiring data that is relevant to the research questions, the process of selecting participants must ensure selecting people who can provide relevant information. Accordingly, data were obtained from 40 female principals to investigate the challenges that they face and the strategies they use to cope with the challenges. The interview is a goal-or task-oriented talk to gather information, in which the interviewer and the interviewee have their respective roles to play (Gubrium, Holstein, Marvasti & Mckinney, 2012, p. 231). With the consent of the participants, the interviews were typed. As Crotty (1998) asserted the researchers' journal/memo reinforced the analysis. Accordingly, the typed interviews along with the researcher's journal reinforced the analysing process.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Analysing the data of the study shows that the challenges being faced by the principals do not originate from any single source. Many elements of school life can present a challenge to principals and requires different techniques to cope with them. The classification of the challenges that principals face is given in Table 1.

Table 1

Classification of the Challenges Faced by the Principals.

The Source of the Challenge	The Challenges
Teacher	Change resistance
	Lack of teacher/ Increase in teachers' retirement
	Lack of qualifications/ lack of experience
	Peers disagreement
	Deficiency in commitment
Rules and Regulation	Continuous changes in rules and regulations
	Uninterpreted rules and regulation
	Centralization
Students	Absenteeism
	Increased in enrolment within limited capacity
Parents	Ignorance/ carelessness
	Change resistance
	Non-cooperation
Infrastructures	Lack of equipment/ inappropriate educational environment
Curriculum	Advanced curriculum within insufficient equipment and lack of teachers' preparations.

Teachers

They are an essential component of the school and can enable the school's success or be a cause of failure. Schools today must adjust to the changes of globalization and the wide openness of the world. Yet principals face ubiquitous resistance, whether from the teachers or the students' parents. When teachers resist required changes, the burden of implementing them falls on the principal's shoulders. However, even when teachers welcome a change, they may not necessarily be well equipped for it. Variations in the teachers' competence, and their lack of experience can raise concern about their performance and the difficulties for principals increase accordingly.

Teachers' resistance to change and lack of skills are not the only problems facing principals. Early retirement and staff resignations add to their worries. Principals attribute this to the continuing changes in rules and regulations in the educational sector under the new Vision 2030. Teachers are concerned that the privilege of early retirement may be terminated; thus, they are incentivized to take advantage of this privilege before any change occurs. Another source of concern for principals is disagreement among peers which causes delay or affects performance negatively. Furthermore, these disagreements can sap staff commitment or lead to staff disobeying the rules, which increases the burden on the principal.

Rules and Regulations

Rules and regulations are usually established to professionalize the workplace. Yet, sometimes these regulations turn out to be a source of challenge for the implementers. These challenges can be seen in the continuous changes in the rules which necessitates convincing teachers to accept and implement the new changes. Furthermore, in some cases, the changes involve staff training. For instance, initiating software programs in education means that trainers have to familiarize teachers with the programs, while some teachers are unwilling to explore technology. On the other hand, when rules and regulations lack clarity, principals are challenged to interpret them accurately. Added to this difficulty is the matter of centralization which paralyzes principals from acting in some specific cases unique to their school or forces them to interpret and implement the rules according to general situation not to specific circumstances.

Students

The challenges that students pose are varied. Absenteeism is the predominant problem that principals face. It also emerges in the form of skipping classes (ditching) while the students are attending the school. Another major challenge they face is increased enrolment within the limited capacity of the school. A desirable location or a school's appealing reputation are characterised as factors explaining the high demand for some schools over others.

Parents

Students sometimes develop problematic behaviours, which necessitates cooperation between school staff and parents to spot the problem and work cooperatively in solving it. Yet parents can be a source of challenge for principals when they deny a problem in their children, fail to cooperate with the school or stand in the way of making positive changes in their children. Principals attribute this problem to the low level of education of some parents that causes their indifference, ignorance and resistance to change.

Infrastructure

Providing a stimulating learning environment requires suitable spaces and facilities. Increased enrolment puts space at a premium. Rooms originally used for other activities may be turned into classrooms and interactive learning has to be sacrificed. Lack of equipment and/or the space in which to allow students to use it may result in an inappropriate educational environment and reliance on theoretical explanations rather than empirical learning experiences.

Curriculum

The continuous development in curricula which is required in today's evolving world can be a challenge for school leaders for many reasons. The advancement of curriculum requires preparing teachers to be able to utilize appropriate teaching strategies and incorporate advanced technology. Many schools have limited facilities or lack the basic equipment necessary for creating an effective educational environment. Therefore, teacher performance is hampered because the amenities for effective teaching are unavailable.

STRATEGIES IN THE FACE OF THE CHALLENGES

It is evident that a myriad of difficulties confronts principals; if they are to survive it is essential to develop smart coping strategies. The principals in this study pointed to numerous approaches that assist them in confronting their challenges. These strategies are categorised under: spiritual belief, administrative/ leadership skills and interpersonal skills.

Spiritual Belief

The ideology that a person embraces has a significant effect on their practices. School leaders emphasized that their belief in God fuels their survival in the face of all the difficulties that they encounter. Furthermore, they indicated that their faith is a source of energy which helps reduce the psychological effects caused by the difficulties they face. Also, spiritual belief allows them to

face hardship with courage, patience and persistence.

Many believe that Prophet Muhammad leadership style demonstrates that he was an influential leader who empowered others and cared about them. Hence, his biography would be a precious source for leaders to learn about his method of leading and unifying people (As-Siba'ie, 2005). The descriptions of the Prophet's leadership include all aspect of human interaction within society, dealing with various types of people. In his list of the most influential leaders in the History, Hart (1976) ranked the Prophet at the top of the list. With this consideration, school leaders took advantage of considering the Prophet as a model that they could emulate in their leadership.

Administrative and Leadership Skills

Regulating behaviours of the school community is one of the fundamental challenges that principals face. They mentioned a number of leadership skills that assist them in dealing with the members of the school community while avoiding the use of power or showing their superiority over others, which results in resistance and rebellion.

Considering the specific situations, they are facing, administrative and leadership skills assist the principals to deal with them effectively. Principals pointed to the effectiveness of flexibility and varying their leadership style to suit the situation and the people they lead. Flexibility within mentoring helps in adjusting the behaviours of the school community members. Mentoring and assessing the performance of both teachers and students allows principals to address problem behaviours. Also, it helps in recognizing issues before they become crises.

In addition, developing positive competition among teachers motivates them to initiate activities and programs that increase student engagement and adjust their behaviours. Participants also emphasized the importance of providing development opportunities for teachers and parents, for example by arranging workshops and courses. Opening the door and welcoming consultation are other ideas that principals use to engage members of the school community, allowing them to alleviate the challenges that they face.

Planning, organizing and transparency are other effective strategies that school leaders apply to ease their work and avoid struggling with barriers. Daily, weekly and monthly plans are some example of organizational work tools. Further, sharing the school plan and clarifying the individual tasks that each teacher must perform reinforces clarity and results in effective execution.

Interpersonal Skills

Principals employ various interpersonal skills that enable them to turn difficulties into enjoyable tasks. Dealing with different types of personalities is not easy. It entails understanding others' personalities and then selecting the best approach for each personality. For instance, assigning tasks that require public speaking to a shy person could cause resistance and aversion.

Engaging teachers and students is a key strategy that principals use to promote their commitment to the school and bring forth their best efforts. Subordinates like to feel appreciated and valued and reciprocate by giving more of themselves. Effective discussion and listening to others are ways of promoting the sense of engagement. Using both extrinsic and intrinsic rewards increases motivation and morale in the school community and the members support their principal. Some principals form a consulting group consisting of teachers, students and parents as a way of engaging and appreciating others' input. Delegation is a much-emphasized strategy employed by principals to raise the sense of trust among school members.

Promoting a culture of trust, respect and cooperation turns the school environment in a positive direction. If the principal was domineering and thought that their position is the cause of their power, this increase the distance between the leaders and the school staff, whereas humble leaders who show that they care about others and are patient with them can influence the school community effectively.

DISCUSSION

As the title of the paper suggested, principals have a significant impact on the commitment of the school staff and the well-being of the educational process in the school, especially if they are able to deal effectively with evolving challenges. The strategies that they implement resemble a life guard who does not have a life jacket yet tried to create one manually.

Culture shapes the practice of leadership and determines how leaders are expected to behave (Hofstede, G. H., Hofstede, G. & Minkov, 2010; House, 2004; Schein, 2004; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2000). In this study, the types of challenges and also the strategies that school leaders apply were influenced by Islamic and Saudi culture.

The centralized system represents a challenge for principals, as the findings indicated. The first dimension of Hofstede's study on national

culture and human behaviour deals with power distance, which indicates the extent to which people accept the unequal distribution of power, and how willingly they accept orders given by their superiors. In Hofstede's findings Saudi Arabia scored high in this dimension, which may explain why the school leaders encounter the challenges of centralization. The struggle with the centralized system occurs when schools are asked to implement precise new rules which may not apply in some schools due to inadequate school facilities or lack of teacher training.

The challenge with the rules and regulations can be seen in the ambiguity of these rules, as the findings indicated. Participants strongly emphasized the importance of knowing the rules and regulations precisely. In addition, when school teachers resist change and prefer working within a regular framework, as the principals mentioned, there are forms of uncertainty avoidance. Hofstede's dimension of uncertainty avoidance reflects the degree to which a society accepts ambiguity and uncertainty. Saudi culture, he asserts, tends towards uncertainty avoidance. It is a rule-oriented society, working under central control with many rules and regulations. In addition, participants were critical of the lack of clarity and vagueness of the rules and regulations. They reported that interpreting rules and regulations was sometimes a challenge. They were hopeful that greater explanatory detail might be provided pertaining to the rules and regulations.

Despite the rule orientation in Saudi culture, the principals in the study believed that engaging staff is an effective strategy for confronting challenges. It is worth noting that by explaining the rationale for their decisions to staff and by engaging them in development and delegation, the principals were in fact empowering staff and manifesting transformational leadership, contradicting the literature indicating that empowerment may not be seen as a characteristic of an effective leader in the Saudi context.

Participants repeatedly emphasized that the interest of the school community has to be prioritized over personal interest, and they indicated that whenever personal interest was higher, leadership was in jeopardy. The participants identified behaviours which nurture the sense of collectivism. They pointed to a strategy for confronting challenges which fosters a sense of trust, by consulting and involving others. These characteristics reinforce relationships and assist in team building. Participants also asserted that the interest of the group must be above the individual's interest. This point can be realized by reviewing Hofstede's dimension of individualism versus collectivism. Saudi Arabia is considered a collective culture in which the interest of the group is predominant over the individual's interests. Accordingly, increasing the sense of belonging among the students and improving the climate of the classroom stimulates students' desire to attend school regularly. It is not enough to engage the students, involving their

families leads them to cooperate more in improving student behaviour.

Among the challenges encountered by principals were lack of teacher commitment and increased student absenteeism. These concerns can be interpreted in the light of Hofstede's fifth dimension, long-term orientation. Saudi Arabia is considered a short-term oriented society with a low score in this dimension. People who score low in this dimension are keen to achieve fast results. Accordingly, making a long-term commitment requires extra effort. In addition, early retirement is another example of the short-term orientation as today's employees look for investments outside the school setting, wanting to make money quickly in their own business. Additionally, as mentioned above, the ongoing changes in rules and regulation, particularly with Vision 2030, encourage teachers to take early retirement while this option is still available to them.

Principals also indicated they apply situational leadership tools. Situational leadership, developed by Hersey and Blanchard in 1969, advocates that a leader should consider the situation and needs of the people involved (Sergiovanni, 2001). School principals consider this approach as a factor that allows them to cope with challenges that they face and reduce their impact.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study showed the lack of the studies that focus on the challenges facing school principals and the strategies that could assist them to overcome difficulties. Some recommendations for practices and policymakers to make the position of principal more attractive are as follows:

Policymakers need to rethink and give extra consideration to school principalship. They need to focus on preparing school principals prior to assuming the role. In addition, this initial preparation is not enough; working principals need frequent development programs and, as indicated, they need opportunities for meetings and exchanges with fellow principals. These meetings would give them an opportunity to share their experiences, express their views, and discuss emerging issues and challenges. This can assist and support them in relieving and reducing their stress and contribute to enhancing their own work environments. A leadership development program has to take into consideration the challenges that confront principals and the strategies that help to reduce their impact.

The development and training program should not only focus on principals, it has also to include teachers and boost their aptitude to accept changes and stay up to date on educational issues and in using

continuously evolving technology. Lack of experience with technology reinforces teachers' resistance to change.

More qualitative research is needed to acquire original insights and an authentic platform of school principals' relevant experience. The use of qualitative approaches can provide a valuable addition to the methodologies in the educational sector, which in Saudi Arabia are mostly based on quantitative approaches. Most researchers who have studied this topic have either developed their own surveys or used someone else's leadership survey. Surveys and purely quantitative studies are limited in their abilities to delve into the participants' own insights regarding the challenges and the coping strategies for school principals.

In terms of practical recommendations, principals need to understand the rules and regulations, as well as their own rights and responsibilities. Without knowing and understanding the rules and regulations, they might deviate from the regulations of the Ministry of Education, causing confusion for the staff. They also have to be able to explain and justify their decisions. Justifying the decision taken fosters a sense of trust and makes school staff feel that they are valuable.

School principals need to know their school members to get the best out of them. Understanding people's different personalities assists the principals in assigning appropriate tasks and using effective techniques to deal with each individual. In addition, they need to be able to engage with their school members, listen to them, let them know that they are appreciated, and increase their motivation. When school members feel that they are valued, they give more to the school. Further, they must be willing to consult with the teachers and delegate tasks appropriately. Delegation fosters the culture of trust, develops others, and motivates them. Flexibility and patience are some characteristics that increase the chance of coping with difficulties.

School leaders need to lead by example and walk their talk. School staff observe a principal's behaviour from the first day of their appointment and adjust their behaviour accordingly. Principals' awareness and application of these findings can contribute to reducing the stress associated with the position, increasing their effectiveness, and refining their leadership.

CONCLUSION

School principals are uniquely positioned to influence the development of the next generation. Hence, their knowledge and skills to confront challenges are more important than ever. As women have begun occupying more important administrative positions in Saudi Arabia, the findings of this study in the

female sector can enhance women's effectiveness as principals by providing support for current school principals, and guidance for those who aspire to become principals. It can serve as a catalyst for policymakers to design preparation programs which encompass practices that enable principals to lead effectively and to be well equipped to handle the inevitable challenges they will face. Understanding the techniques experienced principals use may be a valuable resource for other principals, giving them extra tools and bolstering their resilience so they can perform their work effectively without being affected by the difficulties that they may encounter.

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