

# A Qualitative Analysis of Followership Behaviors among University Teachers in Balochistan: An Exploratory Study

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## Abstract

*Followership behavior is a significant aspect of leadership, yet research on followership—particularly within the higher education context of Balochistan, Pakistan remains limited. Researchers around the globe have presented various models of followership styles. However, this study, drawing upon Kelly's Model of Followership, has explored the followership styles that predominate among university teachers in Balochistan. Exploratory Qualitative design was employed and in-depth interviews from various higher education institutions across Balochistan were conducted to collect data. These interviews were properly transcribed by using thematic coding. These 'codes' and 'themes' were then matched with the styles in Kelly's Model. The analysis revealed that 'Exemplary followership style' characterized by high levels of problem-solving, and proactive engagement was present among most faculty members in HEI's of Balochistan. However, Other styles (Pragmatist, Conformist, Alienated, Passive) appeared less frequently. The findings of this research strengthen the applicability of Kelley's Model to a South Asian context and suggest that organizational strategies need to cherish Exemplary followership among educators. Furthermore, to nurture productive faculty involvement, institutional leadership development programs should emphasize critical thinking and engagement. Lastly, future research could employ quantitative instruments and compare followership patterns across different regions of Pakistan.*

**Keywords:** Followership behaviors; Kelley's model of followership; University teachers; Balochistan.

**JEL Classification:** I23, J24

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## 1. Introduction & Background

Followership is an emerging concept in behavioral and organizational research. Initially, in the early twentieth century, leadership was viewed primarily as a group process, with an emphasis on initiating movements, bringing change, and representing a collective endeavor (Mullins & Linehan, 2005). Over time, perspectives shifted toward a more holistic and relationship-centric approach (House & Aditya, 1997), acknowledging that followership is an integral and indispensable aspect of leadership (Kouzes & Posner, 2004; Osborne, 1996). Earlier assumptions that “power” was the sole factor linking leaders and followers (Bass & Stogdill, 1990) gave way to the recognition that leaders and followers are mutually dependent, co-creating leadership outcomes (Ricketts & place, 2009; Lippit, 2006). Despite its importance, followership has historically received less scholarly attention compared to leadership (Brown & Thornborrow, 1996; Bjugstad et al., 2006; Graham, 1995; Kelley, 2008).

Over the years, the follower’s role within leadership studies has earned greater attention, with followers now recognized as key actors in the leadership process (Matshoba-Ramuedzisi et al., 2022). Followership exists in every organizational and social setting, and leadership cannot occur in isolation from leader–follower relationships (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014; Ricketts & place, 2009). It can be considered a cornerstone of organizational functioning and a determinant of productivity (Blackshear, 2004), as weak bonds between subordinates and their organizations can be hazardous to performance and engagement (Greenwald et al., 2009; Thom-Otuya, 2012).

Followers may be employees, constituents, stakeholders, or individuals united by belief in a cause. Those with limited power or authority who cannot directly influence their superiors often fall into the follower category (Kelley, 2008). In reality, all individuals act as followers at some stage in their lives (Thom-Otuya, 2012). Followership is an interactive role involving either passive or active support for leadership functions and can be defined as the ability to follow directives while contributing to organizational objectives (Bjugstad et al., 2006). Effective followership requires traits such as task competence, enthusiasm, active involvement, and critical thinking (Howell & Costley, 2006; Carsten et al., 2010).

The study of followership evolved from early leader-centric models, where followers were seen as submissive recipients of leader influence (Popper & Castelnovo, 2019), to more contemporary perspectives recognizing them as causal agents influencing leadership processes and outcomes (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). Several influential typologies classify followership behaviors: Zaleznik (1965) developed a framework based on the axes of dominance–submission and activity–passivity, identifying four follower types: withdrawn, masochistic, compulsive, and impulsive. Kelley’s Model (1988, 1992), the most widely documented, classifies followers into alienated, conformist, passive, pragmatic, and exemplary styles based on two dimensions: independent critical thinking vs. dependent uncritical thinking, and active vs. passive behavior. Chaleff (2008) categorized followers into resource, individualist, implementer, and partner

styles, according to the degree of support and challenge offered to leaders. Kellerman (2008) described isolates, bystanders, participants, activists, and diehards, based on engagement levels. Ricketts and Place (2009) mapped follower behavior using respect for the leader and respect for the solution, producing styles such as “buy-in,” “blind hope,” “blind faith,” “wait and see,” and “outright opposition.”

Furthermore, followership has also been identified as an adaptive strategy enabling human groups to coordinate actions, solve collective problems, and navigate complex environments (Van Vugt & Ahuja, 2010). These perspectives suggest that humans adopt flexible follower behaviors that respond to situational demands and leadership patterns (Van Vugt & Ahuja, 2010).

Empirical studies have demonstrated the importance of followership for organizational outcomes. Quantitative research by Othman and Busari (2024) showed that exemplary followership—marked by high engagement and critical thinking—was significantly correlated with organizational commitment among teachers. Similarly, Pey et al. (2021) found that followers in educational contexts who exhibit independent critical thinking enhance leadership effectiveness. Yalçınyığıt and Karacay (2025) reported that proactive follower behaviors improve organizational efficiency, although cultural contexts influence these patterns.

Qualitative evidence further supports these findings. Alanazi et al. (2024) have studied the nurses’ perceptions of followership. Their study has focused on exploring the dynamics through which followers and leaders adjust to professional and cultural complex norms. Furthermore, Chircop (2024) have used narrative interpretations to conceptualize followership in Western higher education. The study has paid attention to explaining the faculty perception and conceptualization of follower roles and how they endorse these roles. Moreover, in another study the importance of integrating training programs on followership has been emphasized (Mamba et al., 2025). It has been articulated that sectors which are leadership-intensive need to focus on such training initiatives so that professional development can be ensured.

## **1.1 Research Problem and Research Objectives**

Despite the growing body of literature, followership remains less investigated in educational research, particularly within higher education contexts (Leane, 2020). Higher education institutions (HEIs) often have complex and decentralized power structures, where authority and influence do not always follow formal hierarchies (Bleiklie et al., 2015; Maassen & Stensaker, 2019). In Pakistan, while a few studies have examined Kelley’s model in academic contexts (Urooj et al., 2020; Arshad et al., 2022; Jamil & Hashim, 2023), research in Balochistan’s HEIs remains scarce. Ghias and Hassan (2018) have touched on courageous followership in faculty development, but comprehensive qualitative studies are absent. Given Balochistan’s distinct sociocultural and institutional factors, followership behaviors in this context may differ from those in other regions, with implications for leadership effectiveness and institutional

performance. To date, no qualitative examination has mapped faculty followership behaviors in Balochistan against Kelley's framework. Therefore, this study aims at fulfilling this gap by:

1. Identifying which followership style(s) are prevalent among faculty members in Balochistan's higher education institutions.
2. Examining how these style(s) are used by faculty members align with Kelley's (1992) typology.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

1. What is the most prevalent followership style(s) among faculty members in Balochistan's higher education institutions?
2. How are these followership style(s) linked with styles given in Kelley's (1992) followership model?

## **1.3 Significance of the study**

This study has theoretical and practical implications. First, it aims to address a critical gap in the followership literature, which suggests that organizational dynamics within higher education institutions (HEIs) are unique and complex (Leane, 2020; Bleiklie et al., 2015; Maassen & Stensaker, 2019). Therefore, by exploring followership in the HEI context, this study will fill this theoretical gap. To capture in-depth knowledge and understanding of Balochistan's distinct sociocultural and institutional setting, this study will incorporate Kelley's (1992) followership typology, as these processes have not yet been explored qualitatively (Urooj et al., 2020; Arshad et al., 2022; Jamil & Hashim, 2023).

Secondly, the findings of this study will be useful for policymakers and leaders in HEIs in Balochistan. The exploration of the followership styles used by faculty will assist policymakers and leaders in aligning their strategies for followers accordingly. Furthermore, the findings will enhance not only the knowledge domain of followership but will also help in structuring leadership development initiatives, strategies for faculty engagement, and selective professional development programs. Hence, by integrating such initiatives in HEIs, educational objectives and institutional performance can be achieved.

## 2. Conceptual Framework

This research adopts Kelley's following Model of Followership Behaviors.

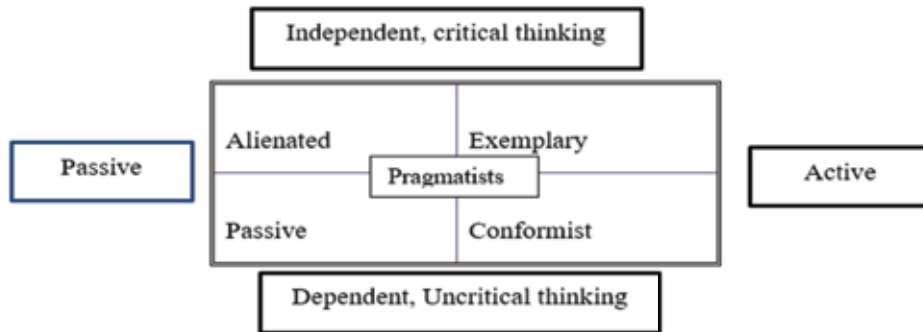


Figure 1: Kelley Followership Model

Source: Kelley (1992).

1. Alienated followers are mavericks who have a healthy skepticism of the organization. They are capable, but cynical.
2. Conformist followers are the “yes people” of the organizations. They are very active at doing the organization’s work and will actively follow orders.
3. Passive followers rely on leaders to do the thinking for them. They also require constant direction.
4. Exemplary followers are independent, innovative, and willing to question leadership. This type of follower is critical to organizational success. Exemplary followers know how to work well with other cohorts and present themselves consistently to all who come into contact with them.
5. Pragmatist followers’ followers are in the middle of the quadrant due to the reason that independence, commitment, and general involvement are all in the mid.

(Kelly, 1992)

## 3. Methodology and Justification

Since the nature of this study is exploratory and seeks to uncover the prevailing followership styles of faculty members in Balochistan’s higher education institutions, a qualitative research approach was adopted. It has been argued by Creswell and Poth (2018) that the quantitative studies cannot capture an in-depth understanding of participants’ behaviors, perceptions, and experiences;

therefore, qualitative designs are essential. As this study also aims at exploring faculty perceptions, therefore qualitative strategy is the best choice. According to Carsten et al. (2010), in a social constructionist perspective, the social interactions between the leader and followers shape their relationship. Also, these relationships are affected by cultural, institutional, and interpersonal factors (Carsten et al., 2010). Therefore, this study is linked with followers' social constructionist perspective because it is aimed at understanding how faculty members in Balochistan's higher education institutions construct and enact their followership roles within a unique sociocultural and organizational environment.

As the purpose of this study is to explore experiences and identify patterns in behaviors the interpretive design in qualitative research has been used. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggested that the interpretive design is most suitable when the aim of researcher is to understand how people interpret experiences, construct meaning and how social context shapes these meanings. Lastly, the content analysis was used for analyzing the data because it is supported by semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection method.

### **3.1 Participants' Profiles**

There were ten participants comprising faculty members from various Public and Private HEIs of Balochistan in this study. The names of institutions, academic departments, and personal details are withheld to maintain confidentiality and ensure anonymity because the participants did not give their consent to share any of this information. The faculty members who took part in this study were full-time employees, holding master's to doctoral degrees. Along with distinct academic backgrounds, the participants' organizational ranks were also divergent (e.g. lecturers, assistant professors, associate professors and professors). Finally, their professional experience ranged from 2 years to 20 years. Hence, the diversity of participants based upon academic qualification, experience, academic role and institutional type has allowed us to capture broad range of perspectives on followership, which reflects upon the leadership styles that may exist in HEIs of Balochistan.

### **3.2 Data Collection**

The data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which offered a balance between guiding the conversation around Kelley's (1992) followership typology and allowing participants the flexibility to express their own experiences and interpretations. A total of 21 open-ended questions were prepared, adapted from Pelletier (2009) to capture insights into participants' perceptions and enactment of followership behaviors. The interview questions were designed to meet the study's objectives to identify which followership styles are prevalent among faculty members in Balochistan's higher education institutions, and to examine how these styles align with Kelley's (1992) followership typology. Although Pelletier (2009), has specifically developed these items to study followership behaviors and perception within organizational studies. Yet, we

have adapted 21 open ended questions (see Appendix-A) by considering following aspects:

**Theoretical foundation:** The questions adapted from Pelletier (2009) were drawn on Kelley's (1992) two fundamental followership dimensions: independent critical thinking and active engagement. It was ensured that each question focused on elements pertinent to classifying followership styles.

**Literature-based refinement:** For further refining the questions used in this study past literature of followership research was reviewed (e.g., Carsten et al., 2010; Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). These studies provided insight into the wording and scope of questions which could assist in capturing faculty perspectives in higher education contexts.

**Context-based relevance:** To contemplate the academic environment of Balochistan's HEIs, questions' wording was readjusted to make them relatable to faculty members.

**Pilot review:** Although no pilot testing was conducted. However, three qualified colleagues from qualitative studies having professional background of higher education were given the task to ensure clarity, contextual fit, and alignment with the research objectives.

In total, 10 interviews were conducted. While there is no strict rule regarding sample size in qualitative research (Baker & Edwards, 2012), a sample of 10 is considered adequate for an in-depth exploratory study, as the focus is on getting rich, detailed accounts and not the statistical generalization (Patton, 2015; Guest et al., 2006). Interviews were conducted in the offices of faculty members who consented to participate, with each session lasting approximately 20–30 minutes. For anonymity, all details (names, departments, gender, specialization, education and experience) are not being revealed. Consent was taken from participants to audio-record interviews and field notes were also taken during the sessions for further assistance.

### 3.3 Data Preparation and Data Analysis

These recordings were then converted into transcriptions. Proper care was exercised while transcribing all interviews. Each interview was transcribed twice at different points in time. These transcriptions were then compared and merged into one consolidated 'transcription' so that any errors could be identified and eliminated. Same treatment was done with each interview. Content analysis was used to analyze data. For this reason, the transcriptions produced after data preparation were used. Different themes were identified from these transcriptions and were grouped into categories. Then these categories were further organized and polished into coherent verbatim descriptions. After this process, seven basic themes were identified. This process allowed the researcher to identify seven basic elements that were captured through participants' narratives. Hence, providing clear understanding of the followership styles present among faculty members in Balochistan's HEIs.

### 3.4 Thematic Analysis

Table 1

#### *Alignment of Interview Questions with Thematic Categories*

Questions	Themes
1. How do you feel about your own involvement whether that helps you fulfill some societal goal or personal dream that is important to you?	<b>Involvement and Commitment</b>
2. What difference do you feel about alignment of personal goals your student organization's priority goals?	
3. What is your commitment, and involvement level in organization/department?	
4. What do you think about your own enthusiasm? How does that affect your peers?	
5. What is your way to approach the identification of challenging activities to achieve organizational goals?	
6. How do you try to solve the challenging problems (technical, organizational, etc) rather than look to the leader to do it for you?	<b>Problem-Solving Ability</b>
7. How do you actively develop a distinctive competence in challenging activities?	
8. When starting a new job or assignment, do you promptly build a record of successes that are important to the organization and its leaders?	<b>Creativity</b>
9. What is your opinion about your own creativity level in teaching for the contribution of organizational goals?	
10. What is your level of interest in helping the leader or organization? (Do you help leaders to see both the upside potential as well as downside risks of ideas or plans?)	
11. What kind of attitude do you have towards self-evaluation?	<b>Independent Thinking</b>
12. How do you perceive an organizational decision?	
13. How do you react when the leader asks you to do something that runs contrary to your professional preferences?	
14. How important your own ethical standards are?	
15. What is your approach towards your own views when they can make conflicts with the views of leaders?	<b>Ethical Standards</b>
16. Can the leader of your organization give you a difficult assignment without much supervision, knowing you will meet your deadline with high-quality work?	
17. Do you help your peers, making them look good, even when you don't get any credit?	<b>Ability to Face Challenges</b>
18. What sort of effort do you make to understand the leader's needs, goals, and constraints?	
19. What is your own opinion about followership or leadership within your organization?	
20. How do you take the initiative to complete assignments?	<b>Team Player</b>
21. How will you contribute to a project when you are not the leader of a project?	
	<b>Responsibility Taking</b>

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Involvement and Commitment level

The study revealed that most respondents perceived themselves as active participants within their organization. They believed that working for the organization is linked to their own personal aspirations and goals. In addition, many expressed a preference for serving society, which further motivated their engagement., so whatever decision is taken at higher level or task is assigned to them, they get fully involved in their work.

The responses also showed that the members’ involvement was not due to the pressure from the leaders nor due to the herd behavior to avoid getting highlighted for self-protection. Rather, the employees felt that the tasks that are assigned to them are related to the accomplishment of their own personal dreams of joining the teaching profession and societal goals. that were set by them for serving their institute. They also wanted to bring improvement in education while performing at their best; hence, their high-level involvement was a means to achieve these goals. As stated by one respondent:

*“As I am a newcomer; my involvement in meetings is high, although I feel that my participation at this stage is not important for others so the patterns will not change based on my suggestions. Still, I get involved because my aim was to become teacher and teaching is a noble profession. I wanted to fulfill my aim of serving my society in the knowledge domain, so I try to give my opinion in each meeting.”*

Only a few respondents accepted that neither their personal dreams are aligned with the work, nor do they have societal goals. However, they still have high level involvement within organization, which is due to their commitment to their job. For instance, one respondent said

*“I am fully involved in the university activities where is my presence required, and I have to contribute, so my involvement is there on university demand. But these are not aligned with my dreams. However, when university says I must get involved, I do so, as I consider it my responsibility; therefore, I fulfil this responsibility”*

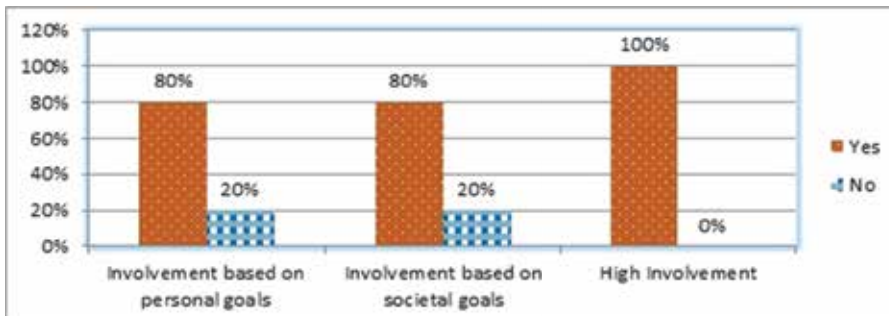


Figure 2: Involvement & Commitment Level

## 4.2 Problem Solving Ability

The interviewees talked about another important factor: that is problem solving initiatives. According to most of the participants, when a difficult job-related problem is encountered, they try to solve it on their own. Most of the respondents expressed similar views. As explained by one respondent:

*“Sometimes talking to students is so difficult, especially when we deal with repeaters who are either not regular students or want to improve their GPA. If they deserve a high GPA, we don’t have any issues but in case of low-caliber students who are trouble makers, we face many issues. These types of issues are not from the organization’s side but are part of our profession—we must deal with students. Sometimes they even use abusive language, which is very difficult for me to handle, but we must cope with such problems.”*

It is very clear that most respondents are active in solving issues independently. However, only one respondent reported taking help from leaders, while all others believed upon their own capability and were self-reliant. As reported by respondent:

*“I try to solve problems by myself, but if there are some issues—like in CMS—I am not fully equipped, so I take help from my focal person or immediate supervisor if issue is related to such problems. Otherwise for lecture or routine issues, I try to find solutions on my own.”*

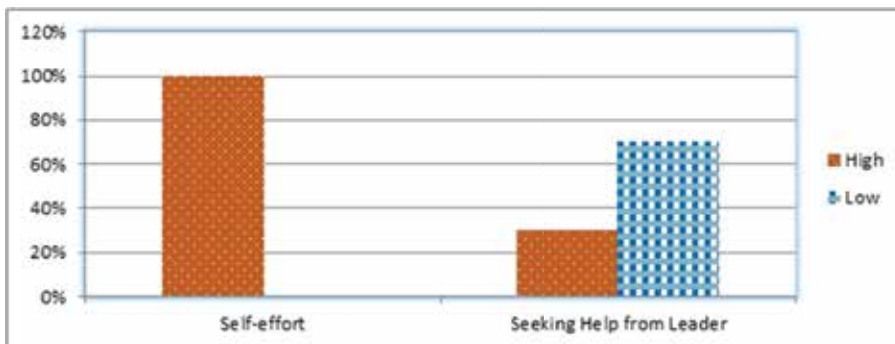


Figure 3: Problem Solving Ability

The results show that the majority of the respondents matched the category of Pragmatist Followers, as seeking help from a leader was low and self-effort was reported high.

## 4.3 Working as a Team Player

In response to the questions about working in the absence of supervision or within a team, the results were surprising. The majority of the respondents wanted to work individually. So, even in the absence of supervision, they described that their efforts will be maximum. As one respondent said:

*“Here in the department, there is no immediate boss, so we don’t have a strict environment, and we contribute at our own level as required. Even if leader is assigned for a teamwork then still, we give maximum input.”*

Yet, while being a part of the team under someone’s supervision, most participants expressed that they will work in accordance with the requirements of the leader. As one respondent shared:

*“I don’t feel that I can become a good leader because of my personality. I work in isolation and independently, so I like to work alone. And within teams or groups when you have to work then you have to be more sociable, have to take care of many things and have to be flexible. And yes, sometimes we have to work in groups under a leader, and I accept it.”*

However, only one respondent described that he would probably like to work under the supervision of a team leader. Because he thinks that only a few employees take responsibility of their work in the team.

*“I would like to work as an individual member because, mostly in teams you are assigned to do all group work. So, I try to use my capabilities to handle such situation and complete the task alone.”*

Furthermore, the majority of the respondents admitted that they were willing to help peers only when they were asked by that person. Otherwise, they did not have any desire to help others voluntarily. Only one respondent showed that he will help his peer even if he is having some personal issues, conflicts or differences with them by stating:

*“I help them to my full extent without giving consideration that I will get credit or not. Even if I have interpersonal conflicts, I help them. Just because of this I also have faced many issues, but as I have a good heart, therefore, I don’t give importance to negative aspects while working with my colleagues”*

It is clear from the responses that majority of the respondents are not actively involved in solving the issues faced by colleagues.

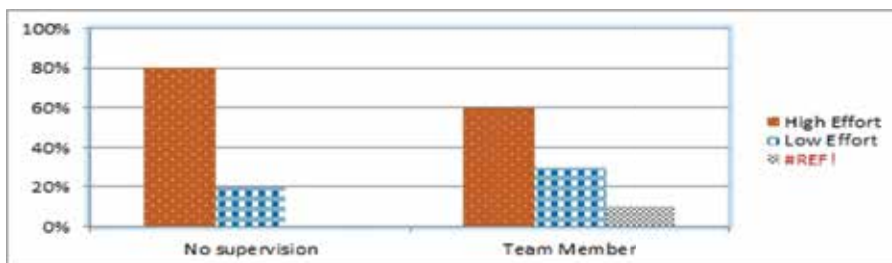


Figure 4: Working as Team Player

The study results reveal that participants fall in Kelleys' exemplary follower category for requiring no supervision. However, while working in team they do conform to leader's requirement which also places them in conformist followers.

#### 4.4 Ability to face Challenges

The answers to research questions portrayed that not only were respondents willing to accept the challenges, but they were also willing to give their best effort for meeting the deadline with the quality work. The interviews showed that when participants are asked to accomplish a challenging goal, they are actively involved through a high level of critical thinking within organization. Also, respondents have agreed that they have a challenge accepting ability. As described by one respondent:

*“Although, I do not ask authorities to assign me challenging activities by myself. Yet, whenever I am asked to perform a difficult task related to academics, not only I accept the challenges but try to complete it by working beyond my capabilities to complete it”.*

Seven respondents were willing to accept challenges related to curriculum and other non-curriculum activities. However, the remaining three respondents thought that they lacked the ability to meet such challenges due to having limited authority over the task assigned to them. As one participant described:

*“In teaching profession, I don't think so that there are too many challenges. And if I ever faced such situation, I think it will not be possible for me to deal with it. As we are part of faculty which does not have much authority over major decisions so yeah it will be difficult for me to handle”.*

Hence, faculty members are lying in the exemplary followers. Figure 4 presents this concept graphically.

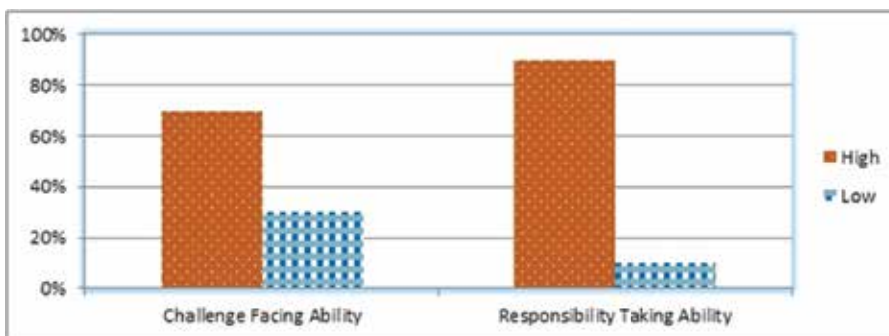


Figure 5: Ability to face challenges and Ability to take responsibilities

#### 4.5 Ability to take responsibility

The majority of the respondents were willing to take responsibility within their role and for their job. Respondents were also willing to put maximum effort into meeting organizational goals and objectives. Moreover, the study participants discussed that although they are sometime asked, even encouraged by the leader to give their ideas and solutions to problems but due to some internal politics in hierarchical structure, either their suggestions are altered or are not communicated to the leader. Hence, not implemented which is why they feel their responsibility-taking abilities are underestimated within organization. As a study participant said:

*“I try to take responsibility for my work and majority of us do the same. I work hard and put my best effort into it so that organization’s goals can be met. Here, we are also encouraged to share our ideas. But internal politics is so strong that sometimes my suggestions are altered or never even reach the leader. Hence, my abilities are underestimated most of the time.”*

Similarly, for routine work respondents described that they are responsible for whatever they do. Within the teaching process most study participants described (figure 5) that they try to deliver knowledge in different and more useful way. For instance, by using different teaching styles, taking helps from the technological equipment (projectors, multi-media, lectures, presentations etc.), and by improving the course outlines.

#### 4.6 Observing Ethics

Respondents were asked to divulge their own conformant to both personal and organizational ethical standards. Eight of the study participants showed that they felt misfit between personal and organizational ethics. But still they were following the institutional standards in order to be loyal to their organization and for this they had compromised their own ethical values. As mentioned by one of the respondents:

*“I give a lot of importance to my ethical standards and believe that just because of my personal reasons I should not compromise on anything less than set criteria in teaching and course outlines. I feel that it is my personal responsibility that I should put my full effort to clear student concepts before their exams and then take their exams. However, in this institute there are many practices like favoritism and nepotism that are not ethically aligned with my own ethical standards. But since I am part of this institute right now therefore I feel pressure to follow those practices”.*

To conform to rules they were using avoidance or obliging style mostly in conflicting situations. According to the respondents as their tasks were totally separate in teaching profession, that’s why most of the time they were facing less conflicting issues. As told by the respondent:

*“I do not confront anyone on any issue if there is a mismatch between my ethical standard and task assigned to me, I simply avoid. I do not argue and keep quiet.”*

Only one respondent revealed that in case of any decision that affected his ethical value or had mismatch with his ethical standard he preferred to refuse the decision. Three of the participants believed that they were conforming to the organizational standards due to other benefits associated with having such a privileged job as shown in Figure 6.

*“If I talk about my practices then I try to work with my ethical standards. I try to be fair while students grading process, and I try not to give undue favor to anyone. And it is my personal ethical responsibility to maintain these standards. However, there is a mismatch between standard set by organization and practices which should not exist. But as if you are not in majority who believes this then you cannot do much. And in my point of view this mismatch is not due to the university itself, rather there are some factors such as having power and hold on university matters few people use undue favor for some other people. Such factors are causing mismatch between set standards and practice, which are beyond our control”.*

Another interesting fact which few of the respondents revealed was that in their point of view ethical standards in their organization were not the problem. The main issue was that the ethical standards were not followed or implemented by and for everyone in same passion, rather there has been some sort of monopoly which has disturbed the whole organization. And it has caused issues of nepotism and favoritism.

#### **4.7 Creativity and Internal Questioning**

Another theme identified for classifying the behavioral style of respondents was creativity. The interview data showed that 8 respondents thought they were creative in their professional field. And whenever an opportunity was given to them related to curriculum and non-curriculum activities they contributed creatively in it. Participant stated that:

*“In non-curricular activities I do get opportunity to be creative. Such as a few years back I was in charge of dramatic society we went to Lahore and earned an award, it was a good learning opportunity as well. I was also part of the debate competitions society and have led the students successfully. Although I feel we do not have many options to be creative on the academic side, still I believe that I have contributed academically. I was asked by my chairperson to update the courses and curriculum. This was also an opportunity for us to show our creativity because we do not have many chances to be creative in teaching field.”*

Conversely, two participants did not explain that they themselves are creative. Similarly, according to them the opportunities to do creative work were found to be non-existent. This was due to lack of opportunities and resources on behalf of organization. Another factor that

contributed to the lack of creative work by employees within organization was excessive workload. Most of the respondents considered workload and lack of opportunities to be major reasons behind their lack of ability to be creative.

*“I am creative but not in every aspect. Having banking sector background, I can easily incorporate creativity in my teaching. I can use real life examples and answers student queries better. However, due to excessive workload and shortage of time, it seems impossible for me to be creative, meet deadlines, and cover courses simultaneously. There is also shortage of funding and resources, which creates hurdle in creative work.”*

For the organizational decisions, all participants revealed that an initial thought is given to the decision and the reasons behind the decision implemented. That is, they use internal questioning. However, most of the time they must follow the orders, so there is no role of critical thinking and internal questioning to accept the decision on its merit.

*“Academically, I evaluate myself on regular basis and I want improvement in my career. I evaluate myself based on my teaching method—from where we started and how I have completed the lesson. But, regarding the decisions that are on higher platform I can only think about it as we are not policy makers, so we can only follow the orders. Additionally, we do not have any say in the decision—making on university level”.*

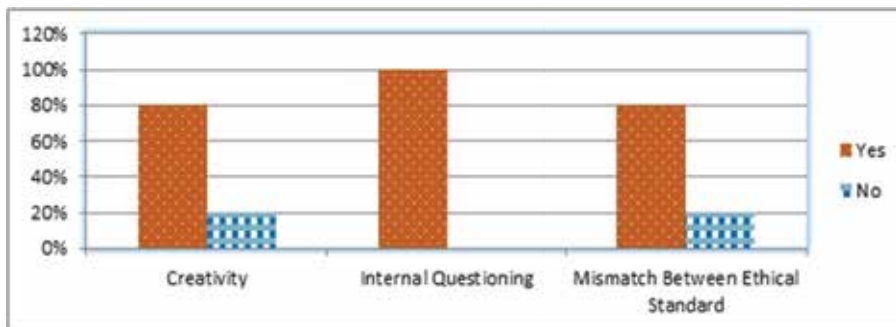


Figure 6: Creativity and Internal Questioning & Ethical Standards

## 5. Discussion

The interviews resulted in seven basic characteristics and dimensions based on which we can provide evidence for classifying our respondents into one of the above five categories of followership behavior style(s) adopted by the employees. The “Involvement and Commitment level” of the employees in any job provides the basic ground for our purpose, as the study results revealed that majority of the respondents described that their involvement within organization is linked to their personal and societal goals accomplishment, and they themselves believe that, as they think their own goals are aligned with the organizational goals, so they are actively involved in the organization.

The second element identified was “Problem Solving Ability”, in which most of the study participants explained their own behavior regarding difficult professional (i.e. teaching related) problems—that they try to solve the problems of their own. On the other hand, when it comes to extreme cases where they have no authority, they consult with their heads and superiors. This information also classified them in active participants. Additionally, these participants also said that they are individualists, as they were trying to solve problems of their own.

The third element, “Working as a Team player,” revealed some contradictory results—eight of them were highly motivated to work alone, meaning individualistic. Whereas, working under the supervision of others, only three of them were willing to put maximum effort as a team member. The other six were conformed to work as per requirement, whereas only one respondent was highly motivated to follow the leader. This also shows lack of team players within the organization.

The “Challenge Facing Ability” was the fourth element; seven of the respondents believed that they did have the ability and willingness to accept challenges. On the other hand, remaining respondents revealed the fact that they were unable to cope with challenging activities as they did not have full authority to meet such challenges. The contradiction here was that although the majority of the study participants were willing to accept the challenging tasks, none of them wanted to take the initiative in this regard. So, they were classified as in the middle of the road for activity level. The reason behind such behavior is that they were neither given full authority over the tasks, nor a proper mechanism to communicate their ideas to the leader (Vice Chancellor) was there. Alongside, there were issues of special influential groups that prevented them from taking any active role. The fifth factor “Responsibility Taking Ability” revealed that most of the individuals are willing to take responsibility but have also identified limitations. All respondents agreed that they were responsible for their duties and in the task over which they had full control. This was considered an important characteristic for self-evaluation.

The sixth element was about ethical standards, which revealed that, from the majority respondents’ perspective, a mismatch between organizational ethical standards and their own personal ethics was present. However, as they had some benefits associated with the job, they did not raise their voice against those issues. Another reason was the hierarchical command, which was working as a barrier to distract people from those standards.

The last element was creativity and internal questioning, for which responses showed that whenever the opportunity was provided, the respondents came up with innovative ideas. Contrary to this, for critical thinking, they did not have an opportunity to raise questions about leader’s decisions, so that limited communication of their concerns about certain issues.

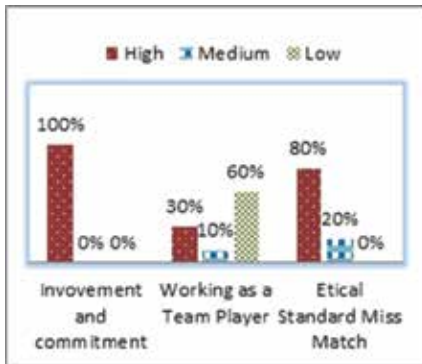


Figure 7

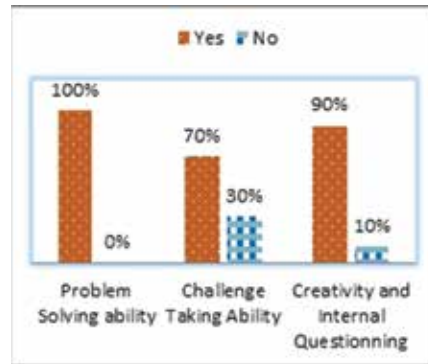


Figure 8

So, based on our analysis, the facts revealed that among characteristics of Kelley’s Model for the Passive Followers, only one thing matched — that they were following superiors’ decisions. Whereas for the conformist analysis, the results also showed both match and mismatch. The reason for mismatch was that the participants were not happy to work in teams or under certain leaders; rather, they were individualists. However, as they needed to survive, they were behaving in a way which provides them fit within the organization. Talking about Alienated style study revealed no possible match. There were also fewer matches for Pragmatist Style, as people had active involvement and high thinking in few aspects like completing their task. But when it came to questioning the leaders, there was less desire to do so. The Exemplary style was met successfully. In that respondents were enthusiastic, showed commitment towards their job, and were able to identify mismatch of standards. They were able to take initiatives to solve problems at their own end for themselves; however, they were not willing to take initiative in asking leaders about organizational decisions. Also, the other qualities like serving others, and preference to work in team were not met with that criterion. Therefore, it also had a match for another style—that is “implementer style of followership,” where support is high and challenge is low by follower for the leader, as presented by the Chaleff (2008).

## 6. Conclusion

This study has two aims: first, to identify the most prevalent followership style(s) among faculty members in Balochistan’s higher education institutions, and second, to determine how these followership style(s) align with the styles given in Kelley’s (1992) followership model. For this purpose, we conducted in-depth interviews and examined the characteristics of followership prevalent among study participants.

Based on these characteristics, we have determined that most of the identified traits among faculty members include problem-solving ability, working independently, and showing a high level of commitment and involvement. These characteristics were similar to Kelley’s

Exemplary Style. Additionally, it was found that the employees were committed to providing support to the leader but were not providing any challenges to the leader. Therefore, the style used by the employees in Balochistan's HEIs is a blend of Kelley's Exemplary Style and Chaleff's Implementer Style of Followership. The reason behind this blend of styles is the hierarchical decision-implementing system, discouraging employees to participate in major issues.

## 6.1 Practical Implications

The results of this research highlight that faculty members of HEIs in Balochistan demonstrate strong commitment, the ability to work independently, creativity, and problem-solving skills. However, their potential to contribute to decision-making remains limited due to top-down leadership culture that discourages employees from taking an active role in decision-making. While such an environment may support leaders' control, it is destructive for faculty challenge facing ability. This dynamic has resulted in a prevalent followership style that blends Kelley's Exemplary Style with Chaleff's Implementer Style.

Given that faculty are at the heart of the educational process, this study carries important practical implications. Involving faculty in policy and curriculum decisions could lead to more fruitful outcomes for all stakeholders in the educational process. Moreover, leadership in HEIs should focus on reducing administrative barriers that limit communication and create trust issues, while also fostering collaboration and supporting the professional growth of faculty members. To increase effectiveness of employees, we suggest that people in higher rank should work closely. Leaders and superiors should develop a more collaborative approach to identify and utilize the capabilities of their faculty to achieve their organizational goals more effectively.

## 6.2 Limitations and Future Recommendations

This research is context specific, i.e. it focused on exploring faculty perceptions in Balochistan. Therefore, the results may not be generalizable. To overcome this limitations, empirical research with larger samples may be conducted in different regions of Pakistan.

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## **Appendix-A**

### **Interview Guide for Exploring Followership Styles in Higher Education Institutions**

The following semi-structured interview questions were used to explore faculty members' perceptions, experiences, and enactment of followership styles, adapted from Pelletier (2009).

#### **Question**

1. How do you feel about your own involvement, whether that helps you fulfill some societal goal or personal dream that is important to you?
2. What is your approach for the identification of Challenging activities to achieve organizational goals?
3. What is your opinion about your own creativity level in teaching for the contribution of organizational goals?
4. How do you try to solve the challenging problems (technical, organizational, etc.) rather than look to the leader to do it for you? (issues faced while teaching)
5. What is your level of interest in helping the leader or organization? Do you help leaders to see both the upside potential (highlight positive aspects of plan or ideas) as well as downside risks (disadvantages) of ideas or plans, playing the devil's advocate (the one who criticize) if needed?
6. What kind of attitude do you have towards self-evaluation? (actively and honestly own up to your strengths and weaknesses rather than put off evaluation)
7. How do you perceive an organizational decision? (a habit of internally questioning the wisdom of the leader's decision rather than just doing what you are told)
8. How do you react when the leader asks you to do something that runs contrary to your professional preferences?
9. How important your own ethical standards are? (Rather than the leader's or the group's standards?)
10. What is your approach towards your own views when they can make conflicts with the views of leaders? (Do you assert your views on important issues, even though it might mean conflict with your group or leader?)

11. What difference do you feel about alignment of personal goals of your student organization's priority goals? (Career related restrictions)
12. What is your commitment and involvement level in organization/department? (Committed to and energized by your involvement and organization, giving them your best ideas and performance)
13. What do you think about your own enthusiasm? How does that affect your peers? (Does that also spread to and energize your peers)
14. How do you actively develop a distinctive competence in challenging activities? (so that you become more valuable to the organization and its leaders)
15. When starting a new job or assignment, do you promptly build a record of successes that are important to the organization and its leaders?
16. Can the leader of your organization give you a difficult assignment without the benefit of much supervision, knowing you will meet your deadline with high-quality work?
17. How do you take the initiative to complete assignments? (to seek out and successfully complete assignments that go above and beyond your role)
18. How will you contribute to a project when you are not the leader of a project? (do you still contribute at a high level, often doing more than your share)
19. Do you help your peers, making them look good, even when you don't get any credit?
20. What sort of effort do you make to understand the leader's needs, goals, and constraints? (Work hard to meet them)
21. What is your own opinion about the followership or leadership within your organization?



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