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INVESTIGATING LEADERSHIP POTENTIALS IN HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS IN WEST BENGAL

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ABSTRACT

Leadership Potential refers to the inherent qualities, skills, and abilities that enable an individual to effectively lead and inspire others, drive change, and achieve organisational goals. The present aims of the study was to investigate the leadership potential shown by undergraduate and postgraduate students in West Bengal. To achieve these aims, a cross-sectional survey was conducted. Simple random sampling was used in the selection of the sample, 681 samples were selected for this study. The Akron Leadership Scale (Lord, Foti, & DeVader, 1984) is a widely used tool for collecting data in the field of leadership research and assessment. The findings of the study are- Male students showed greater leadership potential than female students. General caste students showed greater leadership potential than all other caste students. Students from rural habitation scored higher on measures of leadership potential than their urban counterparts.The leadership potential of arts was higher than that of science student

KEYWORDS: *Leadership Potentials, Higher Education Students, Undergraduate and Post graduate level*

1. INTRODUCTION

Leadership is characterized by its dynamic and varied nature, which has undergone changes throughout history due to the impact of historical events, cultural factors, and the diverse requirements of different organizations (Northouse, 2018). Leadership may be seen as the capacity to exert influence and provide guidance to people or collectives in order to facilitate the attainment of shared objectives. The concept extends beyond basic authoritative power and involves other attributes like as visionary thinking, effective communication, and the capacity to inspire and motivate people. Academic researchers have extensively examined many theoretical frameworks in order to elucidate the concept of leadership. These frameworks include a wide spectrum, ranging from trait-based theories that emphasize inherent abilities to behavioural theories that underscore the significance of acquired skills. The historical narrative of leadership is a complex and intricate fabric, interwoven with the significant contributions made by great leaders across many epochs. Throughout history, there have been several forms of leadership shown by notable figures, ranging from ancient military commanders like Alexander the Great to contemporary business innovators like Steve Jobs. The progression of leadership ideas may be seen by examining the great man theory, behavioural theories, contingency theories, and more recent models such as transformational and servant leadership (Goodwin, 2018). The notion of leadership is not universally applicable, since many leadership styles arise in response to situational requirements and individual traits. Autocratic leadership is characterized by a solitary decisionmaker, while democratic leadership promotes collective involvement. Transformational leaders are known for their ability to motivate and inspire others to bring about significant changes. In contrast, transactional leaders use a more transactional approaches, emphasizing the use of incentives and penalties to motivate their followers. Lastly, servant leaders emphasize the needs and wellbeing of others, demonstrating a selfless and compassionate leadership style (Kotter, 1996).

- **Leadership and Higher Education Students**

The importance of leadership qualities among young individuals in the context of higher education should not be overlooked. During the period of transitioning from youth to adulthood, students engage in preparations not only for a highly competitive job market, but also for assuming the responsibilities and exerting influence as active and conscientious members of society. The prioritization of leadership development within the context of higher education provides young people with the necessary skills and abilities to effectively confront and overcome the many obstacles encountered in the real world. This research note aims to elucidate the fundamental leadership abilities that are crucial for students in higher education, drawing upon contemporary academic research and professional perspectives. The significance of leadership skill lies on the critical thinking ability as a predictor of real-world outcomes is highlighted in a study article that has been published in the Journal of Educational Psychology. Young individuals who are engaged in the pursuit of further education must engage in the critical processes of analyzing, evaluating, and synthesizing knowledge derived from a wide range of sources. The ability to identify biases, evaluate diverse viewpoints, and make well-informed judgments equips students with the necessary skills to assume leadership positions across several domains. The correlation between good leadership and effective communication is inherently interconnected. According to a research conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers, it was shown that employers prioritize verbal and written communication abilities as key traits when evaluating a candidate's CV. Effective communication skills, including the capacity to articulate thoughts coherently, actively listen, and participate in productive discussions, play a crucial role in fostering collaboration and promoting joint endeavours.

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2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

To find out the appropriate answers to the above-identified research questions and knowledge gaps, the problem of the present study is stated as- "**Investigating leadership potentials in higher education students in west Bengal"**

2.1 Objectives of the study

Objectives of the study were formulated and stated as –

I. To study the present state of leadership potential among higher education students of West Bengal.

II. To understand the variation of various demographic variables viz. gender, social caste, habitat, stream of study on leadership potentials in higher education students level in West Bengal.

2.2 Hypotheses of the study

Following null hypotheses were formulated based on objectives of the study as -

H01: There exists no significant mean difference in Leadership potential in higher education students concerning gender.

H02: There exists no significant mean difference in Leadership potential in higher education students concerning social caste.

H03: There exists no significant mean difference in Leadership potential in higher education students concerning habitat.

H04: There exists no significant mean difference in Leadership potential in higher education students concerning streams of study.

2.3 Delimitations of the study

The research work has undertaken within a limited period of time framework and researches on leadership lay in a huge area to discover therefore the researcher has limited current research work in following areas as –

i. Only students from seven colleges and one university were taken.
ii. Students studying in Undergraduate and Postgraduate level were considered as sample only.
iii. The investigator has collected data only from 681 samples.
iv. The demographics of the study were delimited to gender, social caste, habitat, stream of study of the students.
v. Data were collected to confined various districts from Kolkata, south 24 parganas, North 24 parganas, districts.

3.RESEARCH METHOD

The objective of the present study was to investigate the leadership potential shown by undergraduate and postgraduate students in West Bengal. To achieve this objective, a cross-sectional survey was conducted among undergraduate and postgraduate students in West Bengal.

3.1 Population

The population of the study consisted of entire college and university going higher education students in West Bengal.

3.2. Sample

Samples are true representatives of population. Using simple random sampling technique, a number of 681 higher education (UG and PG level) students in West Bengal were reached and considered as the sample of the study.

3.3 Variables

A variable refers to an element or feature that has the potential to exhibit variation or undergo changes in value throughout the duration of the research endeavour. Variables may be used to quantify and explore many aspects of a study subject or issue. The present research used two primary variables, namely dependent and independent variables.

- **Dependent variable** – Leadership potential among higher education students.
- **Independent variable** – Researcher used a sum of four demographic variable as independent variable in present study. Following independent variables were –

i. **Gende**r – Gender was categorized in two parts as male and female.
ii. **Social caste** – Social caste was categorized in four parts as General, OBC, SC, ST.
iii. **Habitat** - Habitat was categorized in two parts as rural and urban.
iv. **Stream of study** - Stream was categorized in two categories as Arts and Science.

3.4 Data collection Tool

The collection of pertinent and appropriate data from the relevant samples is of utmost importance and can be accomplished with the use of suitable instruments. In this study, one primary questionnaire and one demographic information schedule were administered to students.

I. Demographic Information:

Information schedule prepared and deployed to gather basic data of students as –

a. Gender d. Stream of study e. Habitat g. social caste

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II. Akron Leadership Questionnaire

The Akron Leadership Scale is a widely used tool in the field of leadership research and assessment. The study used the Akron Leadership Questionnaire (Lord, Foti, & DeVader, 1984) to get insight into the participants' perspectives of the attributes of an exemplary leader. The participant was provided with instructions to evaluate their subjective response to each of the statements. The scale consists of 25 statements that are evaluated using a 5-point rating system, ranging from 1 (indicating poor performance) to 5 (indicating excellent performance).

Psychometric Properties of scale

Initially, a pilot study was conducted with the bilingual version of the scale among 150 students. The internal consistency was found to be 0.807 (Cronbach's alpha). The construct validity, face validity and content validity were assured by two experts. Then the scale was deployed among 681 higher education students. After the final data collection procedure, again the Cronbach's alpha reliability test was performed and the value was found to be 0.741 among 681 students. Which stayed in acceptable range of reliability test.

4. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Hypothesis Testing

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyses and interpret the hypotheses.

H01: **There exists no significant mean difference in Leadership potential in higher education students concerning gender.**

Table 1. Showing Independent sample T-Test based on Leadership potential of student's gender.

Independent sample T-Test							
Variable	**Category**	**N**	**t**	**df**	**Std. error Diff.**	**p-value**	**Remarks**
Gender	Male	340	.075	679	.868	.940	***NS**
	Female	341					**P>0.05**

***NS=Not Significant**

Table 4.1 showed that the computed value of the independent samples t-test comparing the mean scores of male and female students with respect to Leadership potential was found to be statistically not significant [t (681) = .075, p>0.05]. Therefore, the null hypothesis was failed to reject at 0.05 level and it can be said that the found difference in the mean scores was due to random chance factor.

1.1 Leadership potential based on student's gender.

Table 4.2: mean distribution of Leadership potential based on student's gender.

Variable	**Category**	**Number of Students**	**Mean**	**SD**
Gender	Male	340	81.11	10.640
	Female	341	81.05	11.966

H02: There exists no significant mean difference in Leadership potential in higher education students concerning social caste.

Table 4.3 Showing the One-way ANOVA based on Leadership potentialconcerning social caste.

One-way ANOVA						
	Sum of Squares	**Df**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**Sig.**	**Remarks**
Between Groups	1910.830	3	636.943	5.064	.002	***S**
Within Groups	85146.888	677	125.771			**P<0.05**
Total	87057.718	680				

***S=Significant**

Table 4.3 showed that the computed value of one-way ANOVA comparing the mean scores of social caste students with respect to Leadership potential was found to be statistically significant [F (3, 677) = 5.064, p<0.05]. Therefore, the nullhypothesis was rejected at 0.05 level and it can be said that the found difference inthe mean scores was due to random chance factor

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2. Leadership potential based on student's social caste

Table 4.4 mean distribution of Leadership potential based on student's social caste

Variable	Category	Number of Students	Mean	SD
Social caste	General	282	83.00	10.027
	OBC	151	80.35	12.530
	SC	176	79.62	11.860
	ST	72	78.67	11.087

H03: There exists no significant mean difference in Leadership potential in higher education students concerning habitat.

Table 4.5 Showing Independent sample T-Test based on Leadershippotential of student's habitat.

Independent sample T-Test							
Variable	**Category**	**N**	**t**	**Df**	**Std. error Diff.**	**p-value**	**Remarks**
Habitat	Rural	481	2.079	679	.950	.038	***S P<0.05**
	Urban	200					

***S=Significant**

Table 4.5 showed that the computed value of the independent samples t-test comparing the mean scores of habitat students with respect to Leadership potential was found to be statistically significant [t (681) = 2.079, p<0.05]. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected at 0.05 level and it can be said that thefound difference in the mean scores was due to random chance factor.

3.1 Leadership potential based on student's habitat

Table 4.6 mean distribution of Leadership potential based on student's habitat

Variable	Category	Number of Students	Mean	SD
	Rural	481	81.66	11.113
Habitat	Urban	200	79.69	11.698

H04:There exists no significant mean difference in Leadership potential in higher education students concerning streams of study.

Table 4.7 Showing Independent sample T-Test based on Leadershippotential of student's streams of study.

Independent sample T-Test							
Variable	**Category**	**N**	**T**	**df**	**Std. error Diff.**	**p-value**	**Remarks**
Streams of study	Arts	438	1.587	679	.904	.113	***NS P>0.05**
	Science	243					

***NS=Not Significant**

Table 4.7 showed that the computed value of the independent samples t-test comparing the mean scores of streams of study students with respect to Leadership potential was found to be statistically not significant [t (681) = 1.587, p>0.05]. Therefore, the null hypothesis was failed to reject at 0.05 level and it canbe said that the found difference in the mean scores was due to a random chance factor.

4.1. Leadership potential based on student's streams of study

Table 4.8 mean distribution of Leadership potential based on student's streams of study

Variable	Category	Number of Students	Mean	SD
	Arts	438	81.59	12.442
Streams of study	Science	243	80.16	8.882

CONCLUSION

- Male students showed greater leadership potential than female students.
- General caste students showed greater leadership potentialthan all other caste students.
- Students from rural habitation scored higher on measures of leadership potential than their urban counterparts.
- The leadership potential of arts was higher than that of science student

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