

# Development Of Students' Attitudes Towards Leadership During University Education

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## ABSTRACT

The current study explores the influence of university education in developing students' attitudes towards different types of leadership, i.e., social leadership, political leadership and administrative leadership. It measures the effect that higher education has on the way of thinking, feeling and behaving as leaders during their present and future lives. The research design of the study was casual comparative, having university education as an independent variable and students' attitudes towards leadership is dependent variable. The population of the study are the students of university of Gujrat who are working as the members of students' societies in university. Sample was selected through strata census. A questionnaire having three sub scales was developed comprising 25 stated propositions. The data was collected from 421 university students, i.e., 130 from semester 2nd, 130 and 172 from 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> semesters respectively. For analysis of the collected data, ANOVA was applied to find out the comparative effect of university education on three different given groups, i.e., students of semester 2, 4 and 8. Results of the study revealed that there is upward attitudinal development among university students on political leadership but found least influence of their higher education on their attitudes towards social and administrative leadership.

## Introduction

Leadership establishes working conditions and personal relationships in real life settings with other persons in society to achieve certain goals. For the purpose, some born with and some other acquire the leadership skills where they pick up a lot of leadership, communication, and other practical skills that they may use now and in the future (Segovia et al., 2019). Thus creating leaders for influencing personal and social scenarios, social system has to depend on education institutions, particularly on the institutions of higher learning. Thus universities are at the heart as dynamic organization to produce

leadership for social change to create a fairer society.

A visionary schooling in any educational institution stimulates the traits among youth for progress, where they gone under important changes regarding their attitudes, values and commitments. In the same perspective, the present study explores the leadership traits through measuring university students' attitudes, activities and behavior etc. Selzer, Howton, and Wallace (2017) used a multi-level approach to explore how women improve their leadership skills, taking into account the personal, interpersonal, and organisational settings. The study that was mentioned

started a programme that recommended empowering women to be their authentic selves without boundaries.

Preparing future leaders in various fields, is a prime priority in higher education, but doubts have been raised about whether this given goal is being achieved or not. Educational institutions including universities, mostly focusing on graduating students by imparting superficial knowledge and granting degrees, instead of developing their personal, social and particularly higher order skills like their leadership skills. Student are the direct stakeholders of the university, hence higher education institutions are in positioned to deal youth social issues through the advancement of efficient leadership within sphere of their academic activities (Astin & Astin 2000). For the readiness of professional life, features and abilities of leadership needs to be encouraged to support students in learning such desired behaviors.

Attitudes are the focus of the current study, of which overall evaluation can be positive, negative, or neutral, and it can vary in their extremity as highly positive or highly negative (Weiner, 2003). Similarly, Demirel and Un (1987) explained attitudes as the collection of modified feelings that stimulates a person to behave accordingly when a person meets with some individuals, matters or some circumstances. There is no one specific leadership style for students' leadership for all perspectives like social, political and administrative ones (Northouse, 2009). Administrative leadership is supposed to be that a specific individual in the field of administrative supervision can accomplish a specified goal by instruction and direction or by exercising the appropriate power.

Actually, the demands of a group of people and the characteristics of the structure that

that group is striving to grow within are what cause the administrative leaders to emerge. When the roles of guiding the actions of the subordinates in the organisation have been established and the authority has been established, administrative leadership emerges. Social leadership is commonly observed in universities where social regulation of an individual helps and reinforces for the completion of common goals (Chemers, 1997). It includes demonstration of one's personal actions in ways that strengths faith to achieve the set goals. No of one's social station, financial resources, or privilege, social leadership is the commitment of one's life and abilities to the betterment of society.

Political leadership is commonly used for politicians who have formal power for decision. They are, as advocated by King and Montgomery (2002), Greenstein (2004), usually elected through voting and play their role at local, institutional or national level where emerges multidimensional aspects of political life. In a nutshell, leadership is a real component of the complex social processes that produce certain political outcomes like election results, social harmony and integrity by motivating through team leaders having high morality.

Education is supposed to be responsible for total development of the students, to make them productive citizens of the prevailing society, but contrarily after having sound education, there might be lack of leaders in all spheres of life. Question arises as whether university education which entails leadership education, is playing its role in developing students' even attitudes which provide base for practical leadership in various fields of life. So researcher planned the study to explore the effect of university education in developing students' attitudes towards leadership.

The assumed influence of the Pakistani Higher education universities is based on the results of previous studies like by Segovia et al., (2019) suggested that the female students in the specifically created programme acquired a degree of leadership understanding with useful tools for their future. They were motivated by the programme, which supported improvements in their self-confidence and perception of their own capabilities, including contemplation on how to deal with difficulties at work. The study's conclusions show that specialised education may effectively overcome two hindrances to women in management roles that have been noted in the literature: lack of training and low self-confidence.

### **Related Literature Review**

After having a comprehensive introduction on the variables of the study, particularly the attitudes of the university students towards attitudes. First some further review is presented on attitudes as Oppenheim (1992) defined attitudes as the tendency of a person for positive or negative response as a result of any action. Similarly, the extended concept is that attitudes are the favorable or opposing feelings against something and are the reflections of mental dispositions of the humans to act for some favorable or against a certain situation, that may be positive or negative in nature. Conclusively there are three dimensions of attitudes, as described by Maio, Bell and Esses (1996) i.e. positive, negative and neutral ones.

Keeping in view the focus of the study i.e., university students' attitudes towards leadership which prevails as ever in every field and It is unavoidable and ubiquitous. It is present everywhere, in both small and large organisations, in corporations, in trade unions and in charitable bodies, in tribes and in universities. Organizations,

therefore, focus and give time and worth to leadership training and education and the possible resultant growth (Zorn & Leichty, 1991). Question arises as whether the leadership in focus is compatible to that one stated by Brinia (2008), leadership is an idealistic activity that focuses an organization's core values, makes those values exceptional, and inspires, even transforms, the individuals inside the organisation so that they think and behave in the same manner in order to accomplish predetermined goals.

Administrative leadership is concerned with the public organizations which carry out plans and procedures (Conger & Pearce, 2003) by engaging individuals in different activities in an environment to manage achievement of goals (Musbah, Habtoor & Abdalla, 2015). Different theories explain the subject of administrative leadership to the big concern to the belief of managerial/administrative leadership. Thus in this sense, the leader is the one who establishes controls, and the followers/vassals are those who carry out those rules and follow the leader as they lead them to their intended goals. According to Robbins (2001), leadership is actually authority, which is a component of the larger concept of power. Leadership is the capacity to influence a person's legitimate function or position by having an impact on their decisions, without necessarily requiring that the person in question hold a position of authority.

Relating leadership with education can be defined as both cognitive and attitudinal where the precise nature of leadership including the political one, the most difficult problems in the leadership domain is social action in the most real social and political phenomenon. According to Ruscio (2004) Societies have revered them for the roles, values, and procedures that provide the operational foundations for

representation, participation, and accountability. Therefore, the framework for political leadership is essentially formed by the interplay and implementation of various roles, laws, and practises. According to Wilson (2004), political leadership requires the capacity to interpret a variety of internal and external objectives in order to foster solidarity.

Social leadership is the intention to devote one's life and resources to enhancing society. Social leaders are leaders who seek to change some aspect of the world. Social leadership also needs to take into consideration people's aesthetic and respectful judgements. Social leadership is about taking the initiative, which entails imagining and expressing a sense of resolve, direction, and more concrete goals before establishing the circumstances and cooperating with others to advance the campaign towards these goals. Certain personal traits, attitudes, ideals, and talents are expected of social leaders. Social leaders must be successful at rallying support. In terms that apply to the social leader, Greene (2004) discusses some of the high order talents of highly effective people. Social leadership is about engaging people (Hogg & Vaughan, 2009).

Discussing how academic leaders who foster learning environments with cultural awareness, acceptance of multiple intelligences and ways of knowing, strategic thinking, engagement, and a sense of collective identity as collaborators in knowledge development and active investigators into practise have an impact on all three of the aforementioned leaderships (Amey, 2006).

Summarily the university education is to produce leadership through broadening vision of the graduates to be the leaders of future. For leaders, key literature reflects that Learning and practising leadership

transcends positional and institutional focus and goes beyond the development of administrative and management abilities. Instead, it looks at how leadership is developed and distributed across all roles in organisations. The mental models that shape how administrators perceive the world, alter organisational reality, question the institutional status quo, and promote significant organisational and personal change are discussed by authors (Amey, 2006).

### **Purpose of the study**

The current study explores as whether students' attitudes develop in various leadership domains while passing through phases of university education.

Following research questions are to be answered to address the purpose of the study.

1. What is the dimension of undergraduate students' attitudes towards social, administrative and political leadership at the initial, middle and final phase of their study program at university?
2. Is there significant difference between students' attitudes towards overall as well as social, administrative and political leadership, studying at three different phases i.e. 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> semesters in university education?

### **Methodology**

The study is casual comparative in nature in which two variables, i.e., university education with its phases/levels (2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> semesters) as independent variable and students' attitudes with their dimensions (positive, neutral, and negative) towards leadership as dependent variable.

Population of the study was the BS students' session 2016-20 (participating in

different societies) of University of Gujrat. The total number was 530 which were 7 faculties in University of Gujrat from 33 departments. There are 29 students' societies which were working with different visions and practices. 421 students were selected through stratified sampling, who were working in the students' societies.

Questionnaire was developed on five points Likert scale, consisted of 25 statements related to three types of leadership, i.e., social, administrative and political. Validity of the questionnaire was ensure through expert opinion. Content validity index of the questionnaire was found .71, which was acceptable according to the criteria described by Ishaque (2022). Data was collected from those students who were members of the students' societies in University of Gujrat. Data file was

developed and analyzed in two perspectives i.e. descriptive: means, percentages, and as well as inferential i.e., through one-way ANOVA to compare the leadership attitudes of three groups, i.e. studying in semesters 2, 4 & 8. Further for multiple comparisons, F test (ratio) was applied. Where the F ratio was significant, then Post-Hoc test was applied to find out the means differences in attitudinal dimensions between one groups with each other. Thus three comparisons were made groups 1 and 2, 1 & 3 and 2 & 3. Cut off points of mean scores from 1.0-1.5 was to interpret as highly negative; 1.6-2.5 negative; 2.6-3.5 neutral; while 3.6-4.5 positive and 4.6-5.0 as highly positive, to determine the students' attitudinal dimensions.

## Results and discussion

**Table 1: Analysis of students' attitudinal Dimensions towards Social, Administrative and Political Leadership**

Education Phases	Phases	N	Mean	SD	Attitudinal Dimensions
Social	Initial	118	3.2	.65	Neutral
	Middle	131	3.6	.44	Positive
	Final	172	4.5	.54	Positive
Administrative	Initial	118	3.0	.40	Neutral
	Middle	131	4.3	.44	Positive
	Final	172	3.5	.81	Neutral
Political	Initial	118	2.6	.46	Neutral
	Middle	131	3.6	.33	Positive
	Final	172	3.6	.48	Positive

In table 1, results of data analysis show that students' attitudes towards social leadership are gradually developing at the initial, middle and final phases (M=3.2 and SD .65), (M=3.6 and SD .44), (M=4.5 and SD .54), from neutral to positive respectively.

Similarly, their attitudes towards political leadership are also developing at the given phases (M=2.6 and SD .46), (M=3.6 and SD

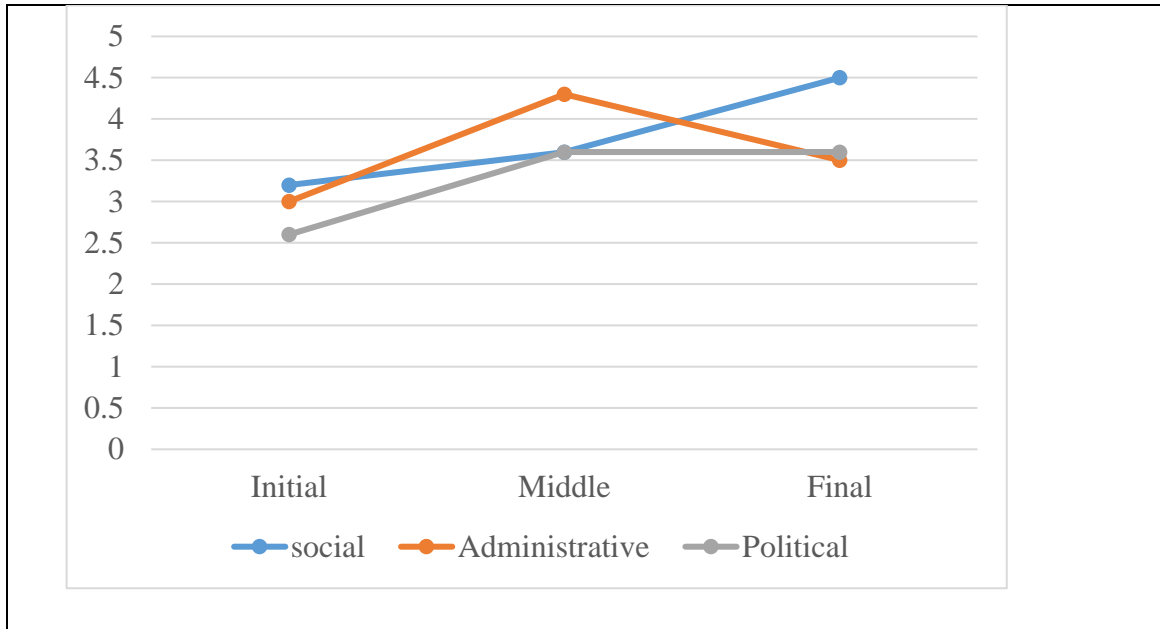
.33), (M=3.6 and SD .48), respectively from neutral to positive but comparatively lower and with less variance in standard deviations.

Contrarily students' attitudinal growth in administrative leadership improves somewhat from initial to middle but decline again at the final stage (M=3.0 and SD .40), (M=4.3 and SD .44), (M=3.5 and SD .81), middle phase also shows students' positive

attitudes towards administrative leadership.  
Graphical representation of levels of

students' attitudes towards leadership is  
presented below.

**Figure 1:** Levels of Attitudes towards Social, Administrative and Political Leadership



According to graph, in social leadership students have neutral attitude (M=3.2) for society services at their initial stage and gradually improved to positivity (M=3.6) at middle stage and it continued towards its peak (M=4.5) at their final stage of their university education. In administrative leadership, students at their initial stage

were comparatively less interested (M=3.0) but it rapidly improved (M=4.3) at middle stage and students' morale was high but it declined at final stage of their program. In case of political leadership, students showed very low interest (M=2.6) at initial stage but it improved at middle stage (M=3.6) and sustained at final stage without any change.

**Table 2: Statistical Analysis of Students' Attitudes towards Leadership (ANOVA)**

Types of Leadership		Sum of Squares	Mean Square	df	F	Sig.
Social Leadership	Between groups	1.12	.56	2	1.81	0.16
	Within groups	130	.31	418		
	Total	131		420		
Administrative Leadership	Between groups	.612	.31	2	1.41	0.24
	Within groups	90.27	.22	418		
	Total	90.90		420		

Political Leadership	Between groups	.96	.48	2		
	Within groups	91.10	.22	418	2.21	0.11
	Total	92.06		420		

$P < .05$

Analysis results show that there is insignificant difference at three different phases of education. The value of  $F$  (1.81) with  $df$  (420) described insignificant difference among students' attitude towards social leadership as  $p = 0.16 > 0.05$  at initial, middle, and final phase of their education. Further analysis results show that there is also insignificant difference at three different phases of education ( $F = 1.41$ ;  $p = 0.24 > .05$ ) in students' mean score on attitudes towards their administrative leadership roles. Result of attitudes of students towards political leadership on initial, middle and final phases of university education is insignificant ( $F = 2.21$ ;  $p = 0.11 > .05$ ), particularly developmentally in overall attitudes' at three different phases of education at the university.

### Discussion and conclusion

Leaders as concluded by Amey (2006), see their own development as paramount to their ability to create environments that serve the needs of others and they seek opportunities to learn and reflect on their own experiences through different activities, collaborating, and reading etc. Moreover, there is least focus of the higher education institutions in developing leadership qualities in the students. Similar perspective presented by Spendlove (2007) supports the situation that most universities had no systematic approach for either identifying or developing leadership skills. It was also found that teachers didn't play any role in the development of students' attitudes towards managerial role and leadership. There may be different reasons for passive role of university education in

developing leadership skills in the students. Students' interest and role of teacher in planning the curricular and co-curricular activities for developing students' positive attitudes towards leadership may be the reasons that may be explored in further studies.

Thanks to the cooperation of a Coaching Human Resources Company, Psicotec, students in a Women Leadership Programme (WLP), which ran over two years in 2017 and 2018, were also given an individual exam on their personal leadership style and abilities. A strong leader today must be able to encourage a team, negotiate, work in a team, and function in an environment that is always changing and becoming more globalised. The theoretical modules were created in response to these requirements. The subjects included personal branding, effective communication, social media and networking, public speaking, effective negotiation, effective leadership style and approaches, and business management.

The female participants in the class were very appreciative of all the topics, but particularly of Personal Branding, Social Media and Networking, and Effective Communication. The majority of students, especially in 2018, admitted to prior topic ignorance. Additionally, female students said that they had acquired a certain level of knowledge and were provided certain tools that helped them develop new skills related to the subjects they had studied.

The programme may have a significant impact on the development of female

engineering students' leadership abilities, particularly for those who are technically bright but who have received insufficient training in interpersonal, management, and social skills.

It is concluded that students reported themselves to be neutral in their attitudes towards social leadership on the basis of calculated mean scores 3.2, and 3.3 at their initial, middle stages of university education respectively. At the final stage their mean score is 3.5 that reflected them to be with positive attitude towards social leadership during their final semester of university education.

It is concluded from the findings ( $M = 3.0$ ) revealed that of university students at their initial stage have neutral attitude towards administrative leadership. Moreover, results ( $M = 4.3$ ) of students at their middle shows that students have highly positive attitude towards administrative leadership and at final ( $M = 3.8$ ) stage of university education described that students have also positive attitude towards administrative leadership.

It was concluded from the findings ( $M = 2.6$ ) at their initial stage revealed that of university students have neutral attitude towards political leadership. Moreover, results ( $M = 3.5$ ) of students with neutral at their middle while on final stage ( $M = 3.6$ ) of their education described that students have also positive attitude towards political leadership. Findings concluded that students have insignificant difference ( $Sig = .16$ ) in their attitude towards social leadership at their initial, middle and final stage of university education.

Findings concluded that students with ( $Sig = .10$ ) have significant difference in their attitude towards political leadership at their initial, middle and final stage of university education. Findings concluded that students

with ( $Sig = .24$ ) have insignificant difference in their attitude towards administrative leadership at their initial, middle and final stage of university education.

Furthermore multiple comparisons showed that there is insignificant difference in their attitude towards political leadership with ( $MD = .12$ ) between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> semester. Finding exposed that with ( $MD = .04$ ) students of 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> semester have insignificant difference in their attitude towards political leadership. With ( $MD = .08$ ) semester 8<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> students have also insignificant difference towards political leadership.

### Recommendations

On the basis of conclusion of the study, following recommendations are presented.

There is no significant contribution of university education in developing students' attitudes towards social leadership, hence university needs to make policies that students' societies should work more rigorously and be more involving and active for students' total development. Thus the prevailing scarcity of social leaders being provided by universities, would be addressed and future graduates may come forward to play their part as social leaders for the social uplift of the fate of the coming generations.

There is also need of social service programs to be launched by the university societies through which students would have more involvement in social activities and thus might have better positive attitudes and resultantly social skills.

There is somewhat role of university education but can be improved by assigning certain social roles to the graduating students during education as well as allowing students' unions for enhancing their political participation in students'



unions as well students' association to debate students problems in universities.

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