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Empowering Future Leaders: Evaluating the Impact of a Leadership Enhancement Program on Female Students' Communication, Strategic Thinking, Problem-Solving and Team Collaboration Skills(*)

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Abstract

Developing leadership skills in female students is essential for preparing them to excel in the 21th century professional settings. This study aims at evaluating the impact of a suggested program titled “the *Leadership Enhancement Program (LEP)*” on improving communication, strategic thinking, problem-solving, and team collaboration skills among first-level students at the Applied College, Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University (PNU), Saudi Arabia. Implemented as a part of the *Administrative Communications Course*, the program was designed to foster essential leadership competencies through interactive and experiential learning methods. A total of 100 female students participated in the *LEP*, which incorporated workshops, role-play activities, project-based learning, collaborative exercises, and the integration of technology to enhance communication. Additionally, reflective journals and focus groups were used to assess students' progress and gather qualitative insights into their learning experiences. The program aimed to provide a structured yet dynamic environment for students to develop critical leadership attributes, particularly in decision-making and teamwork. Findings of the study indicate that students exhibited notable improvements in their leadership-related skills, particularly in their ability to communicate effectively, think strategically, solve problems efficiently, and collaborate within teams. Participants also reported increased confidence in their leadership capabilities, highlighting the effectiveness of experiential learning in leadership development. These results underscore the significance of structured leadership programs within academic curricula to better equip students for future challenges.

Keywords: Leadership Enhancement Program, female leadership development, communication skills, strategic thinking, problem-solving, team collaboration, experiential learning.

Introduction:

In recent years, the discourse surrounding leadership skills in higher education has gained significant terrain, particularly in the context of students in conservative societies such as Saudi Arabia. While the kingdom undergoes a transformative period under the 2030 vision, which emphasizes economic diversification and increased participation of women in the active population, it is becoming more and more imperative to offer students essential leadership skills. The culture of leadership skills among these students is not only essential for their personal and professional growth, but also for the empowerment of women in wider social and economic frameworks of Saudi Arabia.

Leadership skills include a range of capacities, including effective communication, strategic thinking, problem solving and team collaboration. However, traditional educational contexts often do not favor the development of these skills among students, especially in fields such as administrative communication. This is particularly worrying given the essential role that these skills play in promoting resilience, adaptability and influence - the essential qualities for women sailing in the complexities of modern workplaces. In addition, research indicates that female representation in leadership posts positively influences organizational efficiency, improving various perspectives and promoting inclusive environments. Thus, the recognition and development of leadership potential among students' benefits not only in individual career trajectories but also contributes to the advancement of society.

In Saudi Arabia, cultural and societal norms have historically shaped the perceptions and opportunities offered to women, often setting limits on their leadership opportunities. However, the progressive changes in policies and public discourse began to question these constraints, creating a fertile environment to cultivate future leaders. Higher education establishments have a unique responsibility and opportunity to carry out in this development by integrating innovative class activities that facilitate the development of leadership skills in their programs.

The use of innovative educational approaches in courses like Administrative Communication can serve as a dynamic platform to promote the sense of leadership among students. Such approaches could include case

studies, role-playing scenarios and collaboration projects that simulate the organizational challenges of the real world. By engaging students in these interactive and experiential learning processes, educators can create opportunities for students to practice essential skills such as decision-making, conflict resolution and effective communication in a favorable environment.

In addition, the integration of technology and digital communication tools in the program can improve the learning experience, allowing students to connect with leadership and mentoring models beyond their immediate academic context. This can facilitate exposure to broader perspectives on leadership and innovation while encouraging the development of a personal leadership style that resonates with their values and their experiences.

Attention to the development of leadership in higher education aligns not only with contemporary demands but also serves to transform the trajectories of future women leaders within the rapid socio-economic landscape of Saudi Arabia. The integration of innovative activities and procedures in the classroom within the Administrative Communication course presents a significant opportunity to improve leadership skills among the Applied College students.

Problem Statement:

Despite the increasing emphasis on leadership development in higher education globally, many academic programs in Saudi Arabia still lack structured initiatives that actively foster leadership competencies among female students. Traditional teaching methods often focus on theoretical knowledge, offering limited opportunities for experiential learning, collaboration, or real-world problem-solving. This gap is particularly evident in foundational courses such as Administrative Communication, which have the potential to serve as platforms for practical skill-building. Furthermore, while national reforms under Vision 2030 have created new opportunities for women, many young female students remain underprepared for leadership roles due to limited exposure to communication, critical thinking, strategic planning, and team-based challenges. There is a pressing need to design, implement, and evaluate targeted programs that address this shortfall by cultivating essential leadership qualities in women from the outset of their academic journey.

Significance of the Study:

This study is significant as it addresses a critical gap in leadership development opportunities for female students within Saudi higher education. In alignment with the national objectives outlined in Saudi Vision (2030) - particularly the empowerment of women and the advancement of human capital - this research contributes to ongoing efforts to prepare women for active participation in the workforce and leadership roles. By providing an evidence-based model for integrating leadership training into academic curricula, especially within communication-related courses, the study offers a practical framework for skill development. It emphasizes the value of experiential learning approaches, such as workshops, role-play, and collaborative activities, which enhance students' practical abilities and build self-confidence. Furthermore, the study contributes to the limited body of research focused on female leadership development in conservative and culturally specific contexts, offering insights that are both locally relevant and globally informative. The findings are expected to have practical implications for educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers working to empower the next generation of female leaders in Saudi Arabia and beyond.

Objectives of the Study:

This study aims to:

- a-Evaluate the impact of a suggested program titled the *Leadership Enhancement Program (LEP)* on improving communication, strategic thinking, problem-solving, and team collaboration skills among first-level students at the Applied College, Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University (PNU), Saudi Arabia.
- b-Provide a structured yet dynamic environment for students to develop critical leadership attributes, particularly in decision-making and teamwork.
- c-Encourage the use of experiential learning methods – such as role-play, workshops, collaborative tasks, and technology integration – to support leadership growth.
- d-Explore students' perceptions and self-reported progress in leadership competencies through reflective journals and focus groups.
- e-Offer insights and recommendations for embedding leadership development strategies into academic programs for female students in similar educational and cultural contexts.

Literature Review:

Guidance promotes an environment in which mentors can ask questions, look for advice and gain confidence in articulating their ideas (Marghaly Abdelaliam et al., 2025). Students can be encouraged to practice their communication skills by conducting interviews with other university professors, their colleagues, and representatives from the labour market. Then, the course's initiative involves monthly network sessions, where students receive feedback on their interviewing activity, reinforcing their skills to lead discussions and present their ideas in a supportive, stress-free environment. Students are encouraged to engage in reflective practices that build self-awareness, an essential feature for effective leaders.

Leadership workshops represent another dynamic approach adopted by the researcher to cultivate female leadership. These workshops usually include interactive sessions that focus on essential skills such as negotiation, conflict resolution and assertive communication. Shaalan (2024) discusses a specific series of workshops designed to refine presentation skills, where participants have the task of making speeches on leadership topics. These activities not only promote the articulation of thoughts but also create opportunities for colleagues to provide positive feedback, improving participants' confidence and ability to effectively communicate in public environments. By designing activities that require immediate application of learning skills, workshops serve to reinforce leadership concepts and provide practical experience.

Al-Kahlan and Khasawneh (2024) proposed innovative pedagogical strategies designed to improve communication skills. The implementation of learning based on scenarios, role-play and peer comments can simulate real-life challenges which leaders face, which allows students to develop their problem-solving skills. These experimental learning activities not only stimulate critical thinking but also allow students to face real-world challenges, practice assertive communication and conflict resolution in a safe environment. According to Khasawneh et al. (2024), such immersive learning experiences are essential to instill in students self-efficacy and resilience.

Collaborative projects are also a vital mechanism, through which students develop leadership skills and improve their administrative communication skills. These projects usually involve interdisciplinary teams, where students assume leadership functions to coordinate tasks,

manage group dynamics, and effectively communicate objectives. Farghaly Abdelallem et al. (2025) note that these collaborative environments encourage active participation and delegation of responsibilities, placing students in authentic leadership scenarios. This can be done through a group project in which students are given charge of developing a communication strategy for a local organization. Throughout the process, students get involved in strategic brainstorming, facilitate meetings and finally present their recommendations to stakeholders, thus simulating a real-life leadership experience.

Ghamrawi et al. (2024) argue that engaging in collaborative projects allows participants to experience the complexities of group dynamics, thus providing the necessary tools to guide different teams in various contexts. As students engage in debriefing sessions at the end of their collaborative projects, they can identify strengths and areas for improvement, promoting resilience and adaptability, which are essential for effective leaders. In addition, collaborative projects often simulate the challenges of the real world that require students to devise strategic solutions. Through engaging with complex scenarios, students cultivate critical thinking and decision-making skills. Finally, the social aspect of collaboration cannot be overlooked. Collaborative activities promote the establishment of networks between the students, who can benefit from these connections as they advance in their academic and professional activities. Ghamrawi et al. (2024) highlight the importance of tutoring and support networks in promoting leadership among women, claiming that collaborative projects create opportunities for mentor students, sharing experiences and promoting mutual relationships.

In addition, the inclusion of technology can fortify these activities in the classroom, providing students with platforms to improve their communication skills in an increasingly digital world. Tools such as online collaborative software and virtual meeting applications have been integrated into the curriculum, allowing students to practice digital communication and remote leadership. This enhances its adaptability and effectiveness in managing administrative tasks in various contexts.

A corpus of growing literature suggested that innovative activities in class can considerably improve the perception that students of leadership women have and influence their future aspirations, especially in

administrative communication contexts (Ali et al., 2024). Al Fryan et al. (2024) conducted a study evaluating the impact of targeted educational programs on the students of Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University. Their results indicated that students engaged in structured leadership activities reported a marked increase in empowerment and self-efficacy. More specifically, the researchers noted a transformation of how participants considered leadership - not simply as a positional authority but as an incarnation of influence and collaboration. Such an evolution is vital to move the traditional perceptions of female leadership in educational and professional contexts.

Alotaibi et al. (2025) explored the correlation between innovative interventions in class, acquisition of knowledge and the results of empowerment in students. Their research underlined that workshops integrating experiential learning, mentoring by teachers, and collaboration with peers have given important gains in terms of communication skills, leadership and strategic thinking.

Effective communication is a cornerstone of successful leadership, allowing individuals to articulate ideas, inspire teamwork, and navigate interpersonal dynamics (Adelakun et al., 2024). Role-playing exercises, complemented by technological integration, provide a transformative method for improving communication skills. By simulating real-world leadership situations, students practice clarity, assertiveness, and adaptability in their communication styles (Wilson, 2019). These activities push students beyond their comfort zones, fostering confidence in self-expression and addressing societal biases that may discourage assertiveness among women (Adelakun et al., 2024). Furthermore, role-playing enhances teamwork and leadership effectiveness. Engaging in facilitated scenarios refines not only verbal expression but also active listening and responsiveness to peer perspectives (Adelakun et al., 2024). Research indicates that students who develop strong communication skills through role-playing and interactive learning demonstrate greater participation in team settings, leadership in discussions, and conflict-resolution abilities, aligning with participatory leadership models (Wilson, 2019).

Experiential learning, including role-playing, allows students to simulate real-world decision-making processes, improving strategic thinking and problem-solving skills (Xanthopoulou & Papagiannidis, 2012). By

immersing themselves in dynamic scenarios, students explore multiple perspectives and experiment with various leadership strategies in a risk-free environment, ultimately enhancing their academic and professional competencies. Role-playing creates immersive experiences that boost confidence and competency in communication, while case studies facilitate critical analysis and strategic planning, enabling students to tackle complex leadership challenges effectively (Kilgour et al., 2015). Role-playing games serve as an essential experiential learning tool, enabling students to engage in realistic leadership scenarios where they can refine communication techniques, boost confidence, and develop negotiation skills (Jenkins, 2013). The interactive nature of role-playing fosters an engaging learning environment, allowing students to articulate ideas, negotiate outcomes, and present themselves assertively, bridging the gap between theory and practice (Jones, 2019; Funk, 2021).

Elhadary and Abdelatti (2024) also examined the influence of female leadership on gender dynamics in the workplace. Their findings illustrate that women leaders not only break traditional barriers but also serve as mentors, creating paths for other women to seek leadership roles. This transformative potential emphasizes the importance of educational environments that have essential skills such as effective communication, conflict resolution and strategic thinking. The success stories of graduates highlight the role of the university as a catalyst for change, promoting an environment in which women can thrive as leaders, thus reinforcing the meaning of educational innovation in the formation of future generations.

Albaroudi and Iqbal (2024) emphasized the critical importance of contextualized learning to promote leadership qualities among students. Their research highlighted how case studies provide a vital platform for exploitation and discussion on issues that female leaders find, particularly in contexts that are culturally and structurally relevant to Saudi Arabia. Case studies and success stories play a crucial role in evaluating the effectiveness of leadership development programs for female students in administrative communication. They provided concrete evidence of how experiential learning fosters essential leadership skills. Research underscores the transformative impact of such programs on female graduates, highlighting their increased success in securing leadership roles across various sectors. Alwhaibi et al. (2024) conducted a case study revealing that 80% of female

graduates who had participated in a structured leadership program attained leadership positions within two years, significantly surpassing national averages for female employment in leadership roles. One prominent case involved a graduate who became the head of a regional non-profit organization focused on women's empowerment. Her transition into this role was attributed to her participation in collaborative projects during her studies, which enhanced her administrative skills, strategic decision-making, and ability to lead effectively (Subbarayalu et al., 2025). The integration of case studies in leadership programs enables students to analyze the challenges faced by female leaders, drawing connections between their academic experiences and real-world leadership dynamics. Case-based learning is particularly effective in cultivating problem-solving and strategic thinking abilities. By engaging with real-world scenarios, students are challenged to apply theoretical knowledge in practical settings, thereby enhancing their capacity for analytical reasoning and decision-making (Spencer et al., 2019). May et al. (2015) emphasize that case study discussions not only promote critical thinking but also create collaborative learning environments where students can share diverse perspectives, evaluate multiple solutions, and refine their leadership approaches. The ability to collaborate effectively under pressure is a critical skill for leadership success. In essence, case studies serve as an invaluable educational approach, bridging the gap between theoretical learning and practical leadership application, ultimately empowering female students to become confident, capable leaders.

Examining the leadership within a Saudi context enriches the learning experience, as it allows students to engage with challenges and opportunities that they will probably meet in their professional life. Al-Tamimi (2025) underlines the importance of contextualized learning, arguing that familiarity with local dynamics allows students to develop the most relevant problems resolution skills and adaptive leadership strategies. In this regard, the program has incorporated case studies, role-playing and simulation exercises that reflect the cultural and economic realities of Saudi Arabia. For example, students could analyze the leadership styles of important female characters in the Saudi workforce, such as those in government roles or the main initiatives of the private sector. This is not only used to inspire students but also allows them to critically evaluate the effectiveness of different leadership styles in relation to the Saudi socio-political dynamics.

Project-based learning (PBL) has emerged as a prominent pedagogical approach that effectively fosters critical thinking and problem-solving skills, essential for aspiring leaders. This learning method engages students in real-world challenges, promoting an environment in which students may not only acquire knowledge but also apply it in significant ways pertinent to their future roles as leaders. According to Moyo et al. (2024), project-based learning is particularly impactful in the context of administrative communication courses, where the emphasis on communication and collaboration echoes the demands of professional leadership roles. By working on group projects that require collaborative problem solving to face significant communication challenges, students develop both analytical and interpersonal skills. Moyo et al. (2024) highlight the effectiveness of PBL in administrative communication courses, where collaboration and communication mirror professional leadership demands. In addition, PBL strengthens critical thinking skills through involving students in project-based tasks whereby they need to implement evidence-based research and reasoning to explore various information sources critically, evaluate their credibility and apply this knowledge to formulate strategic communication plans. This process mirrors the analytical demands faced by leaders in organizational settings, where informed decision-making is essential (Moyo et al., 2024). Additionally, projects simulating real-world scenarios help students navigate complexities and diverse perspectives, building the confidence necessary for leadership roles.

In addition, the integration of feedback mechanisms that allow students to express their experiences can contribute significantly to refine educational practices. Involving female students in discussions about their leadership aspirations, challenges and perceptions of existing classroom activities, they can produce information that inform the future curriculum design (Alshibani et al., 2024). Such participatory approaches not only promote an agency sense among students but also ensure that content remains aligned with their needs and ambitions. Research underscores the significance of peer feedback mechanisms in communication skills training, emphasizing their role in fostering critical evaluation and mutual growth. Peer assessments encourage students to analyze each other's communication styles and provide constructive feedback, aligning with transformational leadership principles that prioritize collaborative development (Al-Kahlan &

Khasawneh, 2024). This feedback loops enhance self-awareness and confidence, both essential attributes for emerging leaders. Incorporating structured peer evaluations within leadership activities further strengthens self-reflection and collective assessment. For instance, after group projects, students can evaluate each other's leadership contributions and communication skills, fostering an environment of constructive criticism and reinforcing key leadership traits such as empathy, active listening, and collaboration (Aldosari, 2024). By engaging in peer assessments, students develop a growth mindset, a crucial component for future leaders, particularly within educational settings focused on empowering women. Feedback exchanges also build confidence and a sense of responsibility, essential elements of effective leadership (Hussein, 2024). To ensure productive feedback interactions, structured and reflective frameworks must be in place. This includes establishing clear objectives that align with core leadership competencies, such as critical thinking, effective communication, decision-making, and the ability to provide constructive criticism.

Colleagues would be encouraged to provide specific comments based on a defined rubric that evaluates critical aspects of leadership, the effectiveness of communication and clarity of the content. This rubric is not only an evaluation tool but also a guide for students to frame their comments constructively. Hussein (2024) pointed out that the selected rubrics encourage an atmosphere of structured evaluation, thus normalizing the feedback process and improving students' reception of criticism.

Aldosari (2024) argued that focus groups can facilitate a support environment where students feel comfortable sharing their perspectives and suggestions for course improvements. In addition, qualitative methods, such as focus groups or interviews with participants, could provide nuanced information about their perceptions of their leadership capabilities before and after the program. This dual approach allows data triangulation, thus enriching the understanding of how classroom activities are directly translated into improved leadership skills.

In addition, the broader social effects associated with these initiatives remain significant. Mashaly (2024) conducted an analysis of how women's empowerment in university leadership roles contributes to community development and gender equality in the local context. This study revealed that women leaders usually start community projects that further improve

educational opportunities for girls and women, thus creating a ripple effect on social structures.

Alilyyani et al., (2024) articulated the importance of involving students with various leadership models, such as transformational leadership, service leadership and situational leadership. These models not only provide different theoretical frameworks but also encourage self-reflection and personal growth among students, which is vital in the context of the development of female leadership in Saudi Arabia. The exploration of leadership styles in the leadership enhancement program is structured to promote an understanding of different leadership approaches in several scenarios. The integration of speakers and invited workshops who highlight the experiences of successful women leaders in various fields represent a strategic innovation in the suggested leadership enhancement program. Khasawneh et al. (2024) underlined the essential role that models play in inspiring students, particularly in the disciplines dominated historically by male leadership. As observed by Alshammari (2024), the presence of models in leadership roles can inspire students to imagine themselves in similar positions, thus challenging predominant stereotypes and contributing to a change in cultural perceptions about the capacities of women in leadership.

Furthermore, technology enhances communication training by enabling real-time feedback and interaction. Digital platforms offer tools like video analysis, peer reviews, and interactive simulations, allowing students to refine their communication techniques through visual and auditory feedback. These technological interventions help bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, reinforcing communication skills in leadership contexts (Wilson, 2019). The integration of technology into leadership development programs significantly enhances students' communication, strategic thinking, problem-solving, and teamwork skills. Online collaboration tools such as Microsoft Teams, Google Workspace, and Trello provide digital platforms for real-time discussions, resource sharing, and project collaboration, enabling accessibility and proactive participation, especially for students hesitant to engage in traditional classroom settings (Aldosemani et al., 2024). These tools mirror real-world professional environments where effective communication and collaboration are essential. The incorporation of case studies within digital platforms allows students to engage with global perspectives, interactively analyze

real-world scenarios, and develop strategic decision-making skills (Spencer et al., 2019). This approach ensures that students are not passive learners but active participants in their leadership education, fostering problem-solving abilities and critical thinking. Virtual simulations and online platforms have revolutionized traditional leadership training by creating immersive experiences that mimic real-world challenges, allowing students to engage in experiential learning and risk-taking – key components of leadership development (Wills et al., 2011; Beckmann & Mahanty, 2016).

Aligning leadership training with workforce demands, technology-driven programs help students navigate digital environments and cultivate adaptability – critical for strategic decision-making. By simulating real-life challenges, students develop analytical and creative problem-solving skills while practicing teamwork in a dynamic setting (Funk, 2021). As leadership education evolves, integrating technology remains crucial in preparing future leaders, particularly underrepresented groups such as female students (Munin & Efron, 2017). The continued exploration of digital learning frameworks is essential to modernizing leadership programs and ensuring they meet contemporary educational and professional needs.

Collaborative projects and team-based learning are essential to improve leadership skills between the students in the context of administrative communication courses. According to Ghamrawi et al. (2024), these educational approaches create fertile ground for the development of essential leadership skills, such as effective communication, problems resolution and the ability to motivate and inspire others.

As Al Ajmi (2024) notes, by gradually doing scaffolded activities that mix familiar and new approaches, educators can help students strengthen the necessary confidence to adopt innovative learning experiences. In synthesizing these strategies, LEP can act as a transformative platform for students, providing them with vital leadership skills that go beyond academic performance in their professional life. By emphasizing principles such as clarity, persuasion and resolution of conflicts, LEP attempts to prepare students for future roles that require the articulation of ideas and policies, negotiation of resources and management of team dynamics. Through a combination of theoretical paintings and practical applications, the program encourages active participation and interaction between students, thus feeding their innate leadership qualities.

One noteworthy aspect of LEP is its emphasis on experiential learning. By committing to simulations, role-playing activities and case studies of the real world relevant to administrative environments, students cultivate both self-awareness and increased interpersonal abilities. In addition, the program integrates reflective practices, which are crucial to promote critical thinking and self-assessment in students. Self-assessment exercises and peer feedback sessions allow participants to identify their strengths and the areas in which they need improvement. These reflective opportunities may also enhance students' emotional intelligence, an increasingly recognized dimension of successful leadership. Experiencing an improvement in their ability to understand and manage their emotions, in addition to empathizing with others, students become better equipped to guide different teams in their future careers.

Through innovative activities, collaborative projects and reflective practices, LEP actively feeds the essential skills that prepare participants for future leadership roles in different administrative environments. Personal and professional development is considerably influenced by programs like LEP, with participants often signaling an improvement in self-efficacy and resilience while they are committed to various learning activities (Jenkins, 2013). In addition, by promoting a support environment that encourages experimentation and reflection, LEP is likely to be able to counteract the obstacles to which students can be confronted in traditional educational frameworks, thus promoting a more inclusive and stimulating atmosphere. Nourishing young leaders is of paramount importance. Higher-education institutions can, through focusing on communication, strategic thinking, problem solving and teamwork, play a crucial role in the preparation of students for future challenges and leadership opportunities.

Methodology:

This section outlines specific methodologies used in LEP to promote an engaging learning environment by simultaneously cultivating essential leadership skills such as effective communication, collaboration, problem-solving, and critical thinking.

Research Design:

To fully evaluate the impact of these innovative activities and procedural changes, this study adopts a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative methods to assess the effectiveness of the

leadership enhancement program (LEP). This approach includes quantitative measures, such as pre- and post-course surveys that evaluate the perceived leadership skills, together with qualitative assessments, including Focus Group discussions to collect insights into students' experiences and perceived growth.

Participants and Sampling:

The program targeted 100 female students enrolled in the Administrative Communication course at the Applied College.

Program Implementation:

The Leadership Enhancement Program (LEP) ran for eight weeks as part of the activities of the Administrative Communication course and involved a combination of workshops, simulations, case studies, and mentorship sessions. The LEP structure was based on four key leadership skills:

- Effective Communication (Week 1-2):

Effective communication is the cornerstone of successful leadership. The ability to convey ideas clearly, confidently, and persuasively is essential for inspiring teams, building relationships, and resolving conflicts. This section of the program focused on enhancing students' verbal, written, and interpersonal communication skills. Through a combination of public speaking workshops, role-playing scenarios, and practical writing exercises, participants had the opportunity to refine their ability to communicate in professional settings, ensuring they could articulate their thoughts and lead with impact.

- Strategic Thinking (Week 3-4):

Strategic thinking is a vital skill for leaders who aim to drive long-term success and navigate complex challenges. The objective of this module was to enhance students' ability to think critically, evaluate situations from multiple perspectives, and develop actionable strategies. Activities such as case study analysis, decision-making challenges, and vision-setting workshops provided students with practical tools to make informed decisions, set clear objectives, and formulate strategic plans for both their personal and professional development.

- Problem-Solving (Week 5-6):

Leaders are often faced with complex issues that require effective problem-solving skills. It is necessary to equip students with the frameworks and techniques necessary to tackle any challenges. Through brainstorming

sessions, root cause analysis exercises, and decision-making simulations, students developed their ability to identify problems, analyze root causes, and implement solutions swiftly and efficiently, ensuring they are prepared for dynamic and demanding leadership roles.

- Team Collaboration (Week 7-8):

Effective leaders excel in collaborating with others, fostering a sense of unity, and resolving conflicts within teams. Building students' teamwork and conflict-resolution skills is essential for leading diverse groups towards common goals. Team-building challenges, leadership rotation exercises, and cross-team projects allowed students to practice working in teams, taking on leadership roles, and learning to leverage collective intelligence to solve problems, ensuring they could lead with empathy and inclusivity in professional environments.

LEP incorporated active learning strategies, such as role-playing, hands-on exercises, and group discussions, to enhance engagement and retention.

Data Collection Methods:

A comprehensive data collection approach was employed to assess the impact of LEP on students' skill development. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were utilized to capture measurable improvements and personal experiences. Quantitative data provided objective insights into skill progression, while qualitative data offered a deeper understanding of students' learning journeys. This mixed-method strategy ensured a well-rounded evaluation of the program's effectiveness.

A. Quantitative Data:

- **Pre-test and Post-test Surveys:** Students completed structured surveys at the beginning and end of the program to measure their self-perceived leadership abilities.
- **Skill Assessment Rubrics:** The facilitator evaluated students' performance using predefined rubrics during presentations, problem-solving exercises, and team activities.
- **Attendance and Participation Records:** Tracking engagement levels across different activities.

B. Qualitative Data:

- **Focus Group Discussions:** Conducted mid-program and post-program to collect students' insights, challenges, and experiences.

- Reflective Journals:** Students were required to maintain journals documenting their learning progress and personal growth.
- Instructor/Mentor Observations:** The instructor recorded qualitative observations of students' development throughout the program.

Data Analysis:

To evaluate the effectiveness of LEP, a combination of quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods will be employed. Quantitative analysis will assess measurable improvements in leadership skills through statistical testing, while qualitative analysis will explore participants' experiences and skill development in depth. This mixed-method approach provides a comprehensive understanding of the program's impact by integrating numerical data with rich, descriptive insights.

- **Quantitative Analysis:** Pre-test and post-test survey responses were analyzed using paired t-tests to determine statistically significant improvements in leadership skills.
- **Qualitative Analysis:** Thematic analysis was conducted on focus group transcripts, journals, and instructor observations to identify common themes related to student experiences and skill development.

Expected Outcomes:

The study aims to demonstrate that a structured leadership development program can significantly enhance students' skills in communication, strategic thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration. The findings would provide valuable insights for integrating similar programs into academic curricula to better prepare students for leadership roles in professional settings.

Implementation of the Leadership Enhancement Program (LEP):

This program was designed to develop essential leadership skills among female students in the Applied College as part of the classroom activities of their Administrative Communication course. The focus was on four key leadership skills: effective communication, strategic thinking, problem-solving, and team collaboration.

Program Structure: Skill Development Activities

LEP was conducted over eight weeks with a mix of workshops, simulations, group activities, and mentorship sessions. A description of the programs' activities is provided below.

1- Activities Enhancing Effective Communication

The main aim of these activities was to develop students' ability to communicate clearly, confidently, and persuasively in professional settings.

- Public Speaking Workshop: Students were required to prepare and present short speeches on leadership-related topics, followed by peer and instructor feedback.
- Role-Playing Scenarios: Simulating workplace conversations, such as giving feedback, resolving conflicts, and negotiating agreements.
- Professional Email & Report Writing: Training on structuring emails and reports professionally with practical exercises.

1- Activities Enhancing Strategic Thinking

The main aim of these activities was to enhance students' ability to think critically, analyze situations, and develop long-term strategies.

- Case Study Analysis: Students were required to analyze real-world business cases and propose strategic solutions.
- Decision-Making Challenge: Teams were given a simulated crisis, and they had to develop a strategic plan to address it.
- Vision & Goal-Setting Workshop: Students were required to create a personal leadership vision and to set long-term professional goals.

2- Activities Enhancing Problem-Solving

The main aim of these activities was to equip students with structured approaches to identifying, analyzing, and solving problems.

- Brainstorming Sessions: Groups were asked to tackle business or organizational challenges, applying creative problem-solving techniques.
- Root Cause Analysis Exercise: Students were asked to use the "5 Whys" and Fishbone Diagram to break down complex problems.
- Decision-Making Simulation: Participants engaged in timed problem-solving exercises to enhance quick and effective decision-making.

3- Activities Enhancing Team Collaboration

The main aim of these activities was to engage students in teamwork and conflict resolution within groups.

- Team Building Challenges: Students engaged in activities such as escape room challenges or business simulation games that require collaboration.

- Leadership Rotation Exercise: Students took turns leading teams in different tasks, receiving peer feedback on leadership effectiveness.
- Cross-Team Projects: Groups worked together to develop and present a business proposal, fostering teamwork and collective problem-solving.

This structured program aims both to enhance students' leadership skills and to prepare them for real-world professional environments. By combining theoretical knowledge with hands-on activities, participants would gain confidence, experience, and practical leadership abilities. The implementation of role-playing game exercises using real world scenarios not only simulated the complexities of professional interactions but also allowed students to practice assertiveness and the decision-making process in a safe space. Assuming various roles, such as team leader, mediator or negotiator, students obtained insights on different perspectives, thus improving their empathy and emotional intelligence. This experiential learning methodology aligns with constructivist educational theories that emphasize learning through participation and active reflection (Kolb, 1984).

In addition, the use of collaborative projects acted as a critical pedagogical strategy to promote leadership skills. The need to coordinate between peers promotes the care of interpersonal skills, which are fundamental for effective leadership in any administrative context. By integrating peer assessments, the program further improved responsibility and constructive feedback within the team, simulating the dynamics in the workplace.

Stories about real-life women leaders in administrative roles can be used to inspire and motivate students. These stories can provide insights on the navigation of challenges within the field, illustrating the various leadership paths. Incorporating these narratives of the real world into the curriculum allows the personalization of education to motivate leadership. This approach aligns with Bandura's theory of social learning (1997), in which observational learning plays a fundamental role in the development of self-efficacy and aspirational models for students.

The critical reflection exercises constituted another innovative procedure incorporated in the program. Encouraging students to maintain reflective journals in which they document their learning experiences and growth allows greater self-awareness and personal development. The practice of critical reflection promotes an analytical mentality, pushing the students to

question hypotheses and consider alternative points of view in their communication practices. Research claims that reflective practices can significantly improve metacognitive abilities, which are fundamental for effective leadership (Moon, 2013).

In addition, the incorporation of learning tools enhanced by technology, such as the PNU Blackboard's discussion boards and TEAMS, provided platforms for students to articulate their thoughts and engage in a speech beyond the traditional class boundaries. These tools facilitated asynchronous communication, allowing students to contribute with ideas and feedback to their own pace. The use of digital platforms prepares students for contemporary work environments and also improves their trust in expressing their points of view in a stress-free environment.

Pre-Test and Post-Test Evaluation:

To assess the effectiveness of the Leadership Enhancement Program (LEP), pre-test and post-test evaluations were conducted using three tools: self-assessment surveys, performance-based assessments, and instructor evaluations. The pre-test results were reviewed by two academic experts to ensure the validity of the assessment instruments.

Pre-Test and Post-Test Structure:

A. Self-Assessment Survey

Students were asked to complete a Likert-scale questionnaire (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) assessing their perceived proficiency in four leadership skill areas:

1- Effective Communication

- I can express my ideas clearly and confidently.
- I am comfortable with public speaking and professional writing.
- I can provide constructive feedback to others.

2- Strategic Thinking

- I can analyze situations and plan long-term strategies effectively.
- I consider multiple perspectives before making decisions.
- I set clear professional and leadership goals.

3- Problem-Solving

- I can identify the root cause of a problem efficiently.
- I can generate multiple solutions and evaluate their effectiveness.
- I make decisions quickly and effectively under pressure.

4- Team Collaboration

- I work well in a team and resolve conflicts effectively.
- I take the initiative and lead group discussions.
- I listen actively and consider diverse opinions.

Each student's pre-test and post-test scores were averaged to determine skill improvement.

B. Performance-Based Assessment

During both the pre-test and post-test phases, students participated in a practical leadership task designed to evaluate their skills in real-time.

- Pre-Test Activity: Students engaged in a group discussion and problem-solving task where they analyzed a case study and proposed a solution. Their performance was graded using rubric.
- Post-Test Activity: A similar case study was provided, and students were evaluated on how effectively they applied the skills developed throughout the program.
- Evaluation Criteria (Rubric Scoring: 1 to 5 scale):

Table (1) Evaluation Criteria

Communication	Clarity, confidence, engagement in discussion
Strategic Thinking	Ability to analyze and propose effective solutions
Problem-Solving	Creativity and logic in approaching the problem
Team Collaboration	Cooperation, leadership, and contribution

Each student's score was compared between the pre-test and post-test to measure improvement.

C. Instructor Evaluation

The program instructor observed student behavior and participation throughout the program, noting growth in leadership engagement, problem-solving, and communication skills.

Observation Checklist (Scored: 1-5 scale):

- Level of participation in discussions
- Leadership initiative in group tasks
- Ability to provide constructive feedback
- Confidence in decision-making

Statistical Analysis of Pre-Test and Post-Test Results:

A. Descriptive Statistics

Using SPSS (version 30), descriptive statistics were calculated to compare pre-test and post-test mean scores, standard deviations, and percentage improvements across the four targeted leadership skill areas. Results for the (100) participants are presented in Table (2).

Table (2) Results of Pre-Test and Post-Test for 100 Participants

Skill Area	Pre-Test Mean (M)	Pre-Test SD	Post-Test Mean (M)	Post-Test SD	% Improvement
Communication	3.0	0.8	4.2	0.7	40%
Strategic Thinking	2.8	0.9	4.1	0.8	46%
Problem-Solving	3.1	0.7	4.4	0.6	42%
Team Collaboration	3.3	0.8	4.5	0.7	36%

B. Statistical Significance and Validation

A paired-samples t-test was conducted in SPSS to evaluate whether the mean differences between the pre-test and post-test scores were statistically significant across all four skill areas. Results indicated statistically significant improvements ($p < 0.05$) in all domains. The analysis also included calculation of Cohen's d to estimate the effect size of the observed differences.

Table (3) Paired Samples t-Test Results and Effect Sizes for Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores Across Leadership Skill Areas

Skill Area	t-value	df	p-value	Cohen's d
Communication	15.43	99	< 0.001	1.56
Strategic Thinking	14.78	99	< 0.001	1.48
Problem-Solving	16.12	99	< 0.001	1.62
Team Collaboration	13.57	99	< 0.001	1.36

C. Interpretation of Results

- **Significant Improvement:** The t-test results confirmed that the gains in communication, strategic thinking, problem-solving, and team collaboration were statistically significant at the $p < 0.001$ level.
- **High Effect Sizes:** Cohen's d values exceeding 1.3 in all skill areas indicate a large effect, demonstrating that the program had a strong positive impact on students' leadership skills.

- **Validation and Reliability:** The reliability of the self-assessment instrument was supported through expert validation prior to administration, and the use of standardized rubrics ensured consistency in performance-based evaluations.
- **Practical Implication:** The findings suggest that well-structured experiential and reflective leadership training can lead to meaningful and measurable improvements in student leadership competencies, particularly within academic and administrative communication contexts.

Instructor Evaluation Analysis:

In addition to quantitative measures, instructor-led qualitative evaluation played a vital role in assessing students' leadership development throughout the Leadership Empowerment Program (LEP). A structured observation checklist, rated on a 1-5 Likert scale, was employed to monitor four key behavioral indicators:

- Level of participation in discussions
- Leadership initiative in group tasks
- Ability to provide constructive feedback
- Confidence in decision-making

These observations were conducted consistently across pre-, mid-, and post-program stages for all participants. The instructor documented both numerical scores and qualitative notes during each session.

1- Growth in Participation and Engagement

At the start of the program, many students appeared hesitant to contribute during discussions. The initial average rating for participation was (3.0), with several students requiring encouragement to speak. However, by the final sessions, the average rose to (4.6), as students became more engaged and vocal in group settings. By week (4), the instructor observed a significant shift—students who were silent in earlier sessions were now initiating conversations and steering debates during team activities, demonstrating increased confidence and active participation.

2- Emergence of Leadership Initiative

Leadership behaviors became more evident in group work scenarios. Initially, group roles were unclear, with few volunteers stepping up. However, over time, several students began to consistently take on leadership responsibilities such as organizing tasks, facilitating meetings,

and resolving disagreements. One student, for example, took initiative in organizing her group's presentation without being prompted-she allocated roles, kept the team on track, and moderated the Q&A with poise, as the instructor observed. Reflecting on her experience, the student shared, "I didn't think of myself as a leader at first, but when I started leading my team, I realized I could handle responsibilities and make decisions." This progression highlighted a growing sense of ownership and leadership identity among participants.

3- Improvement in Providing Constructive Feedback

The instructor noted a marked increase in students' ability to give and receive constructive feedback-an essential skill in both leadership and team dynamics. Early in the program, feedback tended to lack depth or was overly polite, with students often hesitating to critique one another. However, as the sessions progressed, peer-to-peer feedback evolved to become more analytical, balanced, and genuinely helpful. "In week (2), students hesitated to critique each other's ideas," the instructor remarked. "By the final presentation round, students gave each other insightful, well-articulated feedback- this is a huge development." This shift was echoed by the students themselves. One participant reflected, "I learned that giving feedback isn't just about pointing out mistakes-it's about helping others grow, and that made me more thoughtful and respectful when I spoke." Such developments underscored the program's success in cultivating a reflective and supportive leadership culture.

4- Increased Confidence in Decision-Making

Students displayed greater confidence in making decisions, particularly during problem-solving activities. At the beginning of the program, many students tended to defer decisions or sought constant validation from peers or instructors. However, by the program's conclusion, their decision-making became noticeably more autonomous and assertive. This transformation was particularly evident during the final case study, where the instructor observed, "Student C presented a bold strategy with clear justification and stood by her decision even when challenged by peers." This growing self-assurance was also reflected in students' personal reflections. "The simulation helped me realize I don't always need to second-guess myself - I now trust my judgment more," noted Student C. This enhanced decisiveness

demonstrated not only technical growth but also a significant boost in leadership confidence.

Table (4) Instructor Evaluation of Student Growth in Leadership Competencies

Skill Area	Initial Mean Score	Final Mean Score	Observed Growth
Participation in Discussions	3.0	4.6	Increased engagement and voluntary contributions
Leadership Initiative	3.2	4.4	Emergence of task delegation and decision-making
Constructive Feedback	3.1	4.5	More balanced, thoughtful, and respectful feedback
Confidence in Decision-Making	3.0	4.3	Greater assertiveness and autonomy in leadership

The instructor's detailed observations strongly corroborated the statistical outcomes from the pre- and post-test evaluations, offering a valuable qualitative dimension that reinforces the program's overall effectiveness. As illustrated in Table 4, students exhibited marked growth across key leadership dimensions: participation in discussions, leadership initiative, constructive feedback, and confidence in decision-making. These behavioral shifts were not abstract or theoretical but clearly observable in classroom dynamics, team interactions, and leadership simulations.

For instance, the increase in participation scores – from an initial mean of (3.0) to (4.6) -reflected not only a quantitative improvement but a transformation in students' willingness to engage, initiate dialogue, and lead discussions. The instructor noted specific instances where previously reserved students evolved into active contributors who shaped the direction of group work. Similarly, the rise in leadership initiative from 3.2 to 4.4 indicated a growing comfort with organizing, delegating, and taking ownership of group tasks. Students began to assume natural leadership roles without prompting, demonstrating a readiness to take responsibility and guide peers.

The development of constructive feedback skills, with a mean increase from (3.1) to (4.5), suggests a deeper understanding of effective communication and interpersonal sensitivity-core qualities in administrative leadership. This transition from superficial praise to analytical and balanced feedback reveals that students were not only improving their communication but also building empathy and professionalism.

Likewise, the enhancement in confidence during decision-making – from (3.0) to (4.3) - mirrored students' progress from hesitant contributors to decisive leaders. The instructor's observations highlighted individual breakthroughs, such as one student confidently defending a strategic choice during a case simulation, reinforcing that students had internalized and applied the skills taught.

Taken together, these findings show a strong alignment between qualitative classroom behaviors and quantitative assessment data. This triangulation of evidence-statistical gains, instructor evaluations, and student self-reflections-demonstrates that the Leadership Empowerment Program (LEP) did more than impart theoretical knowledge. It created a supportive environment where students practiced, internalized, and expressed real leadership behaviors, particularly relevant to female university students aiming for roles in administrative communication and team-based professional contexts. Thus, the program not only met its objectives but set a foundation for sustainable leadership growth beyond the classroom.

Thematic Analysis of Focus Group Transcripts, Journals, and Instructor Observations:

Thematic analysis was conducted on qualitative data collected from focus group discussions, student reflective journals, and instructor observations. The data was coded and categorized into key themes that emerged regarding student experiences and skill development throughout the Leadership Enhancement Program.

Theme (1) Increased Confidence in Communication

Many students initially struggled with public speaking, professional writing, and articulating their ideas clearly, but reported significant improvements in these areas by the end of the program. Several students shared in their journals that they felt more confident in expressing themselves in group settings. One student reflected, "At the beginning of the program, I was hesitant to speak in front of a group, but now I feel more comfortable sharing my ideas." Another noted, "I used to avoid speaking in front of class, but after practicing presentations, I feel much more comfortable and even excited about sharing my ideas." Similarly, students reported growth in professional writing skills, with one commenting, "Writing professional emails seemed complicated at first, but after practicing different scenarios, I can now write clearly and persuasively."

The instructor's observations further confirmed these self-reported gains. Early in the program, many students spoke hesitantly and avoided eye contact; however, by the fourth week, "many students who were initially reserved started engaging actively in discussions," and by week six, their speeches were well-structured, and they projected their voices with confidence. The instructor also noted that students who initially relied heavily on reading from notes began delivering presentations with minimal reference by the program's end.

Focus group discussions echoed these improvements, with students acknowledging how the program enhanced their communication skills in practical ways. One participant stated, "I have learned how to structure my emails and reports more professionally, which will be useful in my career," while another reflected on their development in giving feedback: "I was afraid of giving feedback to my classmates, but now I understand how constructive feedback helps teams grow." Collectively, these qualitative insights demonstrate substantial growth in students' clarity, confidence, and effectiveness in communication throughout the program.

Theme (2) Development of Strategic Thinking Skills

Students developed the ability to assess situations critically, consider multiple perspectives, and create structured long-term strategies for decision-making. Many reported that the case study exercises played a crucial role in enhancing their critical thinking skills. One student reflected, "Before, I used to make decisions quickly without much analysis. Now, I take the time to assess different angles before making a choice." Another shared, "At the start, I would jump to conclusions too quickly, but now I take time to evaluate all possible solutions before making a decision." Several students also noted the value of learning specific strategic tools, with one stating, "I didn't know how to plan for future goals in a structured way. Now, I use tools like SWOT analysis to assess my strengths and plan accordingly."

The instructor's observations supported these self-reports, noting that during strategic planning activities, students applied frameworks learned in class and demonstrated deeper analytical thinking. The instructor remarked, "Students became more analytical in their approach to decision-making. They stopped relying on 'gut feelings' and started applying frameworks

learned in class.” Additionally, “students started asking more insightful questions, showing a deeper understanding of the complexities involved.”

Focus group discussions highlighted how students appreciated the importance of multiple viewpoints in problem-solving. One participant noted, “The case study discussions helped me see how different perspectives contribute to better solutions,” while another explained, “When we analyzed business case studies, I realized that strategic thinking is about considering both short-term and long-term impacts.” Overall, these reflections emphasize a marked improvement in students’ strategic thinking abilities as a result of the program.

Theme (3) Enhanced Problem-Solving Abilities

Many students initially relied on trial and error when faced with problems, often feeling overwhelmed by challenges. However, through the program’s structured approaches—such as root cause analysis and creative brainstorming—they became more confident in tackling issues systematically. One student reflected, “The problem-solving exercises showed me that there isn’t always one right answer—sometimes you have to think creatively.” Another shared, “I used to get overwhelmed when faced with a problem, but now I break it down into smaller parts, which makes it easier to solve.” The case study on crisis management particularly helped students understand the importance of structured problem-solving in leadership, as one participant noted, “The case study on crisis management made me realize how important structured problem-solving is in leadership.”

Instructor observations confirmed this progress, noting that students who initially struggled with structured approaches were eventually able to apply methods like the ‘5 Whys’ effectively. The instructor commented, “Students initially struggled with identifying the underlying causes of issues. Over time, they demonstrated better reasoning and logical analysis.” By the final problem-solving task, students had improved their ability to justify decisions with clear, logical explanations rather than assumptions. This growth was further echoed in focus groups, where students expressed increased preparedness for real-world challenges. One student said, “I now feel more prepared to tackle workplace challenges because I have a method to analyze problems,” while another added, “The ‘5 Whys’ exercise was eye-opening – I now understand how to get to the root of a problem instead

of just treating the symptoms.” Overall, these insights reveal a marked development in students’ problem-solving capabilities as a result of the program’s structured training.

Theme (4) Stronger Team Collaboration and Leadership Initiative

Students reported significant improvements in their teamwork and leadership skills, particularly in areas such as conflict resolution, delegation, and active listening. Many acknowledged a deeper understanding of collaboration’s role in achieving shared goals. One student reflected, “I used to find it hard to work with different personalities, but I learned how to navigate group dynamics effectively.” Another shared, “At first, I thought leadership was about giving orders, but now I see that it’s about guiding and motivating my team.” Additionally, a student noted, “One of the biggest lessons I learned is that listening is just as important as speaking when working in a team.”

Instructor observations supported these self-reports, highlighting the positive changes in group dynamics. The leadership rotation exercise, for example, encouraged students to step out of their comfort zones and take initiative. The instructor observed, “Early on, some students dominated discussions while others stayed silent. By the fourth week, there was more balanced participation and teamwork.” Furthermore, during group exercises, students increasingly supported each other, provided constructive feedback, and volunteered to take on leadership roles. This shift was echoed in focus group discussions, where students expressed a more nuanced view of leadership: “Now, I understand that leadership is not about controlling the team but about guiding and motivating others.” One participant also commented, “I struggled with delegating tasks before, but now I understand how to distribute responsibilities effectively.” Overall, these reflections reveal a meaningful growth in collaborative leadership competencies fostered by the program.

Theme (5) Real-World Application of Leadership Skills

Many students expressed that the leadership skills they developed during the program were not only theoretical but highly practical and applicable in both professional and academic contexts. Several reported actively using these skills in student organizations, internship experiences, and part-time jobs. One student shared, “I recently applied the conflict resolution

techniques we learned in a part-time job, and it worked well.” Another noted, “I was able to use conflict resolution strategies from the program to deal with an argument between two of my friends, and it worked really well.” Additionally, a student reflected, “I recently led a team project at another subject, and I felt much more confident managing different opinions and making final decisions.”

Instructor observations confirmed this transfer of learning into real-world settings. The instructor noted, “Some students have started taking on leadership roles in student organizations, demonstrating the program’s real-world impact.” Another observation highlighted, “One student shared that she used strategic planning techniques to help her family business improve customer service.” Furthermore, “A few students mentioned that they received positive feedback from their managers at work for showing improved communication and leadership skills.”

Focus group discussions revealed a shift in mindset regarding leadership. One participant remarked, “I used to see leadership as just a title, but now I understand it as a skill that requires constant learning and practice.” Another added, “Before this program, I didn’t think leadership skills were important in everyday life, but now I see how they apply to any situation.” These insights underscore the lasting influence of the program on students’ perceptions and application of leadership beyond the classroom.

Theme (6) Overcoming Challenges in Leadership Development

Some students initially struggled with self-doubt, fear of public speaking, and reluctance to take on leadership roles. Many expressed feelings of uncertainty about their abilities at the start of the program. One student shared, “At first, I doubted my ability to lead, but after multiple exercises, I started believing in myself.” Another reflected, “At the start, I didn’t believe I could be a leader, but this program showed me that leadership is a skill that can be gained through practice.” Some students even admitted, “I used to avoid taking leadership roles in group work, but now I actively participate and even volunteer to lead.”

Instructor observations aligned with these self-reports, noting that while a few students hesitated to take the lead initially, over time they became more proactive and confident. The instructor commented, “Students who were hesitant to speak up in team discussions slowly gained confidence and

became active contributors.” By the end of the program, those who initially lacked confidence were stepping up to lead activities, demonstrating significant personal growth. The instructor noted, “By the last week, students who initially lacked confidence were stepping up to lead activities, showing significant personal growth.”

Focus group participants also reflected on this journey, emphasizing how the program helped them embrace leadership despite challenges. One participant said, “I learned that making mistakes is part of leadership, and what matters is how you learn from them.” Another noted, “One of the biggest challenges I faced was managing group conflicts, but the program gave me strategies to handle disagreements constructively.” These reflections highlight how structured guidance and peer support helped students overcome initial barriers and develop stronger leadership capabilities.

The thematic analysis highlighted that LEP led to significant growth in students' confidence, strategic thinking, problem-solving abilities, teamwork, and real-world leadership application. The findings suggest that hands-on activities, peer interactions, and structured mentorship played a crucial role in developing these skills.

5-Discussion of Findings

The findings of LEP implementation reveal significant improvements in students' communication, strategic thinking, problem-solving, and team collaboration skills. The combination of quantitative data (pre-test and post-test evaluations) and qualitative insights (focus group discussions, student journals, and instructor observations) provides a comprehensive understanding of the program's effectiveness.

Improvement in Communication Skills:

The key findings reveal significant improvements in students' communication skills as demonstrated through both quantitative and qualitative analyses. Quantitatively, the post-test mean score for communication rose from 3.0 to 4.2, reflecting a 40% improvement. This increase was statistically significant, supported by a paired t-test result ($t = 24.0, p < 0.05$). Qualitative feedback reinforced these results, with students reporting increased confidence in public speaking, professional writing, and delivering constructive feedback.

This positive development suggests that structured activities – such as public speaking exercises, professional writing workshops, and peer feedback sessions-played a vital role in enhancing students’ communication abilities. Many students initially hesitated to speak in front of others, but through progressively challenging tasks, they gradually overcame their fears and improved clarity and confidence in their expression. Additionally, role-playing exercises and email-writing tasks contributed to sharpening their effectiveness in professional communication. These findings indicate that active engagement in realistic communication scenarios significantly accelerates skill acquisition.

To build on this progress, future programs should incorporate more industry-based communication challenges, including simulated job interviews and client presentations. Such practical experiences will help students apply their communication skills in real-world contexts, further enhancing their readiness for professional environments.

Development of Strategic Thinking Abilities:

The key findings indicate a substantial improvement in students’ strategic thinking skills, supported by both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitatively, the post-test mean score increased from (2.8) to (4.1), representing a (46%) enhancement in this area. Qualitative feedback further emphasized that students found case studies and structured decision-making frameworks instrumental in helping them analyze problems from multiple perspectives.

This progress underscores the effectiveness of interactive learning methods such as SWOT analysis, long-term goal planning, and scenario evaluation in strengthening students’ critical and strategic thinking abilities. At the beginning of the program, many students relied heavily on intuition rather than systematic frameworks; however, by the program’s conclusion, they exhibited a more deliberate and structured approach to decision-making. The evidence suggests that incorporating real-world case studies and strategy simulations into leadership development programs significantly bolsters students’ analytical skills and strategic mindset.

To deepen these gains, future iterations of the program should include mentorship sessions with industry leaders. Such engagement would offer students valuable insights into strategic decision-making processes in

professional environments, further bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application.

Enhancement in Problem-Solving Skills:

Key findings reveal a notable enhancement in students' problem-solving skills, supported by both quantitative and qualitative evidence. Quantitatively, the post-test mean score rose from 3.1 to 4.4, reflecting a 42% improvement. Qualitatively, many students reported a shift from impulsive, trial-and-error approaches to more structured problem-solving methods, such as root cause analysis and brainstorming techniques.

Initially, students found it challenging to deconstruct complex problems into smaller, manageable parts. However, through targeted exercises like the "5 Whys" technique, decision trees, and collaborative brainstorming sessions, they developed a stronger grasp of analytical problem-solving processes. This progression underscores the effectiveness of structured problem-solving activities in fostering critical thinking and logical reasoning.

Given these results, future leadership programs should incorporate more real-world problem-solving challenges, such as corporate simulations or entrepreneurship projects, to provide practical and engaging learning experiences. Additionally, exposing students to industry-specific problem-solving scenarios-where they analyze authentic organizational issues and propose viable solutions-would further enhance their ability to apply these skills in professional contexts.

Strengthening of Team Collaboration and Leadership Initiative:

Key findings demonstrate significant growth in team collaboration skills, supported by both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitatively, the post-test mean score increased from (3.3) to (4.5), representing a (36%) improvement. Qualitatively, students became more proactive in group settings, increasingly taking initiative in leadership roles and developing effective conflict-resolution abilities.

At the beginning of the program, many students were hesitant to assume leadership roles, often preferring to remain passive members within their teams. However, through rotational leadership exercises, teamwork simulations, and structured conflict-resolution training, they gradually gained confidence and skills to step forward. They learned to delegate tasks

efficiently, listen actively to their peers, and manage disagreements professionally, fostering a more balanced and collaborative group dynamic.

These findings suggest that practical leadership exercises-particularly those that involve role rotation and real-time handling of team dynamics-are highly effective in enhancing collaboration skills. To build on this success, future leadership programs should introduce multi-disciplinary team projects where students from diverse fields work together to address cross-functional challenges, promoting broader collaboration and problem-solving abilities across disciplines.

Real-World Application of Leadership Skills:

Key findings reveal that many students successfully applied the leadership skills gained from the program in real-world contexts such as internships, student organizations, and part-time jobs. Qualitative insights from students highlighted how they translated theoretical leadership concepts into practical actions, demonstrating the program's effectiveness in preparing them for diverse responsibilities. Instructor observations further confirmed this impact, noting that several students showed initiative and leadership in their personal and academic environments, indicating the program's lasting influence.

This strong real-world application underscores the value of experiential learning and suggests that future leadership programs could benefit from integrating internship opportunities or leadership shadowing experiences to deepen practical understanding. Additionally, providing students with networking opportunities alongside industry professionals would help foster mentorship and career guidance, thereby enhancing their readiness to navigate professional challenges and advance their leadership journeys.

Overcoming Challenges in Leadership Development:

Key findings indicate that many students initially struggled with self-doubt, fear of public speaking, and reluctance to assume leadership roles, but they gradually built confidence over the course of the program. Instructor observations noted that by the final weeks, students who were once reserved became active participants and willingly took initiative in leadership tasks.

These early challenges emphasize the importance of gradual skill development within a supportive and nurturing learning environment. Rather than pushing students abruptly into leadership roles, the program's

incremental approach allowed them to develop confidence step-by-step. To further support this growth, future programs should incorporate personalized coaching and mentorship tailored to address individual self-confidence barriers. Additionally, fostering a safe space where mistakes are viewed as valuable learning opportunities will encourage students to embrace leadership development with greater openness and resilience.

By prioritizing guidance, interactive workshops and project-based collaborative learning, LEP effectively enhanced students' leadership capabilities, preparing them to assume proactive roles in administrative settings. The dynamics of the suggested program not only develop communication skills, but also nourishes the confidence and assertiveness needed for future leaders, thus solidifying the role of the university as an essential institution to promote female empowerment in leadership.

By enhancing leadership skills through innovative classroom activities, the researcher attempts to build a foundation not only for individual career success but also for collective social changes. The alignment of educational practices with women empowerment has proved to promote a more equitable social structure, illustrating the role of higher education in the approach of comprehensive gender equality and community advancement.

Conclusion and Recommendations:

The Leadership Enhancement Program (LEP) successfully improved students' communication, strategic thinking, problem-solving, and teamwork skills, with statistically significant post-test improvements in all areas. Thematic analysis confirmed these developments through qualitative evidence from student experiences and instructor observations.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that leadership skills can be effectively cultivated through structured learning interventions that blend theoretical knowledge with experiential learning. The increase in student confidence and application of leadership strategies in real-world contexts signifies the lasting impact of the program. Future leadership initiatives should build upon these insights to further refine training methods, ensuring long-term success for students entering professional and academic leadership roles.

The innovative activities proposed within LEP are strategically designed to promote interactive learning experiences which directly contribute to the development of leadership skills among students. By promoting

environments that encourage exploration, collaboration and practical application of leadership concepts, the program aims to provide students with the skills necessary to navigate and prosper in various leadership roles, ultimately contributing to their personal and professional growth. These activities not only support the objectives of the program but also align with broader institutional objectives to empower women leaders in the region. The exploitation of innovative classroom activities and pedagogical procedures in the Administrative Communication course highlights a critical imperative to promote effective leadership skills among female students. The results of previous studies illustrate that the integration of experimental and project-based learning and collaborative projects not only enhance communication skills but also cultivates an environment that motivates and nourishes leadership development.

The findings suggest that when female students were actively involved in LEP, they demonstrated self-confidence, self-efficacy and preparation to assume leadership functions. In addition, guidance has emerged as a fundamental component to improve the leadership trajectories of female students. Introducing students to case studies of female leaders in various fields provided invaluable guidelines and inspiration. Involvement in collaborative projects also encouraged interdependence and teamwork among students, allowing them to try first-hand the dynamics of leadership in group contexts. By working in collaboration in projects that address real-world issues, students had opportunities to engage in decision-making, conflict resolution, and strategic thinking-the skills intrinsically linked to effective leadership. In addition, the incorporation of technology into the administrative communication classes broke traditional barriers to learning. Digital platforms facilitated flexible communication and collaboration, allowing students to get involved with colleagues and with the teacher beyond the limits of the classroom.

As leadership development programs continue to evolve, it is crucial to explore innovative approaches that can further enhance the effectiveness of these initiatives. Future studies should aim to build upon the current findings and investigate new methods that better equip students with the essential skills needed for professional leadership roles. By expanding the scope of research and incorporating diverse strategies, we can ensure that

leadership programs remain relevant, engaging, and impactful for students across different fields and industries. Below are several recommendations for future studies that can contribute to the advancement of leadership skill enhancement programs.

- 1- Enhance real-world engagement through corporate case studies and internships.
- 2- Expand industry collaboration with guest speakers and mentors.
- 3- Implement longitudinal follow-ups for skill retention analysis.
- 4- Develop personalized leadership tracks based on career aspirations.
- 5- Increase experiential learning activities like leadership rotations and simulations.

These strategies will further empower students and enhance leadership readiness.

Finally, universities should consider promoting initiatives focused on leadership training, including workshops, focus groups, reflective activities and project-based learning activities. These initiatives not only complement the academic curriculum but also create platforms for professional development and community involvement. By promoting a broader understanding of the essential skills needed for effective communication in administrative environments, higher-education institutions can cultivate a new generation of female leaders.

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