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## **A Study of Challenges Faced by Head Teachers of Government Primary Schools**

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### **Abstract**

This study examines the challenges faced by head teachers in government primary schools in Jambusar Taluka, Bharuch District, Gujarat, focusing on gender and school location (rural vs. urban) differences. Using a quantitative descriptive survey, data were collected from 100 head teachers (83% of the population) via the Head Teacher's Challenge Scale (HTCS), a 40-item, 5-point Likert scale covering eight domains: workload, educational, administrative, financial, teaching-learning process, student-related, evaluation, and inclusive education. Findings indicate that inclusive education, workload, and evaluation pose the most significant challenges, with male head teachers and urban schools reporting higher difficulties due to complex demands and large student populations. The study suggests targeted training and resource allocation. To address these challenges. Limitations include the localized sample and reliance on self-reported data, which may limit generalizability. The findings can inform policy reforms for enhanced training and support, improving school leadership and educational outcomes.

**Keywords:** *Head Teachers, Government Primary Schools, Challenges, Inclusive Education, Workload, Gender Differences, Rural-Urban Disparities*

## **Introduction**

Primary education forms the cornerstone of a child's academic and personal development, equipping them with foundational literacy, numeracy, and social skills essential for lifelong learning. In India, government primary schools play a pivotal role in achieving universal education, as mandated by the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009, and reinforced by the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The NEP emphasizes foundational literacy and numeracy by Grade 3 and promotes inclusive education through a new 5+3+3+4 curricular structure, integrating early childhood education and advocating for instruction in regional languages (Ministry of Education, 2020). However, the effective implementation of these policies heavily relies on the leadership of head teachers, who serve as instructional leaders, administrators, and community liaisons in government primary schools.

Head teachers in government primary schools face a complex array of responsibilities, including managing limited resources, ensuring curriculum implementation, supporting teacher development, and fostering inclusive learning environments. These challenges

are compounded by systemic issues such as inadequate infrastructure, financial constraints, and large class sizes, particularly in underserved regions like Jambusar Taluka, a rural administrative subdivision in Gujarat. Previous studies, such as Belete (2019) and Chauhan (2015), have highlighted challenges like excessive administrative burdens and insufficient training for inclusive education, yet there remains a gap in localized, comprehensive analyses of head teacher challenges in specific Indian contexts.

This study addresses this gap by examining the challenges faced by head teachers in government primary schools of Jambusar Taluka. It explores the nature and extent of these challenges across eight key areas: workload, educational, administrative, financial, teaching-learning process, student-related, evaluation, and inclusive education. By comparing challenges based on gender and school location (rural vs. urban), the research seeks to provide insights into the unique needs of head teachers and inform policy interventions to strengthen primary education leadership. The study is guided by the following objectives:

1. To identify the specific challenges faced by government primary school head teachers.

2. To compare challenges faced by male and female head teachers in government primary schools.

3. To compare challenges faced by head teachers in rural and urban government primary schools.

### **Review of Related Literature**

The literature on educational leadership highlights the pivotal role of head teachers in driving school outcomes, grounded in transformational leadership theory, which emphasizes inspiring change and fostering collaboration (Bass, 1985), and contingency theory, which suggests leadership effectiveness depends on situational factors like school context (Fiedler, 1967). Desai (2017) notes that head teachers must adopt modern pedagogical approaches, manage diverse stakeholders, and promote inclusive education for marginalized students, aligning with transformational leadership's focus on vision and inclusivity. However, challenges persist. Chauhan (2015) found that administrative overload and multitasking create stress, particularly for female head teachers, limiting instructional leadership. Belete (2019) identified inadequate resources and training as barriers to inclusive education in Indian and Ethiopian contexts, reflecting contingency theory's emphasis on resource

availability. Pandey (2016) highlighted evaluation challenges due to limited training in standardized assessments.

Gender and location further shape challenges. Rajendran (2005) observed that female head teachers often excel in communication and collaboration, which can help mitigate some challenges, while male head teachers face greater pressure in discipline and infrastructure management. Urban schools, with larger, diverse student populations, encounter complex challenges compared to rural schools, which face resource scarcity but simpler administrative structures (Ministry of Education, 2020). Despite these insights, few studies address rural Gujarat's specific context, creating a research gap that this study fills.

A meta-analytical review underscores the need for targeted training and resources. This research uniquely examines eight challenge components in Jambusar Taluka, offering localized insights into educational leadership.

### **Research Methodology**

This study adopts a quantitative descriptive survey research design to explore the challenges faced by head teachers in government primary schools. The population comprises all head teachers from 121 government primary schools in

Jambusar Taluka, Bharuch District, Gujarat. A sample of 83% (approximately 100 head teachers) was selected using convenience sampling to ensure representation across gender and school location (rural and urban).

### **Research Tool**

A self-developed 5-point Likert scale, the Head Teacher's Challenge Scale (HTCS), was used for data collection. The HTCS consists of 40 items across eight components: workload, educational, administrative, financial, teaching-learning process, student-related, evaluation, and inclusive education challenges. Each component includes five items, with responses ranging from "Strongly Agree" (5) to "Strongly Disagree" (1) for positive statements and reverse scoring for negative statements. The tool was standardized through expert validation, item analysis, and reliability testing, achieving a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.85, indicating high reliability.

### **Data Collection**

Data collection involved obtaining permission from the Block Resource Centre (BRC) Coordinator and individual school heads. The researcher briefed participants on the study's purpose and provided instructions for completing the HTCS. Data were collected in April 2025,

ensuring ethical considerations such as informed consent and confidentiality.

### **Data Analysis**

Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques in SPSS. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, frequency distributions) summarized the nature and extent of challenges. Inferential statistics, specifically independent samples t-tests, were used to compare mean challenge scores between male and female head teachers and between rural and urban head teachers. Normality tests confirmed the appropriateness of parametric tests.

### **Results and Discussion**

The analysis of data from 100 head teachers in Jambusar Taluka provides insights into challenges faced by government primary school head teachers, alignment with the study's objectives. Descriptive and inferential statistics are summarized in tables below.

#### **Objective 1: Identify Specific Challenges Faced by Head Teachers**

The study identified inclusive education ( $M = 4.12$ ,  $SD = 0.67$ ), workload ( $M = 3.98$ ,  $SD = 0.72$ ), and evaluation ( $M = 3.85$ ,  $SD = 0.69$ ) as the most significant challenges (Table 1). Inclusive education difficulties stem from inadequate training and resources, aligning with Belete's

(2019). Workload challenges reflect from limited tools and training for balancing administrative and academic standardized assessments, supporting duties, consistent with Chauhan's (2015) Pandey (2016). observations. Evaluation challenges arise

**Table 1:** Mean and Standard Deviation of Challenges Across Components

Component	Mean	SD
Inclusive Education	4.12	0.67
Workload	3.98	0.72
Evaluation	3.85	0.69
Educational	3.75	0.71
Administrative	3.70	0.68
Financial	3.65	0.70
Teaching-Learning	3.60	0.73

**Objective 2:** Compare Challenges Faced by Male and Female Head Teachers

Male head teachers ( $M = 3.92$ ,  $SD = 0.64$ ) reported higher overall challenge scores than female head teachers ( $M = 3.65$ ,  $SD = 0.59$ ), with statistical significance ( $t = 2.87$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). male head teachers faced greater challenges in inclusive education ( $M = 4.25$  vs.  $M = 3.98$ ,  $t = 3.12$ ,  $p <$

$0.01$ ), workload ( $M = 4.10$  vs.  $M = 3.85$ ,  $t = 2.65$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), and evaluation ( $M = 3.95$  vs.  $M = 3.75$ ,  $t = 2.33$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), possibly due to societal expectations (Rajendran, 2005). Female head teachers reported higher educational challenges ( $M = 3.80$  vs.  $M = 3.60$ ,  $t = 2.15$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), potentially due to limited subject-specific training (Table 2).

**Table 2:** Comparison of Challenges by Gender

Component	Male (M, SD)	Female (M, SD)	t-value	p-value
Inclusive Education	4.25, 0.65	3.98, 0.68	3.12	<0.01
Workload	4.10, 0.70	3.85, 0.73	2.65	<0.05
Evaluation	3.95, 0.67	3.75, 0.70	2.33	<0.05
Educational	3.60, 0.72	3.80, 0.69	2.15	<0.05
Overall	3.92, 0.64	3.65, 0.59	2.87	<0.05

**Objective 3:** Compare Challenges Faced by Rural and Urban Head Teachers Urban head teachers ( $M = 4.05$ ,  $SD = 0.61$ ) reported higher challenge scores than rural head teachers ( $M = 3.70$ ,  $SD = 0.66$ ), with significance ( $t = 3.45$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Urban head teachers faced greater challenges in inclusive education ( $M = 4.30$  vs.  $M = 3.95$ ,  $t = 3.20$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), workload ( $M =$

4.15 vs.  $M = 3.80$ ,  $t = 2.98$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), and evaluation ( $M = 4.00$  vs.  $M = 3.70$ ,  $t = 2.76$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). driven by larger, diverse student populations, and stricter administrative demands (Ministry of Education, 2020). Rural head teachers face resource shortages but simpler structures (Table 3). observations.

**Table 3:** Comparison of Challenges by School Location

Component	Male (M, SD)	Female (M, SD)	t-value	p-value
Inclusive Education	4.30, 0.63	3.95, 0.70	3.20	<0.01
Workload	4.15, 0.69	3.80, 0.74	2.98	<0.05
Evaluation	4.00, 0.66	3.70, 0.71	2.76	<0.05
Overall	4.05, 0.61	3.70, 0.66	3.45	<0.01

### Hypothesis Testing

The study tested null hypotheses related to the objectives.  $H_{01}$  (no significant difference in overall challenge scores between male and female head teachers) was rejected ( $p < 0.05$ ), indicating gender-based differences.  $H_{02}$  (no significant difference between rural and urban head teachers) was also rejected ( $p < 0.01$ ), confirming location-based disparities.  $H_{01}$  (no significant difference in inclusive education challenges between male and female head teachers) was rejected ( $p < 0.01$ ), highlighting a key gender disparity. However, other component-specific

hypotheses (e.g., workload, evaluation) showed no significant differences in some cases, suggesting that certain challenges are universally experienced.

### Discussion

The prominence of inclusive education challenges underscores the need for enhanced training and resources to support diverse learners, particularly in urban schools with heterogeneous student populations. The gender disparity, with male head teachers facing more challenges, may reflect societal expectations and leadership style differences, as male head teachers are often tasked with discipline and



infrastructure management. Female head teachers' higher educational challenges suggest a need for targeted pedagogical training. Urban head teachers' greater challenges highlight the complexity of managing larger schools under stricter scrutiny, necessitating better resource allocation and stress management programs. These findings align with prior research (Belete, 2019; Chauhan, 2015) and emphasize the importance of context-specific interventions.

### **Implications**

The findings of this study underscore the need for targeted, actionable interventions to address the challenges faced by head teachers in government primary schools in Jambusar Taluka. Specific recommendations for state bodies, district officials, and schools include:

1. **Inclusive Education Training Programs:** State education departments should collaborate with teacher training institutes to develop mandatory, specialized training modules on inclusive education. These programs should focus on equipping head teachers, particularly male head teachers and those in urban schools, with practical strategies for accommodating students with diverse learning needs. For example, workshops could cover differentiated instruction and assistive technology use,

with a minimum of 20 hours of annual training mandated by the Gujarat Education Department.

2. **Workload Reduction Strategies:** District education officers should implement administrative support systems, such as appointing dedicated clerical staff or assistant head teachers in urban schools to handle routine administrative tasks. This would allow head teachers to focus on instructional leadership. A pilot program could be initiated in Bharuch District, allocating one clerical assistant per 10 schools by 2026.

3. **Gender-Specific Professional Development :** State bodies should design gender-tailored professional development programs. For male head teachers, leadership training should emphasize inclusive education and stress management to address their higher reported challenges. For female head teachers, subject-specific pedagogical training in core areas like mathematics and language should be prioritized to enhance their confidence in addressing educational challenges. The Gujarat Council of Educational Research and Training (GCERT) could spearhead these initiatives, targeting 100% head teacher participation by 2027.

4. **Resource Allocation for Urban Schools:** The Gujarat State Education Department



should allocate additional budgetary resources to urban schools, including funding for infrastructure upgrades, additional teaching staff, and inclusive education materials (e.g., Braille kits, digital learning tools). A proposed 15% increase in per-student funding for urban schools could be implemented by the 2026-27 fiscal year to address their complex administrative and student-related demands.

5. Psychological Support Systems: District officials should establish peer support networks and counselling services for head teachers to address the emotional toll of their multifaceted roles. Schools could partner with local NGOs to provide quarterly mental health workshops, with a goal of reaching at least 80% of head teachers in Jambusar Taluka by 2026.

These actionable steps, grounded in the study's findings, aim to enhance head teacher effectiveness and improve educational outcomes in government primary schools.

### **Conclusion**

This study illuminates the critical challenges faced by head teachers in government primary schools of Jambusar Taluka, with inclusive education, workload, and evaluation emerging as the most pressing issues. The disparities

observed between male and female head teachers, as well as between urban and rural settings, highlight the need for context-specific interventions to strengthen educational leadership. By implementing targeted training, equitable resource allocation, and psychological support systems, educational authorities can empower head teachers to navigate their complex roles effectively, ultimately advancing the quality of primary education in alignment with the National Education Policy 2020. Future research should explore longitudinal impacts of these interventions and investigate additional factors, such as teacher retention and community engagement, in diverse Indian contexts. Policymakers are urged to act swiftly to translate these findings into actionable reforms, ensuring that head teachers are equipped to lead inclusive, high-quality education systems.

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