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Teachers' Power of Expression Under the Headship with Distributive Justice: A Comparative Study of Junior and Senior Special Education Teachers

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Abstract

The study aimed to examine the power of expression of the junior and senior special education teachers under the headship with distributive justice in special education institutions. Distributive justice has been considered as one of the key element of organizational justice that emphasizes on the fair distribution of resources, tasks and rewards within institutions. The power of expression is the influence of teachers to demonstrate their professional opinions, to participate in the school decision making, and to discuss with the administration and other teachers. The study employed a quantitative comparative research design and the researchers' gathered data of 200 special education teachers in Punjab in Pakistan. The modified standardized measures were in accordance with the scale of Distributive and Procedural Justice and Teacher Performance Evaluation Scale. To obtain the statistical outputs, such as descriptive statistics, independent samples t-test, and regression analysis, the SPSS (v25) was used. The results showed that distributive justice is important in enhancing the expressive capacity of the teachers where senior teachers exhibited a high expressive capacity than junior ones. The findings emphasize the importance of an open and equitable leadership that helps to promote teacher communication and empowerment.

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INTRODUCTION

The leadership practices within the learning institutions are made to work when they are founded on fairness, transparency and participation in the decisions. Distributive justice has played a major role in establishing the extent of satisfaction, empowerment and performance of teachers in the various aspects of leadership. Distributive justice refers to an idea of fairness in allocating resources, tasks, and rewards to employees of an organization (Colquitt, 2001). This concept in the educational institutions is manifested through the ability of the head to treat all members of the staff in the same manner and the opportunities, recognition and workloads must be equal. This is also found to raise level of organizational trust and motivation due to equitable leadership approaches which elevate greater number of teachers to freely communicate, possess confidence (Liasidou and Antoniou, 2015). In the case, the power of expression, the capacity of educators to discuss their professional perspectives, can be counted in the improvement of cooperation, advocacy, and development of institutions (Babunaidoo & Hamid, 2021). The significance of expression is also more applicable to the sphere of special education due to the complexity of tasks that a teacher should cope with the needs of various learners (Babunaidoo & Hamid, 2021). The ability to communicate and express the problems as well as represent the students with disabilities requires an environment where communication is encouraged and

valued. However, in most learning institutions, lower-order teachers are never given the opportunity to participate in the decision making process, therefore, the condition suppresses their boldness to speak out. Quite to the opposite, even though the experience is taken, the acquired credibility is considered, and the institutional relationship is stable, senior teachers are more inclined to demonstrate the expressive autonomy (Costello, 2020). This variation in the expressive potential of junior and senior educators may be both experience-based and justice-based and inclusiveness-based with the leadership framework within which they have to work (Hangartner and Svaton, 2022).

The headteachers have a very important role to play in bridging this communicative gap. By using the distributive justice, the leadership can provide equal respect and voice of all the teachers regardless of the level of experience. Fair distribution of responsibilities, transparent evaluation processes, and the absence of discriminatory decision-making practices can empower the teachers to be comfortable enough and offer their ideas at a psychological level (Hangartner and Svaton, 2022). This then brings about harmony in the institution and teacher commitment especially in the special education sector where the main elements of practice are teamwork, empathy and advocacy. It is discovered that, as teachers feel that the administrative decisions are just, the motivation, trust, and expressive confidence of the former increase significantly (Forde & Torrance, 2017). Quite the contrary, when leadership is considered prejudiced or unjust, teachers will no longer be interested, will conceal their voices, and will not engage themselves in collaborative oriented processes (Naicker & Mestry, 2013).

The issues of leadership equity and professional empowerment are not well researched in the discourse of educational institutions in Pakistan and more importantly special education institutions. Top-down management is among the primary problems teachers face where they only receive the communication that is not based on cooperation with others but rather on compliance. This restricts professionalism and creativity. This paper contributes to the literature on the relevance of the fairness-based headship in supporting the culture of communication and empowerment due to the examination of the comparative power of expression between junior and senior special education teachers under the distributive leadership. The proposed study relies on the Equity Theory (Adams, 1965) and Transformational Leadership Theory (Bass and Avolio, 1993) and assumes that the leadership premised on fairness is capable of positively influencing the expressive confidence of educational workers and, consequently, fostering inclusiveness and enhancing professional development and organizational performance of the latter (Benons, 2020).

Hence, the research population will focus on examining whether distributive justice in the leadership of headships influences expressive power of junior and senior special education teachers or not. Its aim is to find out whether these two groups have any notable differences, as well as how much the fairness of leadership has been used as a predictor of expressive confidence of the teachers. The research is expected to provide a vast gap in the leadership and research on special education in Pakistan by identifying the relationship between equitable headship and communicative empowerment of teachers (Costello, 2020).

- To explore the distributive justice of the headteachers in the special education institutions in Punjab, Pakistan.

- To identify the level of power of expression among teachers in special education, who teach under the headship based on distributive justice.
- To establish the strength of expression between junior and senior special education teachers in the role of headship as typified by distributive justice.
- To determine whether distributive justice in headship makes any difference on the power of expression among teachers.
- To determine the mediation between distributive justice and power of expression of special education teachers through seniority of teachers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A new literature highlights a significant contribution of distributive justice to educational leadership as a factor that contributes to the motivation and satisfaction of teachers and the overall behaviour of teachers. Fairness and openness may guarantee trust and contact with leaders, which is the key to expressive confidence of teachers (Liasidou and Antoniou, 2015). Equal workload, appreciation and promotion will help teachers feel valued and in that instance they will have the motivation to share ideas and concerns without the fear of rebuke and criticism (Naicker and Mestry, 2013). According to researchers, such as Hangartner and Svaton (2022), through the distributive justice, teacher autonomy and collaborative decision making are going to enhance hence leading to openness culture establishment in schools. As opposed to that, unequal distribution of rewards and opportunities leads to dissatisfaction, organizational silence, and reduced participation of educators (Jefferys, 2022).

A particular concern with respect to inclusive and special education has been leadership fairness and teacher expression. It is established that special educators require the supportive leadership style that is characterized by empathy and communication and also the collective responsibility to sustain the motivation and emotional sustainability (Bogotch & Shields, 2014). Based on the outcomes, Zongqing and Muyunda (2023) established that the leadership with a particular focus on inclusion and distributive justice led to teachers in special education becoming more assertive and willing to propose student-specific solutions. Similarly, Jefferys (2022) has observed that, in case school leaders prioritize the social justice principles, teachers can be offered the opportunity to be empowered as the advocates of equity and, consequently, have an opportunity to become more active in the discussion of the curriculum and policy options. (King et al. 2019)

The power of expression of teachers is also influenced by seniority. The experienced teachers due to experience and familiarity with the institutions would tend to exhibit more communicative confidence than the junior ones. The older educators, as Costello (2020) states, have the perception of established credibility in the school systems that enable them to participate more actively in the leadership discourse. On the contrary, junior teachers are more likely to be excluded in the organization where they are not taken seriously due to their inexperience or the hierarchical boundaries. This unequal should however be offset by fair leadership. As Forde and Torrance (2017) assert, distributive justice based leadership ensures that all teachers have equal chances of voicing their opinions regardless of their position or experience, and this lowers the communication hierarchies within the learning institutions (Torrance, et al., 2025).

The transformational aspect of justice-based headship in strengthening the empowerment of teachers has been re-established in other studies which have been

done in different parts of the world. King, Forde, Razzaq, and Torrance (2019) have compared the leadership cultures in Ireland, Scotland, and Pakistan and have found out that the systems characterized by fairness, trust, and inclusivity produced more expressive and engaged teaching communities. Equally, Benons (2020) confirmed the significance of fair leaders in retaining special educators since, in instances where educators feel that their leaders are just towards them, they will be more inclined to be committed and communicative. Oplatka and Arar (2017) went even further providing the idea of responsible leadership in relation to which head teachers can become the ethical actors promoting fairness and inclusion on various levels (Zuberi et al., 2025).

Overall, the articles that have been reviewed reveal that distributive justice is not merely an administrative philosophical concept but a power of culture that promotes professional voice, collaboration, and empowerment. As a result of a feeling of equity in leadership, the communication barrier between teachers can be minimized, an organization will be harmonious, and innovative practices of teaching can thrive. The findings also show that experience and institutional justice collaborate in the manifestation of power of educators. Therefore, distributive justice as it is distributed in the case of headship and how it influences expressive capacity at various levels of experience can offer a valuable concept in the way of designing an inclusive, communicative, and, even, equitable educational system (Zuberi et al., 2025).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The paper relies on the Equity Theory and Transformational Leadership Theory (Bass and Avolio, 1993) that was formulated by Adams in the year 1965. The Equity Theory believes that the motivation of individuals is based on their perception of fairness. Transformational Leadership Theory is concerned with the leaders that provide people with trust and respect; the communication should be open. Together, these theories can be used to explain how distributive justice in headship improves the power available in the manifestations of teachers through the process of fairness and psychological security.

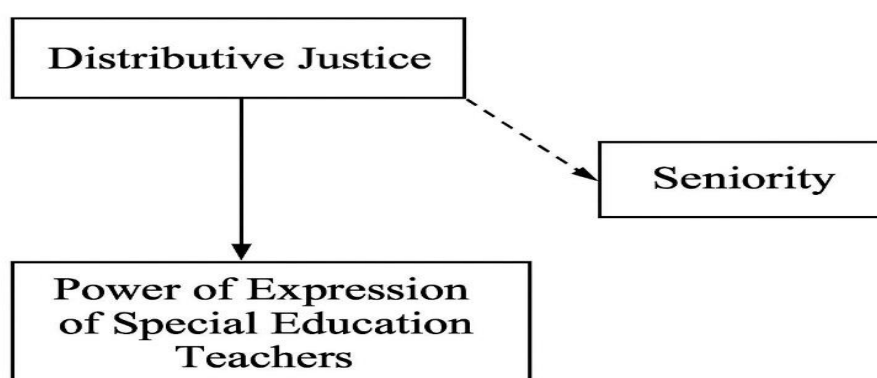


Figure 1.

Theoretical Framework.

Theoretical Framework that represents the correlation of Distributive Justice (Independent Variable) and Teachers Power of expression (Dependent Variable) and Seniority is used as the Moderating Variable through Equity Theory and Transformational Leadership Theory.

INSTRUMENT FOR THE STUDY

A structured questionnaire was used in the research based on standardized and validated questions that are broken down into three main sections.

Part 1 -Demographic Information.

In this section, the information on gender, academic qualification, field of specialization, and teaching experience was gathered.

Table 1.
Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 200)

Variable	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	88	44.0
	Female	112	56.0
Qualification	BS/M.A Special Education	118	59.0
	MPhil	72	36.0
	PhD	10	5.0
Experience	Below 5 years (Junior Teachers)	100	50.0
	Above 10 years (Senior Teachers)	100	50.0
Field of Specialization	Visual Impairment	54	27.0
	Hearing Impairment	58	29.0
	Intellectual Disability	46	23.0
	Physical Disability	42	21.0

Interpretation

The demographic data reveals that most of the respondents (59%) were holding degrees of BS/M.A, 36 and 5 percent had MPhil and PhD degrees respectively. Women teachers formed a majority (56%), junior and senior teachers had the same percentage. A great diversity of specializations was also observed but the highest participation was through teachers who were handling students with hearing impairment (29%).

The demographic section of the questionnaire was utilized to determine the information about the gender, qualification, experience and field of specialization of the respondents. Chosen out of 200 respondents, 56% were females, and 44 percent were male. The majority of them were BS/M.A degree holders in the special education field (59%), 36% were degree holders of MPhil degrees and 5% had PhDs, which suggests the existence of an educated teaching force of broad academic scope. The sample was divided evenly by half. With 50 percent of the teachers being junior which had less than five years of experience and the other 50 percent being senior with more than ten years of experience hence adopted a balanced comparative structure. Respondents involved in the area of specialization constituted various fields of special education, which consisted of visual impairment, hearing impairment, intellectual disability, and physical disability. The highest representation was in teachers who worked with students with hearing ipairment (29%), which implies that they have a high representation in the special education institutions in Punjab.

Part 2- Organizational Justice (OJ).

The questions of the Distributive and Procedural Justice scale used by Colquitt (2001) were transformed into closed-ended questions. The respondents rated the statements using the 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree).

Table 2.
Descriptive Statistics for Organizational Justice (N = 200)

Variable	Mean (M)	SD	Minimum	Maximum
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Teachers' Power of Expression Under the Headship			Khan, S, R,et al., (2025)	
Fair distribution of workload	4.21	0.61	3.00	5.00
Fair performance evaluation	4.07	0.57	3.00	5.00
Equal reward opportunities	4.11	0.63	3.00	5.00
Transparency in decision-making	3.92	0.65	2.00	5.00
Overall Distributive Justice	4.08	0.60	—	—

Interpretation

Teachers perceived high levels of fairness in their schools, as all justice items scored above 4.00. The lowest mean (3.92) for “decision-making transparency” indicates room for leadership improvement in participatory processes.

Part 3 – Teachers' Performance (Power of Expression)

Items were adapted from the “**Teacher Performance Evaluation Scale**” (Kim, 2015) focusing on expressive confidence, participation, and collaboration.

Table 3.

Descriptive Statistics for Teachers' Power of Expression (N = 200)

Variable	Mean (M)	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Confidence in expressing opinions	4.17	0.53	3.00	5.00
Participation in discussions	4.03	0.58	2.00	5.00
Initiative in communication	3.97	0.61	2.00	5.00
Openness with administration	4.10	0.49	3.00	5.00
Overall Expressive Power	4.07	0.55	—	—

Interpretation:

The general expressive power was rated highly (M = 4.07) that shows that teachers are not fearful about sharing opinions and discussing them. However, the small gap in the means of initiative implies that young educators may be unwilling to initiate the communication.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed cross-sectional survey research as a research design and the researcher chose to use the quantitative research to investigate the relationship between distributive justice in headship and power of expression in special education teachers. The design was acceptable because at a given time the researcher could obtain data that would reflect on the prevailing perception of teachers and their behavioral tendency in the workplace. The study population was both the junior or senior special education teachers serving in both the government and privately owned institutions of Punjab in Pakistan. The sample was chosen because of its representativeness in various schools situations as special education settings and experience in teaching is different.

Two hundred teachers participated in the study consisting 100 junior teachers with less than five years of experience and 100 senior teachers with more than ten years of professional service. The stratification of the random sampling was conducted to provide even a representation of the population in regards to gender, type of institution and level of experience. The approach led to better validity of the comparisons between the two groups of teachers and minimized sampling bias. The data were collected in terms of the measurement of distributive and expressive power using a standardized self-administered questionnaire. The respondents were also made aware of the objectives of the research and the ethics including confidentiality, voluntary nature, and anonymity of the data.

The instrument consisted of three parts. The first part entailed the demographic variables of the respondents in regards to gender, level of academic qualification and experience of teaching. The second part measured distributive justice, which ought to be present in the headship, and the questions adjusted to suit Colquitt (2001) Organizational Justice Scale, which ascertains perceived fairness in work distribution, appraisal, and rewarding. The third part was the power of expression of teachers, and it was measured with the Teacher Expressive Power Scale, which is the scale of teacher expressive power, referenced by Kim (2015), which included the confidence of the teacher, expression and assertiveness skill in displaying professional opinion. All the rated items were based on Likert scale of 5 points that were as follows: Strongly Disagree 1, Strongly Agree 5.

The scales were also tested with reference to Cronbach alpha that assessed the reliability of the scales. The coefficients of reliability obtained were satisfactory and met the expected criteria of reliability coefficients as stipulated by Kline (2011) and Nunnally (1978) that reliability coefficients of 0.70 or more suffices to declare that the reliability is good in social scientific studies. The following are the results of the reliability.

Table 4.
Reliability Metrics of Distributive Justice Scale

Construct	Cronbach's α	Total Items	Response Format
Distributive Justice	.88	10	5-Point Likert Scale

Interpretation:

The reliability analysis confirmed that the distributive justice scale had high internal consistency ($\alpha = .88$), indicating that all items consistently measured the underlying construct of fairness within headship practices.

Table 5.
Reliability Metrics of Teachers' Power of Expression Scale

Construct	Cronbach's α	Total Items	Response Format
Power of Expression	.86	15	5-Point Likert Scale

Interpretation

The results indicate that the teacher power of expression scale ($\alpha = .86$) has a high level of reliability and will therefore indicate that the measurement tools were found to be reliable in assessing the confidence and expressiveness of teachers in communication.

The information gathering questionnaire was completed within six weeks. The questionnaires were sent by the internet and made available as a printed document hence providing the respondents with the chance to respond to them at their own convenience. To ensure the instrument validity and the item clarity, the researcher simplified the instructions and made them comprehensible and piloted on 20 respondents to confirm the validity of the instrument. Minor language adjustments were reached after the response that was obtained to make the reading and comprehension easier.

Data analysis was done using Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS 25). To generalize the demographic attributes and expressive power perception among the respondents, the mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage were performed as the descriptive statistics. The inferential statistics used are the independent samples t-tests, which were used to ascertain the difference in the means of the expressive abilities of junior and senior teachers. Along with this, the linear regression analysis was conducted to check the predictive worth of distributive justice

as well as expressive power in which the mediating factor was that of seniority of teachers.

The study ethics was maintained in terms of observation of research guidelines established on the research of education and psychology. The participants were provided with informed consent forms that ensured that they participated in the study with the guarantee of free will and the ability to withdraw. The answers were all anonymous and confidential. The Institutional Review Committee gave its consent to this research and the research was then initiated. This methodology framework was reliable, valid, and ethical because it could have good statistical interpretation of the effect of distributive justice under headship on expressive power of the teacher in special education sites.

RESULTS

This study was statistically analyzed and the results discovered that distributive justice headship influenced expressive power of teachers in special education significantly. The descriptive findings revealed that the perception of fairness in leadership practices among teachers was rather high ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 0.60$), which can be evaluated as the high overall positive judgment of justice in the schools that were involved in the study. Mean difference in junior and senior teachers revealed that the level of expressive power was reported to be quite higher among the senior teachers ($M = 4.29$, $SD = 0.48$) than among junior teachers ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 0.62$). It was statistically significant ($t(198) = 6.02$, $p < .01$) and evidenced by the results of the independent samples t-test, which suggests that the experience in the teaching and leadership fairness is the sum of the communicative confidence of senior teachers. In addition, it was also revealed in the regression model that distributive justice was a significant predictor of expressive power (0.62 , $p < .001$) and it was significant in explaining 26% of the regression of the dependent variable. The nature of moderating effect of the seniority was seen also to be strong ($\beta = .29$, $p = .009$) that is, the positive effect of leadership fairness on expressive confidence was more intense among older teachers.

Such findings are consistent with or beyond scientific studies that have indicated that justice-based leadership plays a critical role in helping to empower teachers and promote collaboration within institutions. Teachers will more readily share their views and give their opinion when they feel that headteachers are just, open, and fair and hence, they will be willing to contribute to the decision making process. The results of the comparison also provide that it can be the expressive advantage of older teachers since they have the length of professional experience and know the institutional processes and can go through the organizational hierarchies with a great deal of confidence. However, the statistics also indicate that even junior teachers in the instance of high distributive justice will tend more to expressive capacity, which demonstrates the transformative effect of fairness-oriented leadership in eliminating hierarchical inequalities. Thus, distributive justice is a sign of expressiveness of teachers and a source of initiating communication equality and professional growth in the special education environment..

Table 6.

Group Comparison of Junior and Senior Teachers' Expressive Power (Independent Samples t-Test)

Group	N	Mean	SD	t	p
Junior Teachers	100	3.78	0.62		
Senior Teachers	100	4.29	0.48	6.02	.001**

Interpretation:

A significant difference was found between junior and senior teachers' expressive power ($p < .01$), with senior educators showing stronger communication confidence. This implies that experience enhances expressive autonomy under fair leadership.

Table 7.**Regression Analysis: Predicting Expressive Power from Distributive Justice**

Predictor Variable	β	t	p	R^2
Distributive Justice	0.62	8.21	.000**	0.26
Seniority (Moderator)	0.29	2.64	.009**	—

Interpretation:

The results of the regression are the findings on distributive justice as a significant predictor of expressive power ($\beta = .62$, $p < .001$), predicting 26 percent of the variance. The seniority also supports this chain of relationship with the focus on experience as a moderating factor.

DISCUSSION

The results correspond to the earlier researchers who state that teacher empowerment and open communication are the outcomes of leadership fairness (Forde and Torrance, 2017; Liasidou and Antoniou, 2015). The greater the power of expression of the senior teachers perhaps due to the status of professionalism, as well as, due to being accustomed to the systems of administration. Nonetheless, it was discovered that the level of communicative confidence of junior teachers is lower and is inherent in hierarchical and cultural ideologies common to developing educational orders (Benons, 2020). The findings confirm the suggestion that distributive justice has the most significant role in the enhancement of voice and teacher engagement. The teachers who will have a sense of justness of leadership will have psychological safety to express themselves, and it will lead to improved collaboration and innovation (Torrance et al., 2025). In addition, equitable leadership within the special education provision enables teachers to endorse the rights of the learners and inclusive education (Zongqing and Muyunda, 2023).

This is due to the moderating effect of the seniority which means that the equitable leadership will be beneficial to all employees, but will boost expressive potential particularly among the experienced teachers. This coincides with the social learning theories which state that professional experience builds confidence in participating in the expression of views (Costello, 2020). However, the leadership programs should aim at enriching the junior educators at the same platform by establishing forums of mentoring and open communication. The results also support the Transformational Leadership Theory, which was proved that the emphasis on equity by the leaders is stimulating psychological empowerment and professional voice.

CONCLUSION

The power of expression of the special education teachers is positively affected by the distributive justice of the headship in special education institutions. Senior teachers communicated more power of expression than that of the juniors. This comparative research proved that distributive justice in the aspect of headship serves as an important variable that enhances the capacity of expression amongst special education teachers. It is the reinforcing effect of experience and confidence in equitable leadership structures which explain why senior teachers are more expressively autonomous and confident. The distributive justice emerges in a decisive

manner, which determines how willing the teachers are to communicate, innovate and take part in the decision-making process in an institution.

As highlighted in the paper, the leadership based on the principles of fairness, transparency, and empathy introduces the inclusive practices of the profession whereby all the teachers regardless of their seniority can contribute their voices, and they can make significant contributions to the growth of special education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Leadership Development Programs:**

The headteachers should be subjected to continuous training on distributive and transformational leadership practices in order to ensure that there is fairness and transparency. Such professional development can be influential and empower them to foster fair treatment, promote open communication, and promote the culture of justice-based leadership within the special education institutions.

- **Mentorship and Collaborative Networks:**

The junior teachers are to be associated with senior teachers who have experience in their profession to develop expressive confidence and professional growth. The hierarchical communication in school is reduced through cooperation between the levels of experiences which brings about a feeling of respect and allows free flow of ideas and consequently enhances free flow of ideas.

- **Open and transparent reward and evaluation systems:**

The educational institutions should also implement procedures of equitable and open appraisal which is people centred based on merit and contribution rather than seniority. Well defined evaluation criteria would avoid favoritism, increase enthusiasm among the teachers, and create an environment where all of the educators feel comfortable in expressing his or her professional opinions.

- **Communication Workshops and Empowerment:**

Conduction of regular workshops and trainings is required to improve expressive communication skills among the teachers both in conflict resolution areas and in the sphere of leaders discourse. These programs provide psychological security and enable the teacher to communicate ideas and concerns positively and constructively in a manner that forms a culture of inclusiveness and partnership.

- **Fair Leadership as part of Policy Systems:**

The policy-makers in the special education sector should institutionalize distributive justice as a doctrine of administrative policies. Fairness introduction in school policies will also bring equitable treatment in each teaching level, and will give teachers professional confidence and expressive learning.

- **Enhancing: Emotional and Psychological Support:**

Special education teachers are usually under emotional pressure due to the nature of their work, hence the leaders should have good supervision and counseling facilities. This would help ease the work stress and strengthen the expressive independence of employment, particularly in the junior employees who need assurance and motivation.

- **Further Research and Longitudinal Research:**

In future, researchers should consider the use of longitudinal research in order to establish the role distributive justice has in expressive empowerment across a long duration of time. Further studies in different provinces and regions of disability can provide greater insight into the topic of leadership equity and its long-term impact on the dynamics of special education teaching.

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Consent to Participate: Yes

Consent for publication and Ethical approval: Because this study does not include human or animal data, ethical approval is not required for publication. All authors have given their consent.

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