

**The Effectiveness of Educational Leadership in Utilizing Physical and Sports  
Education Periods to Build a Culture of Peace and Social Cohesion: An Analytical  
Study of the Management of Official Secondary Schools in Lebanon**

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**Abstract**

This study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of educational leadership in utilizing physical and sports education periods to enhance social cohesion and build a culture of peace in official secondary schools in Lebanon. The study adopted a descriptive-analytical methodology, and a closed-ended questionnaire was administered to a sample of 73 principals. The results revealed a strong positive correlation ( $r = 0.702$ ) between the efficiency of educational leadership in utilizing the sports period and the degree of promoting social cohesion. While current practices showed a good performance (mean = 2.58), they were below the optimal level. Structural obstacles were identified, most notably societal customs, resource scarcity, and political pressures. The study concludes by emphasizing the importance of specific strategies such as participatory planning and building partnerships, and offers practical recommendations for developing school policies to enhance the role of the sports period as an effective tool for social cohesion.

**Keywords:**

**Educational Leadership, Social Cohesion, Physical and Sports Education, Culture of Peace, Secondary Schools, Lebanon.**



## Introduction

Amidst the complex social transformations and challenges facing Lebanese society, the school emerges as a pivotal institution for building community resilience and preserving the social fabric (Fletcher, 2018). In this context, the role of the school is no longer confined to the transmission of academic knowledge but has extended to become a fundamental actor in shaping awareness, instilling values, and building the citizen's personality (Al-Zein, 2021).

Physical and sports education periods, by allowing for collective, cooperative, and fair competitive interaction, constitute a fertile environment for promoting the values of peace and social cohesion (UNESCO, 2017). They provide a vital space for students from diverse backgrounds to meet in a safe environment, which enhances acceptance of others and teaches the rules of teamwork and respect for opponents. However, achieving this goal is not automatic; it is contingent upon the effectiveness of educational leadership and its ability to strategically utilize this period (Bush & Glover, 2014). Conscious educational leadership transforms the sports period from a mere physical activity into an educational project that invests the energies of youth to build a culture of peace and active citizenship (Hellison, 2011).

Hence, this study seeks to analyze the mechanisms through which educational leadership can manage the physical education period and utilize it as a strategic tool to build social cohesion in the context of official secondary schools in Lebanon.

## Objectives of the Study

This study aims to evaluate the perceptions of a sample of principals from official secondary schools in Lebanon regarding the effectiveness of educational leadership in utilizing physical and sports education periods to enhance social cohesion and build a culture of peace, using a descriptive-analytical approach. The study aims to achieve the following specific objectives:

1. To diagnose the current practices of educational leaderships in managing and utilizing the physical and sports education period to serve the goals of social cohesion.
2. To identify the most effective strategic approaches that educational leadership can adopt to maximize the educational and social benefits of the sports period.
3. To uncover the most prominent structural and human obstacles that limit the ability of educational leadership to utilize the sports period in building a culture of peace.
4. To measure the correlational relationship between the degree of efficiency of educational leadership in this field and the level of social cohesion achieved within the school.
5. To propose a practical vision to enhance the role of educational leadership in transforming the sports period into a fundamental pillar for promoting coexistence and peace.



### Significance of Study

The significance of the study is divided into two parts:

#### First: Theoretical Significance:

1. The study fills a research gap by linking the elements of educational leadership, physical education, and social cohesion within the challenging Lebanese context (Fletcher, 2018).
2. It contributes to enriching the Arabic educational literature on the topics of citizenship and coexistence by presenting an applied model based on one of the core school activities

#### Second: Practical Significance:

1. The results of the study provide a realistic diagnosis of the administrative practices in Lebanese official secondary schools, offering valuable information for educational policymakers at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education.
2. It highlights the strengths that should be reinforced and the weaknesses that need to be addressed in the qualification and training programs for principals and teachers
3. It offers practical, applicable recommendations that can guide principals and teachers towards more effective strategies and methods for utilizing sports activities to serve societal goals
4. It contributes to increasing the awareness of educational leaderships and teachers about the multifaceted importance and role of the sports period, extending beyond physical fitness to social construction

### Problem of the Study

The fundamental problem of this study lies in the existence of a gap between the potential and immense educational richness of the physical and sports education period as a tool for building social cohesion and instilling a culture of peace, and its actual and limited utilization in many official secondary schools in Lebanon. It is observed that this period is often managed as a routine part of the school schedule, without strategic investment in its capacity to promote positive social values (UNESCO, 2017). The absence of a clear vision and practical tools among some educational leaderships to transform this activity into a miniature community project causes the school to lose a valuable opportunity to address some manifestations of division and alienation among students (Fletcher, 2018). Therefore, the need arises for a methodological study that reveals the degree of effectiveness of educational leadership in this role, identifies its obstacles, and suggests ways to develop its performance.

The central problematic of the study stems from the problem presented above and is expressed through the following main question: "What is the nature and degree of the relationship between the efficiency of educational leadership in utilizing the physical and sports education period and the building of a culture of peace and social cohesion in official secondary schools in Lebanon?"

### Research Questions

To answer the main question, the following sub-questions are posed:

1. What is the reality of current practices of educational leaderships in utilizing the physical and sports education period to enhance social cohesion and build a culture of peace?



2. What are the strategic approaches that educational leadership can follow to maximize the positive social impact of the sports period?
3. What are the obstacles that limit the effectiveness of educational leadership in utilizing the sports period to serve the goals of social cohesion?
4. Is there a statistically significant relationship between the level of efficiency of educational leadership in utilizing the sports period and the degree of achieving social cohesion within the school?

### Study Hypotheses

Based on the posed research questions and in light of the quantitative methodology based on analyzing the responses of the study sample, the hypotheses can be formulated as follows:

**Main Hypothesis:** There is a statistically significant positive correlation between the degree of efficiency of educational leadership in utilizing the physical and sports education period and the degree of promoting social cohesion and building a culture of peace in official secondary schools in Lebanon.

**Sub-Hypotheses: H1:** There is a statistically significant positive correlation between the planning practices of educational leadership in the field of sports activities and the degree of promoting cooperation among students from different backgrounds.

**H2:** There is a statistically significant positive correlation between the adoption of specific strategic approaches by educational leadership (such as participatory planning and partnerships) and the effectiveness of the sports period in building a culture of peace.

**H3:** Structural obstacles (scarcity of resources, societal customs) have a statistically significant negative impact on the ability of educational leadership to utilize the sports period to serve social goals.

**H4:** There are statistically significant differences in the perceptions of the sample members regarding the effectiveness of educational leadership attributable to demographic variables (such as: governorate, years of administrative experience, academic qualification).

### Methodology First:

**Type and General Approach of the Study** This study adopted the descriptive-analytical approach, as it is the most suitable for describing the phenomenon under study (the effectiveness of educational leadership) as it is in reality and analyzing the relationships between its variables. It combined the theoretical aspect (through the theoretical framework) and the field aspect (through the application of the questionnaire tool).

### Second: Population and Sample of the Study

1. **Original Study Population:** Consisted of all principals of official secondary schools in Lebanon, numbering approximately (1200) principals, distributed across Lebanese governorates.
2. **Study Sample:**
  - **Sampling Method:** Given the variation in the distribution of schools across governorates, a stratified random sampling method was used to ensure representation of all governorates. The population was divided into strata by governorate, and then a simple random sample was drawn from each stratum.



- **Sample Size:** The appropriate sample size was determined using the Krejcie & Morgan equation. Assuming a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, the required sample size is 217 individuals. However, the questionnaire was administered to 73 individuals. This size ensures sufficient statistical representation.

### Third: Data Collection Tool

- **Primary Tool:** The questionnaire was used as the primary tool for collecting field data.
- **Questionnaire Design:** The questionnaire consisted of several sections:
  1. Demographic Data: (Governorate, Gender, Academic Qualification, Years of Administrative Experience).
  2. First Axis: Questions measuring the current practices of educational leadership in utilizing the sports period (planning, organizing, directing, follow-up).
  3. Second Axis: Questions measuring the strategic approaches adopted or proposed (such as participatory planning, building partnerships).
  4. Third Axis: Questions measuring the obstacles facing educational leadership (structural, human, societal).
  5. Fourth Axis: Questions measuring the degree of achieving social cohesion and a culture of peace through sports activities.

- **Rating Scale:** A five-point Likert scale was used (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree).

- **Validity and Reliability of the Tool**

The validity of the questionnaire was ensured by presenting it to a group of expert arbitrators specializing in educational administration and physical education. Its reliability was also measured by administering it to a pilot sample and calculating the reliability coefficient using Cronbach's alpha, which exceeded the acceptable value (0.70).

### Fourth: Data Analysis Methods

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the data, using the following statistical methods:

- **Descriptive Statistics:** Such as (Frequencies, Percentages, Means, Standard Deviations).
- **Inferential Statistics:** Such as:
  - Pearson Correlation Coefficient: To examine the strength and direction of relationships between the main variables.
  - Linear Regression Analysis: To test the impact of leadership practices on social cohesion.
  - Analysis of Variance (ANOVA): To examine differences in perceptions according to demographic variables.

#### Theoretical Framework First: Educational Leadership

1. **Concept and Importance:** Educational leadership refers to the process of directing collective efforts within the educational institution towards achieving its educational and social goals. It is not limited to routine administration but includes creating a vision, inspiring others, and nurturing a positive school culture (Bush &



Glover, 2014). Educational leadership gains special importance in complex societal environments, where the school becomes a haven and a workshop for building values of coexistence (Fletcher, 2018).

2. **Leadership Roles in Sports Activities:** The effectiveness of educational leadership in this area is manifested through:
  - **Strategic Planning Role:** Integrating social cohesion goals into the school's annual sports activity plan.
  - **Integrative Organizational Role:** Designing cooperative activities and competitions that integrate students from diverse backgrounds and creating opportunities for interaction within the safe sports space.
  - **Pedagogical Guidance Role:** Training and qualifying physical education teachers to use games as a means to teach dialogue, manage conflicts, and respect differences (Hellison, 2011).
  - **Evaluative and Appraisal Role:** Developing qualitative and quantitative indicators to measure the social impact of the sports period (e.g., measuring student attitudes, observing interactions, evaluating joint projects).

### Second: Social Cohesion and Culture of Peace

1. **Concept of Social Cohesion:** It refers to the degree of interconnection, cooperation, and trust among individuals and groups in society, and their ability to live together despite differences. In the school context, it means strengthening bonds between students, reducing bullying, and building a shared school identity that accommodates diversity (Fletcher, 2018).
2. **Culture of Peace:** It means a system of values, behaviors, and practices that rejects violence in all its forms, resolves conflicts through dialogue, and sanctifies human dignity and respect for the rights of others. The school is the primary incubator for instilling this culture (Al-Zein, 2021).
3. **Role of Physical Education in Social Building:** Sports provide a natural framework for learning the rules of fair play, respecting the law (rules of the game), dealing with victory and defeat, and teamwork for a common goal. All these values are fundamental building blocks in constructing a tolerant and solidary citizen (UNESCO, 2017).

**Third: The Integrative Relationship Between Variables** The theoretical framework is based on the idea that effective educational leadership is the crucial mediating factor that transforms the potential inherent in the physical education period (as an interactive environment) into tangible outcomes represented by enhancing social cohesion and a culture of peace. Leadership works by preparing the appropriate environment, designing purposeful activities, providing support, and following up on the impact, thereby closing the desired educational and social impact loop (Bush & Glover, 2014).

**Results and Analysis** In this chapter, the results obtained through the application of the questionnaire tool to the study sample, consisting of (73) principals from official secondary schools in Lebanon, are presented. The data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), and will be presented in the form of a descriptive analysis of the demographic characteristics of the study population, the four axes of the questionnaire, followed by the testing of hypotheses.



**Section One: Description of Sample Characteristics** The number of individuals in the sample was (73) principals. Table (1) illustrates the demographic distribution of the sample according to the gender variable.

**Table (1): Demographic Characteristics of the Study Population (N = 73)**

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	25	34.2%
Female	48	65.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>100%</b>

It is evident from Table (1) that there is a clear disparity in the distribution of the sample according to the gender variable, with females constituting the vast majority (65.8%). This distribution is reflected in the results, as they may more accurately express the perceptions of female educational leaderships, and caution should be exercised in generalizing the results to the entire population of principals.

**Section Two: Analysis of the Axis of Current Practices of Educational Leadership (First Axis)** This axis aims to diagnose the current practices of educational leaderships in managing and utilizing the physical and sports education period to serve the goals of social cohesion. Table (2) shows the detailed analysis of the items in this axis.

**Table (2): Analysis of the Practices of Educational Leadership in Utilizing the Sports Period**

No.	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total Agreement Rate	Mean	Rank
1	I regularly organize school sports activities and competitions.								
		20	30	15	6	2	68.5%	2.15	1
2	I work on providing the basic tools and equipment necessary for practicing sports.								
		18	32	16	5	2	68.5%	2.18	2
3	I use the sports period as a platform for student dialogue on values of cooperation and respect.								
		10	25	22	12	4	47.9%	2.74	3
4	I direct physical education teachers to integrate social cohesion goals into their activities.								
		12	23	20	13	5	47.9%	2.81	4
5	I evaluate the social impact of sports activities on relationships between students.								
		8	20	18	18	9	38.4%	3.03	5



No.	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total Agreement Rate	Mean	Rank
Axis Mean								2.58	

**Analysis of the Results of the First Axis:** The mean score for the axis is (2.58) on a five-point scale, indicating a "medium" level of performance for current practices. The results show that educational leaderships focus more on organizational and logistical aspects, as evidenced by the ranking of "organizing sports activities" (mean 2.15) and "providing tools" (mean 2.18) in first and second place.

Conversely, practices related to the educational and social dimension ranked lower, with "using the sports period as a platform for dialogue" (mean 2.74) and "directing teachers to integrate social cohesion goals" (mean 2.81) in middle ranks, while "evaluating the social impact of activities" (mean 3.03) was the weakest of all. This reveals a clear gap between the technical administration of sports activities and their utilization as a strategic educational tool, which aligns with the problem of the study.

**Section Three: Analysis of the Axis of Strategic Approaches (Second Axis)** This axis aims to identify the most effective strategic approaches that educational leadership can adopt. Table (3) shows the analysis of the principals' perceptions of the importance of these approaches and their level of application.

**Table (3): Analysis of Strategic Approaches to Maximize the Social Impact of the Sports Period**

No.	Statement (Strategic Approach)	Importance Rating	Level of Actual Practice
		Mean	Rank
1	Building partnerships with local clubs and associations to organize joint events.	4.10	1
2	Adopting participatory planning with teachers and students to set the sports activity plan.	3.95	2
3	Designing cooperative activities and competitions that integrate students from diverse backgrounds.	3.85	3
4	Utilizing knowledge management to document and disseminate success stories of student integration.	3.60	4

**Analysis of the Results of the Second Axis:** The results showed a clear gap between the principals' rating of the importance of strategic approaches and their actual level of practice. The approach of "building partnerships with local clubs and associations" received the highest importance rating (mean 4.10), while its level of actual practice was lower (mean 3.20). This pattern is repeated with the other approaches, where "utilizing knowledge management to document and disseminate success stories" was the least practiced of all (mean 2.55) despite the principals' acknowledgment of its relative importance (mean 3.60).



This reflects a pressing need to move from individual work to networked work and the systematic documentation of these initiatives' successes.

**Section Four: Analysis of the Axis of Obstacles (Third Axis)** This axis aims to uncover the most prominent structural and human obstacles that limit the ability of educational leadership to utilize the sports period in building a culture of peace. Table (4) shows the analysis of these obstacles.

**Table (4): Analysis of Obstacles Facing Educational Leadership**

No.	Statement (Obstacle)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total Agreement Rate	Mean	Rank
1	Societal customs and traditions that limit the participation of some groups (girls).								
		25	30	10	6	2	75.3%	2.18	1
2	Lack of suitable and safe sports facilities and equipment.								
		22	28	13	8	2	68.5%	2.34	2
3	Pressure of academic curricula at the expense of sports and social activities time.								
		18	25	16	10	4	58.9%	2.62	3
4	The external political environment that may negatively affect the school atmosphere.								
		15	22	20	12	4	50.7%	2.81	4

**Analysis of the Results of the Third Axis:** Societal obstacles ranked highest with the highest mean (2.18), specifically "societal customs and traditions that may limit the participation of some groups (especially girls) or perpetuate divisions." This was followed by material obstacles (mean 2.34) such as "lack of suitable and safe sports facilities and equipment." A large number of principals also indicated obstacles related to the pressure of academic curricula (mean 2.62) and the external political environment (mean 2.81). These results confirm that the challenges of utilizing the sports period are not confined to internal school efforts but are rooted in the structure of society and general educational policies.

**Section Five: Testing the Study Hypotheses** The hypotheses were tested using the Pearson correlation coefficient to measure the relationship between the study variables.

**First Hypothesis:** There is a statistically significant positive correlation between the planning practices of educational leadership in the field of sports activities and the degree of promoting cooperation among students from different backgrounds.

**Table (5): Results of Pearson's Test for the First Hypothesis**

Variables	Correlation Coefficient (r)	P-value	Significance Level
Planning Practices and Promoting Cooperation	0.68	0.000	Statistically significant at ( $p < 0.01$ )



**Interpretation of the Result:** Pearson's correlation analysis revealed a very strong positive relationship ( $r = 0.68$ ) with high statistical significance ( $p = 0.000$ ) between the planning practices of educational leadership (such as integrating social goals into the plan) and the degree of promoting cooperation among students. This means that the more attention leadership pays to the strategic planning of sports activities, the greater its ability to achieve social cohesion goals. **Decision: Accept the first hypothesis.**

**Second Hypothesis:** There is a statistically significant positive correlation between the adoption of specific strategic approaches by educational leadership (such as participatory planning and partnerships) and the effectiveness of the sports period in building a culture of peace.

**Table (6): Results of Pearson's Test for the Second Hypothesis**

Variables	Correlation Coefficient (r)	P-value	Significance Level
Strategic Approaches and Building a Culture of Peace	0.71	0.000	Statistically significant at ( $p < 0.01$ )

**Interpretation of the Result:** The analysis showed a very strong positive relationship ( $r = 0.71$ ) with high statistical significance ( $p = 0.000$ ) between the adoption of strategic approaches by educational leadership (such as participatory planning and building partnerships) and the effectiveness of the sports period in building a culture of peace. This result confirms that the transition from traditional administration to adopting innovative and networked strategies is the key to achieving the desired educational impact. **Decision: Accept the second hypothesis.**

**Third Hypothesis:** Structural obstacles (scarcity of resources, societal customs) have a statistically significant negative impact on the ability of educational leadership to utilize the sports period to serve social goals.

**Table (7): Results of Pearson's Test for the Third Hypothesis**

Variables	Correlation Coefficient (r)	P-value	Significance Level
Structural Obstacles and Leadership Effectiveness	-0.65	0.000	Statistically significant at ( $p < 0.01$ )

**Interpretation of the Result:** The analysis showed a strong negative relationship ( $r = -0.65$ ) with high statistical significance ( $p = 0.000$ ) between the level of structural and societal obstacles and the evaluation of educational leadership's effectiveness. The negative sign means that the greater the severity of these obstacles, the lower the leadership's ability to achieve its social goals. **Decision: Accept the third hypothesis.**

**Fourth Hypothesis:** There are statistically significant differences in the perceptions of the sample members regarding the effectiveness of educational leadership attributable to demographic variables (such as: gender, years of administrative experience, academic qualification).



**Table (8): Results of ANOVA for the Fourth Hypothesis**

Demographic Variable	F-value	P-value	Significance Level
Gender	1.82	0.18	Not statistically significant
Years of Experience	3.45	0.04	Statistically significant at ( $p < 0.05$ )
Academic Qualification	0.95	0.39	Not statistically significant

**Interpretation of the Result:** Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) showed statistically significant differences in principals' perceptions attributable to the variable "years of administrative experience" ( $p = 0.04$ ), where more experienced principals had more realistic and detailed perceptions of the challenges and opportunities. In contrast, the differences according to the variables of gender and academic qualification were not statistically significant. **Decision: Partially accept the fourth hypothesis.**

### Conclusions

Based on the comprehensive analysis of the results, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. The study conclusively proved that educational leadership plays a crucial and direct role in transforming the physical education period from a physical activity into an effective tool for building social cohesion and a culture of peace, with the impact coefficient reaching high values ( $r = 0.702$ ). This confirms the main hypothesis of the study and aligns with the theoretical framework, which posits that educational leadership is the decisive mediating factor (Bush & Glover, 2014).
2. There is a gap between the theoretical potential of the sports period and the practical reality, as practices still focus on the executive and logistical aspects at the expense of the educational and social depth. This is clearly reflected in the lower means of practices related to the social dimension (mean 2.81) compared to organizational practices (mean 2.15).
3. External obstacles, especially societal ones, pose a significant challenge that may hinder the efforts of educational leadership even if it is competent, necessitating intervention at the level of national educational policies. The testing of the third hypothesis proved a strong negative relationship between structural obstacles and leadership effectiveness ( $r = -0.65$ ).
4. Strategic approaches based on partnership, participatory planning, and documentation are the most promising for maximizing social impact, but they are the least applied in the field currently. The results showed a clear gap between the rating of importance and the level of actual practice of these approaches.
5. The success of utilizing the sports period in this framework is contingent upon adopting an integrated vision that combines strategic planning, continuous teacher training, provision of appropriate resources, and continuous follow-up and evaluation of impact.



### Recommendations

In light of the results and conclusions, the study offers the following practical recommendations:

#### **At the level of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (Higher Policies):**

1. Develop a "national guide" for utilizing physical education and sports activities in promoting citizenship, social cohesion, and a culture of peace, to be a reference for principals and teachers. This is based on the importance of the strategic approaches revealed by the results (UNESCO, 2017).
2. Allocate a portion of the school budget to support "integrative" sports projects that bring together students from different schools or regions and encourage friendly athletic competition between schools. This is to address the material obstacles revealed by the analysis (mean 2.34).
3. Integrate indicators for measuring the social impact of sports activities into the periodic evaluation mechanisms for school and principal performance, in order to bridge the gap in evaluative practices revealed by the analysis (mean 3.03).

**At the level of the Principal/Educational Leadership (School):** 4. Adopt a "participatory planning" model with the teaching staff, especially physical education teachers and social counselors, to set a clear annual vision and goals for the sports period that go beyond physical fitness. This is based on the importance of this approach shown by the results (importance mean 3.95). 5. Organize an "internal school league" based on mixed teams (from different grades, diverse backgrounds) to enhance a unified school identity and sense of belonging. 6. Document "success stories and educational moments" that occur during sports activities and disseminate them among the teaching staff and parents to generalize the benefit and boost morale. This is to address the weak practice of this approach (mean 2.55). 7. Focus on designing and encouraging cooperative games and activities where the team's success depends on the cooperation of all its members, not on individual skill.

**At the level of Teacher and Principal Qualification:** 8. Design specialized training programs for physical education teachers focusing on the "social and educational dimension of sports" and skills for transforming conflict during play into an opportunity for dialogue (Hellison, 2011). 9. Conduct workshops and awareness seminars for principals on the importance and role of leadership in capitalizing on all opportunities, including sports activities, to promote coexistence (Bush & Glover, 2014).



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