

WALLS ALL AROUND: DEVELOPMENTS IN THE GENDER AND LEADERSHIP IN PAKISTAN

Rafia Faiz, Safia Bano & Amna Asif

Institute of Business Administration, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is twofold: it first addresses how gender affects leadership, and then examines the societal, organizational, family and individual challenges experienced by male and female leaders in Pakistan. Using a research map, ten interviews are conducted with key informants, i.e, men and women at top leadership positions in various organizations of Pakistan. Based on thematic analysis in QSR NVivo, we came to the conclusion that there is a scope of breaking stereotypes related to gender in order to give more empowerment to the women to unleash their leadership potentials. As a leader, women are equally capable to get the work done by their subordinates and exercising their authority to achieve the personal and organizational goals but their capacities is contained by the society of Pakistan. The findings of this paper establish the indigenous conceptualization (Three M's) of gender in leadership in Pakistani society that is mental-block, patriarchy and masculinization.

Keywords: *Culture, Gender, Leadership, Interviews, Pakistan*

INTRODUCTION

Gender is a differentiating characteristic between masculinity and femininity (Deaux, 1984). These characteristic may incorporate biological determination of the sex or the social structures formulated on the base of the sex that may include gender roles and social roles. A leader is a person who is officially selected for the leadership status or echelon (Goleman, 2003). This study emphasizes on gender differences and its implications on the leadership styles of men and women. Depending on their respective set of beliefs, attitudes, abilities and behavior, men and women tend to differ in their style of leading people. Gender effects the perceptions about male and female leadership. Predominantly, it is contemplated that challenges posed to the women leaders are more intensive as compare to male leaders especially in the developed countries (Perryman, Fernando & Tripathy, 2016). In this study, research map by Layder (1993) has also been adapted. This article is arranged as follows. Firstly, the research map of the study is drawn, as well as the differences between men and women leadership in Pakistani context has been discussed. Secondly, the methodology of the study is defined. The findings of the study are explained and finally, key implications are discussed.

LITERATURE REVIEW

If we look at the upper leadership positions throughout the globe, it will be clearly visible to us that majority of these positions are taken by men. For instance, merely five percent are run by female CEOs, and approximately seventeen percent of panel seats are led by females according to the Fortune 500 corporations recorded in 2013. Manning and Robertson (2015) reported that women included 35% of Senior Civil Service staff, but 58% of staff at the Administrative Officer/Administrative Assistant level. This resistance towards women at the leadership positions exists despite evidence that organizations with gender diversity in the top management exhibit improved performance as well as lower agency costs especially in the absence of external governance (Jurkus, Park & Woodard, 2011). Conversely, some women themselves may be lacking the self-confidence to compete (Comeig, Grau, Jaramillo & Ramírez, 2016) at the same time, even when women have an appropriate education and work related experience to prove their worth for the top managerial positions, invisible barricades in an organizations halt them to reach at the top of the company hierarchy .i.e. “glass ceiling” (Carli & Eagly, 2001) drastic difference in the pay structure of the men and women is the ramification of this hindrance (Perryman et al., 2016; Krishnan and Park, 2005).

It is not unusual to expect that corporate opacity is influenced by the gender and ethnic diversity. The participation of the females in the work place environment is increasing with equal employment opportunities for the top ranks as well (Bartol & Wortman, 1975). Despite all these progressions, women are placed in the lower management positions that have low job depth and power than males, even when females possess more propitious behavior in management in comparison with males and have a stronger work-related attitude than their male counterparts (Selvarajan, Slattery & Stringer, 2015). The corporate ladder landscape is undergoing transformation across the globe, for example, research suggests a significant rise in the ratio of male managers stating encouraging behaviors towards female managers (Carlson, Kacmar & Whitten, 2006). Cultural, economic, technological, demographic and political aspects of society influence ideas of leadership. Different Leadership styles e.g. transformational, transactional, collaborative or contingency leadership (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999) are conceded without reference to any questions of approach to leadership ranks. Such variables such as class, race and gender can provide a context to comprehend all the forms of leadership in the wide perspective of power.

This form of work is frequently influenced by the feminist theory having the concepts of open-minded feminism and similar opportunities. Culture defines the expectations related to the male and females in the society and most of the time civil culture outweighs the national culture and how we look at them performing and pursuing leadership career

(Shah, 2010). In the society women are looked as feeble creature that is kind, homely and have less importance as compare to men and needs to be studied. Women who have acquired the status equivalent to men have realized the fact that expectations of the community from the female leader are entirely different. They have to become ‘deviant’ females; to outperform the expectations of the culture to prove their mettle as leader. Women will be assumed “flopped” if they do not fulfill the expectations of being a leader. If females are at the administrative posts in the organizations or ranked as a leader, it fabricates them “insiders” to their organizations and but their ‘abnormal’ rank as females fabricates them ‘outsiders’ in their organizations (Schmuck, 1996). This study, in particular, addresses the following research questions:

RQ1 Does gender affect leadership in Pakistan?

RQ2 What types of societal, organizational, family and individual challenges are experienced by male and female leaders in Pakistan?

RESEARCH DESIGN

Using purposive sampling technique, the researchers used personal contacts and gatekeepers to recruit men and women at leadership or upper management positions in different sectors, including leading non-government organizations, higher educational institutions and banking sector. Access to key informants was made possible through personal contacts and negotiation. Demographics of the participants are presented in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1-Demographics of Participants

No	Pseudonym	Gender	Marital Status	Post	Age group	Length (min)	Audio Rec
1	Aysha	Female	Married	Manager	30-35	33	Audio Rec
2	Ahsan	Male	Married	President	36-40	40	Audio Rec
3	Saniya	Female	Married	Principal	Above 60	30	Notes
4	Abdullah	Male	Married	Director	36-40	32	Audio Rec
5	Ahmad	Male	Married	Principal	Above 60	43	Notes
6	Saima	Female	Unmarried	Director	30-35	34	Audio Rec
7	Fatima	Female	Married	Director	40-45	33	Notes
8	Irfan	Male	Married	Chairman	50-55	36	Audio Rec
9	Youssef	Male	Married	Regional Head Officer	46-50	38	Notes
10	Sara	Female	Married	Principal	30-35	37	Notes

Semi-structured interviews provided a flexible platform to acquire participants' understanding of their leadership experiences against a uniform set of questions, while allowing generation of follow-up questions and probes for in-depth discussions. All the primary data gathered in the field and was imported to QSR NVivo where specific folders were created for Transcriptions, Interview Recordings, Administration and Field Notes. Clarke & Braun (2013) six stage process of thematic analysis was followed; the next stage of analysis was familiarization and reduction of data. Through deductive and inductive coding, relevant sections and narratives of transcriptions were selected, and transformed into themes. The research design of this study adapted Layder (1993)'s research map for analytical purposes. As shown in Figure 2 below, we follow Layder's view that social reality is complex and multilayered.

Figure 2- Research map (Adapted from Layder, 1993)

Research Elements	Levels	Research Focus and Objectives	Key Methods
Context	Social	Focus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indigenous culture Religious & cultural Taboos Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To find out the differences between the experiences of men and women leadership in its social context 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organized literature review National data
Setting	Organization	Focus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender in leadership Patriarchal Organizational culture and policies Family structures and systems Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide native conceptualizations of the lived leadership affairs of Pakistani men and women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Literature review Semi-structured interviews with men and women leaders
Situated Activity	Family	Focus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social interface in institutions and family structures Objective: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To examine the institutions of leadership with societal mental blocks about women on top 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Literature review Semi-structured interviews with men and women leaders Personal Reflections
Self	Individual	Focus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Men and Women's self-perceptions regarding their leadership styles Objective: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To examine the gender roles, mental block and patriarchal leadership the strategies used by women to cope with social barriers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Semi-Semi-structured interviews Personal reflections

Research elements of the research map include context, setting and situated activity. These four layers of reality are important to understand reality, but individual self-level is the focus of our research. All the four layers are interlinked; and at the same time, all have their specific key methods and objectives.

FINDINGS & DISCUSSIONS

Supporting data along with findings are presented in the section below to emphasize issues and stereotypes in which gender has been and still is constructed within the lives of all the women leaders irrespective of their leadership positions.

Nature Nurture - learn to be a leader

Leaders are born or made is most precarious myth. The question of whether leadership can be taught has instigated substantial debate among leadership scholars (Sinclair, 2009). Ahsan expressed: *Leadership can be learned by anyone with the nuts and bolts. If a leader rises up from the crowd, then that individual was already a leader. [Ahsan]*

The first emergent theory of leadership is “Great Man” theory and it was a first endeavor to elucidate how leadership happened. The “great man” theory states that heroic men were naturally trained and would transform the world somehow (Walker, 1929). Saniya told about the “heroes” she follows: *Banazir Bhutto was such a brilliant leader, almost with all the qualities a leader should have. Indra Gandhi, Angela Marker, Hilary Clinton had unique qualities, which distinguish them from the general public. [Saniya]*

However, Trait theory agrees with the opinion that leaders are not made rather born, as it studies persons and then tries to group a core of qualities. These comprise motivation, determination, (Kirkpatrick et al. 1996), trustworthiness and cognitive ability. This was aptly explained by Ahsan as: *If somebody’s son is street hawker, he will be successful in selling his stuff only if he has the “talent” and he will show his skills effectually. The abilities that make any person a leader are gifted by Allah Almighty. [Ahsan]*

There is no final answer to this debate. The perfect combination may provide great leaders to the world that can change the destiny of thousands of people around them.

Broken wings - Challenges faced by Women

Generally women are believed to be more sentimental and men are thought to be more assertive and erratic. Society holding such views cannot provide the platform to the women for attaining influential role of leader.

One such tale was shared by Saniya: *I feel everywhere females are more polite. Males are mostly autocratic. So we (women) are not seen in upper positions because of that.* [Saniya]

Men and women are complimentary yet distinguished from each other. They work in conjunction with each other and they have no functional viability when separated. Women, all around the world, have to face the criticism on their leadership with strength. A participant, Ahmad, said: *Almost all over the globe, the situation is same for females. See, we cannot change the system of Allah. We humans cannot make sun appear at night and moon in a day. Women are not made for such leadership things. Likewise, we men cannot do the things that are women capable of.* [Ahmad]

In Pakistan traditions and social customs governs Islamic injunctions with regard to females' rights (Bhattacharya, 2014). Pakistani women face solitude and inhibitions due to socio-cultural traditions pivoted on patriarchy which ultimately rejects approach to benefits of growth. Aysha also stated: *Men's ego does not permit them to think on positive lines about women. Men are not ready to obey the orders of women. It makes them to feel inferior. Men feel jealous from the popularity of the female leader* [Aysha].

There seems to be a never ending chain of challenges in every sphere of female leadership. Climbing up a corporate ladder is not an easy task and the challenges women meet are immense.

Pockets of resistance

Females are related with communal qualities which show a concern for the caring attitude for other people. They embrace being explicitly supportive, friendly, understanding, kind and affectionate, as well as interpersonally calm, soft spoken and subtle. Sara tried to define her leadership style: *My married subordinates sometimes face family issues like if they had a row with their wives. They share such stuff with me...I handle them (subordinates) with love and affection.* [Sara]

On the other hand, men are associated with agentic qualities which infer control and assertion. Research suggests that not all women have the confidence to compete, therefore, they remain a minority at the top managerial levels (Comeig et al., 2016). Conversely, Irfan told a story of his assertive behavior as: *I initiated the Ph.D. program and asked every faculty member to enroll themselves in it. They came to me and protest against this. I said that if they did not enroll themselves as a Ph.D. scholar, they would have to quit from here. So no choice left for them.* [Irfan]

Women leaders discover themselves in a twofold dilemma. They may be doomed for not being satisfactorily agentic if they are extremely communal. In contrary, if they are very agentic, they may be condemned for omitting communion.

Family call

Differences in personal values, rather than work-related values, have been found between male and female leaders (Chusmir and Parker, 1991). In collectivist Pakistani society, family is a vital constituent. Their usual role of homemaker is fixed in Pakistani society (Bhattacharya, 2014). Sara narrated her tussles: *When I was pregnant I faced a lot of issues. It was really difficult for me to manage myself, my work and my home. So, these are some feminine issues that every female face in her career. Alhamdulillah, I was very happy to know about my pregnancy but I could not take the pressure of this job at that time. [Sara]*

Using a metaphor of the use of break to slow down or stop a moving vehicle, Saniya said: *Wedding is like a 'break' to females' profession. [Saniya]*

Barriers have led to the communal and financial dependence of women that result in strengthening the male domination in the society (Bhattacharya, 2014).

Societal red herring-religious fallacy

Islam provides basic parity to woman and also gives equal legitimate rights. A woman may purchase, trade, earn a living and govern her own money and possessions (Bhattacharya, 2014). Ahsan shared his views: *Hadhrat Bibi Khadeeja (Peace Be Upon Her), the wife of Rasool Allah (Peace Be Upon Him), was involved in trading 1400 years ago. She (Peace Be Upon Her) was the richest lady in Arab and was very famous. Islam doesn't restrict women. It is we and our society who has defined the boundaries for women. [Ahsan]*

Islam teaches equality and it gives equal rank to women and she has a self-governing and separate character, which cannot be repressed. A participant, Ahmad, stated: *In Islam, our women are not burdened with additional errands which disturb that major demanding duties that only she can do. Men must provide physical safety and material for his family. Islam does not view women as lesser to men or that men are the selected leaders of women. Islam commands men to fulfill duties toward women who bear children. Therefore, they should not be expected to work outdoor and also support her family. [Ahmad]*

Women have the power to halt the mental chunks and touch their full potential. A society must have a mixture of matriarchy and patriarchy. The business organization or societal framework needs “female touch” to have pleasant functioning besides masculine traits.

Figure 3 Conceptual model of Three M's of gender in leadership in Pakistani context

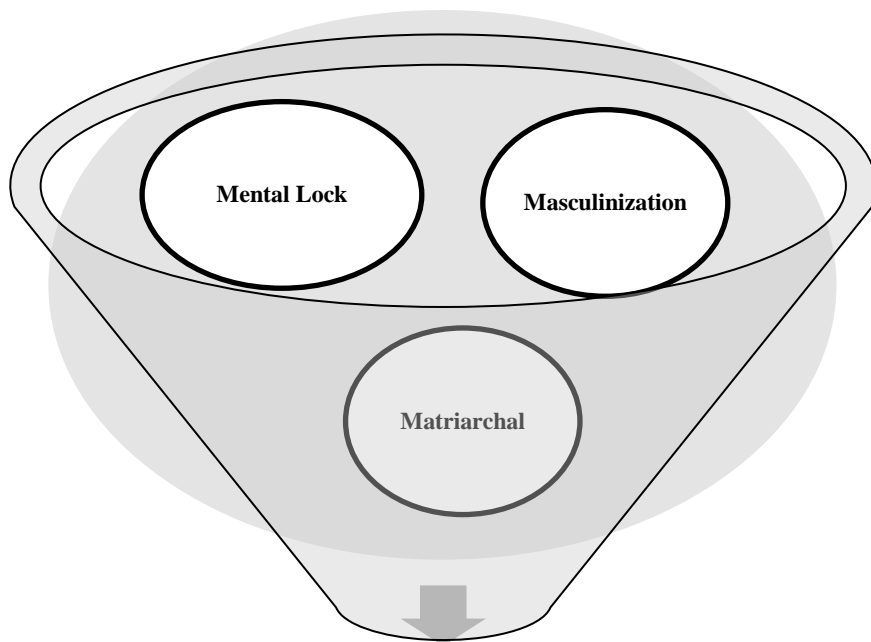


Figure 3 depicts the three M's of leadership. 'Masculinization' refers to the characteristics and attributes that are related to male gender; 'matriarchal' is the society in which heads are females and 'mental block' means inability to think beyond a certain point. Patriarchal structure is the system in which main power is held by males like males in Pakistan are considered as head of the family. Our model shows the three M's which act as a barrier for women leadership in Pakistani context. Leadership is considered a masculine job in Pakistan and Pakistani society does not accept when less powerful gender lead the dominant males. They strongly discourage the matriarchal system. Pakistani society has a mental block to accept women as a leader. Even in Pakistani family system, major decisions are made by fathers. In Pakistan, males are at primary and powerful position. This patriarchal structure of the society diminishes chances for women to become successful leaders.

CONCLUSION

The experiences of women irradiate to a higher level that the roles of gender are socially built. Though, women and men participants show that these roles are not static, and can

be challenged and rebuilt. In this research, the women's experiences seem to conclude that as socially formed creatures, their choices were not completely open; however, as persons, regardless of the loads set upon them, they struggled being individuals who were purely 'acted upon.' They were proficient to make choices, even if constricted, and impact alteration. Therefore, this seems to deduce that organizations can be places where gender roles can be rehabilitated and confronted. Leadership cries for commitment and thirst; basic values that help distinguish authorities from any run of the mill 'quacks'. The study in hand joins to remind the society that it is not vital whether a man or woman leads an organization, but relatively an acknowledgment and legitimization of women leaders is what that matters the most in every single sense of the word. Possibly, it is currently the period in Pakistan to assent a more encompassing opinion of leadership that is more supportive for women.

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