Belief and Practices of Women Leaders in Higher Education: A Myth of Transformational Leadership Style

Farah Saleem Qureshi[1], Ghazala Noureen[2] & Anam Noshaba[3]

[1]*PhD Scholar, Department of Secondary Education, Lahore College for Women University, Lahore, Pakistan.*
[2]*Associate Professor, Lahore College for Women University, Lahore, Pakistan, Email: g_noureen@yahoo.com*
[3]*Assistant Professor, Lahore College for Women University, Lahore, Pakistan, Email: anam_pk2006@yahoo.com*

Abstract

Transformational leadership produces a valued and constructive transformation in the employees and augments followers' enthusiasm, confidence, and performance using different strategies. Females are considered more transformational as compared to men. The main focus of the present study was to identify transformational leaders and investigate how women in higher education practice transformational leadership. In this study, an explanatory sequential mixed-method research design was selected to establish a relationship between practices, behaviors, and preferences for the explanation of the quantitative findings of the study. Women working in leadership roles in public sector universities of the province of Punjab were the population of the study. Seventy-four women were selected in the study sample, and fifty-five responded to the questionnaire. Bass and Avolio's (2000) "Multifactor-Leadership-Questionnaire" (MLQ) 6S was used for the collection of quantitative data regarding transformational leadership style. Qualitative data were collected through a semi-structured interview protocol. Findings from the study showed that women leader's mean score was above neutral on a five-point rating scale. Women practiced intellectual stimulation as transformational leaders.

Keywords: Belief, Practices, Women Leaders, Higher Education, Transformational Leadership Style.

Introduction

The term leadership is continuously defined by scholars, academician and researchers till it inception. At least a thousand definitions are available and still more forthcoming such, constructed on the attitude, intellect and alterations in time period. For instance, many years ago, the traits to be a leader that you can follow, were totally changed. Initially, there was focus on physical and mental qualities of the leader i.e. strength, courage, running fast, hitting or biting hard. There is an obvious paradigm shift where leader is judged as per qualities such as smartness being adaptive, diplomatic and charismatic. Initially, leadership research emphasized on the treatment of subordinates and strengthened by systematization of human belief and deed. In this regard major impact was laid down by Max Weber, A German sociologist. He constructed equivalents for the automation of industry and bureaucracy of administration. Max Weber observed that administrative style regulates the procedure of management in the similar fashion as machine routinized manufacturing. But his point of view didn't shake the main theoretical models of that time "Classical Management Theory"" and "Scientific Management". Classical theorists concentrated on the plan of the entire organization whereas scientific managers engrossed on the methodical management of specific jobs.

While scientific management focused technological aspect of the organization such as competence, quantification, certainty, and de-skilled jobs and viewed human beings like a machine that is controlled by their leaders. The significant landmark of this period was the development of new theories that focused how fast growth in economic, political and geographic arenas can be accommodated. Scientific management theory enforces performance criteria to accomplish organizational objectives. Hence, leaders laid emphasis on the increase in efficiency and productivity of the organization while ignoring individual workers' need and aspiration. In spite of a huge dissimilarity among the scientific and the classical model, their end goal is same. Interesting fact about both approaches is using common metaphor of machine for human being while ignoring the complex nature of human being as a multifaceted organism and insistent

for automation of jobs as a more productive tool along hierarchical bureaucratic structure.

Another paradigm shift emerged when researchers and scholar realized the human aspect and emphasized that leaders need to distinguish between humans and machines. Researchers focused mainly to find out that to what extent relationship exists among leader behavior and subordinate contentment and organizational efficiency and productivity. Later on in 1940s, a post-bureaucratic change relocated the philosophy of work towards a new perspective that everyone should be accountable for the organization's victory or disaster. Prominent theorist Maslow, and Herzberg, concentrated on overpowering the upshots of classical and scientific theories. Elton Mayo's Hawthorne Studies laid emphasis on the job context and how its influences leaders and subordinates, signifying that the responses of human beings effect their job as well as structure and functioning of the organization. Recent theoretical models are based on the idea that a person can work best when their needs are fulfilled. These needs include both external and internal needs such as physiological, security, and social (intrinsic) needs and ego and self-actualizing (extrinsic).

The new-fangled supposition is that personnel are even more multifaceted as trait and behavioral theories of leadership anticipated. The leader's association to workers should base on care. Such relationship ensures commitment and loyalty of the subordinates to the organization Therefore, the organization's goals and accomplishments are seen as personal successes by all of its members.

Further development occurred when it was felt that leadership does not mean only actions. Leaders are supposed to create situations for the subordinates in which they can perform at their best. A contingency model was presented by Hersey and Blanchard where they suggested that style of the leader depends upon two maturity factors: 1) job maturity– proficiency in job related tasks and skills and 2) psychological maturity–levels of affective domain such as self-confidence, self-concept etc. For instance, subservient having higher job and psychological maturity need lesser supervision as compare to an employee having lower level of above mention aspects. As per Hersey and Blanchard's situational leadership theory, leaders act according to situation. On the contrary, Fielder's Contingency Theory stated that leader success is signified not by the

leader's capability to understand the context rather the capability to select the appropriate leader for a specific situation. Above mentioned theory is unable to fix responsibility the fluid situation and in response action taken. So, some leaders perform better in certain situation than others. How successfully, a leader handles the situation mainly depends upon competence, skills and confidence. People are different in handling different situations depending on their personal traits.

 In 1970s, leadership theory research stirred beyond appropriateness of situation and leader's reaction to increase organizational performance. Leadership turned towards transactional leadership, self-motivated employee who performed well in a controlled and focused environment. Research findings have indicated that recently paradigm shift to a transactional leadership, established technique of leadership witnessed in the work places (Avolio, Waldman, & Yanimarina, 1991). The underpinning of this approach was that leaders interchange rewards for underlings' acquiescence, having faith on authority based on bureaucratic model and a leader's acceptability within an organization (Tracey & Hinkin, 1994; Yukl, 1998). For instance, reward exchange encompassed the leader's capability to satisfy and acknowledge worker's needs, pay rises and rewards, and progressions for workforce who complete successfully and meet deadlines. Transactional leadership concentrate on mechanism, not alteration. Followers of the approach have strong faith on this notion. This would be a simpler approach to instantaneously inspire colleagues, gain their daily commitment, and guarantee an improvement in production. Not to add that their productivity will rise immediately if this reaction happens right away. The fact that this theory is fairly limited and does not concentrate on the complete issue or the organization's future is an inconsequential flaw.

Leadership is mainly perceived as title or position designated to a person which is a misconception rather it is a largely anticipated valued action and behavior not just a title or position. Northouse (2021) stated that while leading a group of individuals, leaders try to influence and control their behavior to accomplish mutual goals. This concept categorizes leadership i.e. influence and control, shared goals and objectives and group of individuals (Gholamzadeh, 2016). Transformational leadership since its inception by Burns (1978) has become a highly researched topic in

leadership domain. Initially Burns' work focused on political leadership and compared two types of leader's i.e. transformational and transactional leaders. Transformational leadership pulls the attention of researchers and academician due to its variance to traditional leadership styles (Chen *et al.,* 2018).

A unique characteristic of transformational leadership is that leaders construct a vision and cultivate an image of the future of their organization and converse this vision to their subordinates while using different mediums. At the applied level, a vision offers shared objectives for workforces to slog towards and indorses individual behavior that is consistent with the leaders' values for the organization. Transformational leadership's main features are constructing and communicating vision and encourage employees to accept set goals, enhance work efficiency and stimulate worker's intellect (Carless *et al.*, 2000). Transformational leadership and performance of the subordinates are directly linked (Le & Lei, 2018). A person in leadership role practicing transformational leadership style is considered as role model that are revered, appreciated and reliable, responsiveness to followers' self-development process, encourage novelty to be inquisitive, abstaining, and applying new methods to solve problems, and motivate to exceed their personal interests for organizational interests.

Transformational leadership produces valued and constructive transformation in the employees and augments the enthusiasm, confidence, and performance of followers while using different strategies. As mentioned previously while presenting themselves as role model transformational leaders connect the follower's with the mission of organization, built ownership, and sense of identity. Transformational leader inspires followers to align them with tasks that improve their performance. D'Souza and Kang (2021) stated that efficiency of any organization directly linked to effective leadership. Transactional style however might not be appropriate when the condition necessitates a noteworthy modification in direction, or circumstances call creative problem-solving. They found that transformational leadership style is intermittently vital and will be more prolific.

Explicitly, most of the research studies verified that transformational leadership has a relationship with outcome variables (Barling *et al.,* 2002;

Eisenbeiss *et al.,* 2008; Le & Lei, 2018; Zhang *et al.,* 2011). Different research studies support above mentioned claim i.e. TL has positive correlation to emotional intelligence (Brown and Reilly 2008), task performance (Walumbwa *et al.,* 2008; Wang *et al.*, 2005), organizational citizenship behaviors (Podsakoff *et al.*, 1990), organizational commitment (Avolio *et al.,* 2004), occupational safety (Barling *et al.*, 2002), team performance (Dionne *et al.*, 2004; Zhang *et al.,* 2011) and team innovation (Eisenbeiss *et al.,* 2008). Review of leadership literature explicitly mentions that the transformational leadership is a generally acknowledged favorable predecessor variable, leads to advantageous consequences. Although globally women are still under represented in position of power, responsibility and leadership despite the dramatic increase in their former employment over last few decades. Men occupy most of leadership positions even in developed countries. Interestingly, when transformational leadership is studied in terms of gender, there is a noteworthy difference. Women entrepreneurs were much more likely to be transformational. Many researches are available on leadership and gender in which effect of leaders' gender on their leadership style has been discussed (Michel, 2018). Poddar and Kirshnan (2004) investigated the effect of gender on transformational leadership. It was found that women's traits such as kindness and consideration are positively related to followers' perceptions of transformational leadership.

  Women as human beings are considered "more sophisticated, dependable and subtle to others' perspectives in decision making." The question is then why do men hold most of the leadership positions? Treatment of men and women at workplace mainly depends upon cultural standards and gender socialization. Men consequently mount their dominance through the leadership position. All around the world women main responsibility is household; men by default can focus more on their careers, and promotional opportunities and career development. Female are usually perceived through men lenses because they are living in male dominated societies especially in South East Asia. There are certain disciplines such as the sciences where it was assumed these field are specified for men, although many female scientists performed excellent in their respective fields. It is not easy for women to secure a higher position in top research oriented higher education institutions. Women in academia are less

empowered along with lack of mentoring by other women create serious problems for them in pursuance of career path. It is a matter of acceptability, if society accepts women as a male counterpart in leadership role and paves the way for women to excel in profession, this will make their transformation in higher education more flexible. Glazer-Raymo et al. (2000) stated that, the question of whether or not women can lead has become moot with the rise of women in political and corporate leadership positions. Female leaders are participating in variety of leadership roles and participatory management approach is mostly used by female leaders to empower the followers.

Consequently, females attaining the highest leadership position in higher education are depending upon numerous elements; the way they are perceived by society and academic peers along with high level of personal commitment to the profession, mentoring, and competence. Numerous females have acquired the chance to lead in higher education by their personal efforts. In USA, females are progressively admired for having outstanding leadership skills, and sometimes manifest leadership styles linked with effective performance as leaders. According to research on the characteristic method, there has been a list of attributes that people may need to maintain or want to cultivate if they want to be seen as leaders. Such qualities are: intellect, self-assurance, willpower, morality, and sociability. Present study was designed to investigate how women in higher education are practicing transformational leadership style in Pakistani universities.

Research Methodology

In this study, an explanatory sequential mixed method research design was selected in order to establish relationship between practices, behaviors, preferences and for the explanation of quantitative findings of study. Women working on administrative posts in public sector universities of the Punjab province was the population of this study. Seventy-four women were selected purposely for data collection. Fifty-five participants responded and sent questionnaires back.

Quantitative data regarding transformational leadership style was collected using Bass and Avolio (2000) Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) 6 S. The MLQ offers a full range of assessments of 4Is of transformational leadership – Idealized Influence, Inspirational

Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration. Qualitative data were collected through semi structured interview protocol.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed by using descriptive statistics. Mean scores were calculated to compare 4Is of transformational leadership – Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration. The data emerging from the semi-structured interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis.

Table 1

Designation-wise Distribution of Women Leaders (n=55)

Designation	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Vice Chancellor	4	7
Dean	6	11
Director	15	27
CODs/HOD	30	55

The above table shows that the highest percentage of responses received from transformational leadership survey is from the chairperson of the departments (55%).

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of Subscale of Transformational Leadership 'Idealized Influence' (n=55)

Sr #	Item	Not at all (%)	Once in a while (%)	Somet imes (%)	Fairly often (%)	Frequently if not always (%)	Mean
1	I make others feel good to be around me	0	1.8	14.5	45.5	38.2	3.20
2	Others have complete faith in me	0	0	16.4	58.2	25.5	3.09
3	Others are proud to be associated with me	0	5.5	10.9	54.5	29.1	3.07

The above table shows that majority of the respondents responded to item no. 1 (M= 3.20), which shows that women leaders make others feel good to be around them.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics of Subscale of Transformational Leadership 'Inspirational Motivation' (n=55)

Sr #	Item	Not at all (%)	Once in a while (%)	Somet imes (%)	Fairly often (%)	Frequently if not always (%)	Mean
4	I express with a few simple words what we could and should do	0	1.8	10.9	45.5	41.8	3.27
5	I provide appealing images about what we can do	0	0	23.6	40	36.4	3.13
6	I help others find meaning in their work	0	0	12.7	29.1	56.4	3.44

Table 3 shows that item no.6 has the highest mean score i.e. *M*=3.44, suggesting that the majority of women leaders agreed with this statement. This mean score suggested that women leaders help others focus to on their work, and try to make others feel their work is significant.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics of Subscale of Transformational Leadership 'Intellectual Stimulation' (n=55)

Sr #	Item	Not at all (%)	Once in a while (%)	Some times (%)	Fairly often (%)	Frequently if not always (%)	Mean
7	I enable others to think about old problems in new ways	1.8	16.4	30.9	49.1	98.2	3.28
8	I provide others with new ways of looking at puzzling things	0	0	10.9	34.5	52.7	3.43
9	I get others to rethink ideas that they had never questioned before	1.8	14.5	47.3	34.5	98.2	3.17

Table 4 shows that item no.8 has the highest mean score i.e. *M*=3.43, suggesting that the majority of women leaders agreed with this statement. This mean score suggested that the leaders show the degree to which they encourage others to be creative.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics of Subscale of Transformational Leadership 'Individualized Consideration' (n=55)

Sr #	Item	Not at all (%)	Once in a while (%)	Somet imes (%)	Fairly often (%)	Frequently if not always (%)	Mean
10	I help others develop themselves	0	0	9.1	20	69.1	3.61
11	I let others know how I think they are doing	1.8	3.6	27.3	40	25.5	2.85
12	I give personal attention to others who seem rejected	1.8	1.8	12.7	34.5	47.3	3.26

Table 5 shows that item no.10 has the highest mean score i.e. *M*=3.61. This mean score indicated that the leaders felt that they provide support and encouragement to employees to grow themselves.

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics of 4Is of Transformational Leadership (n=55)

Sr #	4Is	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	Idealized Influence	9.36	1.61
2	Inspirational Motivation	9.83	1.78
3	Intellectual Stimulation	9.87	1.87
4	Individualized Consideration	9.72	1.77

Above table 6 shows that Intellectual Stimulation is the most common factor among 4Is of transformational leadership (Mean = 3.29). It can also be observed that Idealized influence is the least common factor among 4Is (Mean = 3.12). This indicated that most of the female leaders in Punjab prefer to encourage others to think creatively about old problems, create a comfortable environment and encourage people to question their own values and beliefs about the organization.

Qualitative Findings

Qualitative research is most suitable approach when researcher aim is to explore specific phenomenon through behavior and perception of target participants. This research used in-depth interview of five serving vice chancellors of women universities. The themes in this section were extracted from interpretations of participant's interview discoursing their personal experiences in leadership roles concerning gender and career opportunity. Following themes and sub themes were extracted from the interviews 5 vice chancellors.

Table 7

Themes representing the role of women transformational leader.

Sr #	Themes	Sub themes
1	Orthodox Roles and Gender Beliefs	Power Inequity
		Representation
2	Balancing act	Work family balance
		Equal opportunities
3	Future women leadership	Social injustice
		Mentoring

Traditional Roles and Gender Beliefs

Women vice chancellors articulated the notion of "orthodox roles" and how these gender expectations played their role and created obstacles for women's leadership. These gender roles and expectations are shaped on the basis of long-lasting stereotypical norms Pakistani society. Participants conversed that women in leadership roles are perceived and evaluated on different parameters when compared to men. Keeping in view such stereotypical women's, they received different responsibilities and uniform expectations in the workplace, which was expressed by a participant below:

> *Women faced prejudices more than men, for instance, a woman who is focused and more deadline driven, I mean more result oriented, likely to be perceived as irritating. On the other hand, men who do the same are generally perceived as focused on getting results.*

Power Inequality

The vice chancellors also sensed that some actions taken by them as a leader are equated with perceived gender roles. The instituting of gender roles inclined to produce an imbalance in power dynamics where men are seen as having greater knowledge and power, which means turning to them for leadership and decision-making, over women. Participants emphasized that due to perceived subordinate leadership role, they need to exercise more effort as a woman to prove themselves. These efforts are mostly taken as a negative more often connected with the opposite gender role. Instead of acknowledging women efforts, they are tagged acting "like a man." Such damaging perceptions of women who step outside their gender roles create power inequality.

> *I felt most of the time that when independent-minded women express her disagreement, are often viewed as being overly*

> *defensive, I mean negative connotations are attached with her feedback and whereas men are perceived as speaking their mind and contributing ideas.*

Another vice chancellor expressed that

> *Common terminology used for dedicated and focused women is "that women works like men" why I mean it's not fair why can't we label women as hardworking and dedicated. So I mean we as a woman sometimes entrapped in such cultural connotation*

Devotion to stringent gender roles was accredited to already learn behavior from family dynamics and culture over generations, as a participant expressed below:

> *But I do think some of my ideas of myself as a leader are influenced in ways that I can't even really fully get my brain around by, just from some of those systemic things to do with the way our culture and specifically within religious fields often view women and what they're acceptable roles in life are:*

Gender Representation

It is quite evident through literature review that the environmental and natural resource management area has a historically been dominated by men. The VC's expressed being usually acquainted of belonging to the minority regarding gender. This fact is obviously noticeable when in conferences or meetings, female voices are neglected. One of the participants stated that; One of the vice chancellor pointed out that:

> *As a part different statutory bodies in the universities, I felt women are mostly less in numbers I mean female representation on equal basis is ignored. Consequently, women voices are not reflecting in decisions. If women raised voice most of the time they are sunbed and even listened. Again their presence cannot create much difference.*

But this is also a well-established is that there are not enough women who are qualified to assume top positions. Thus, having more women in decision-making roles may translate into a generally lower quality of representatives. Participants of the study are well aware of this fact.

> *I think the first person you need to convince that you can be a good leader is yourself and that is what has been noticed most of the time like you know we have been mentioning these female vice chancellors but I don't want to be called a female vice chancellor I am a vice chancellor and you know I would like to see women in general universities as vice chancellors being vice chancellor in our women university of course it's a privilege and it's an honor to be vice chancellor in these prestigious institutions but you know look at the general universities why don't we have female Vice chancellors there and the main reason is once I was looking at the data that you don't even find many applicants these general universities because, they shy away even to apply and accepted male dominance.* so that's *what I'm saying what is keeping them away from applying for those positions is very strange so you know you are the first one to be convinced that yes you can do it before you can convince*

It can be concluded that there is a need to develop gender-sensitive human resource strategies, including networking, career tracking mentoring and succession planning.

A Balancing Act

The notion of having gender equity in terms of gender roles and behavior as an academic leader was voiced repeatedly during current study. Participants anticipating the need of balancing when policies are formulated for higher education. Participants described they were vigilant about the labels often conscious of weighing when to be assertive and when to be humble, which varies between contexts.

Work Family Balance

Men and women cope with their activities daily to spend a life with higher quality and balance. Women manage twofold working hours because they are the ones who mostly care for the elderly, disabled, and children after formal work. These are responsibilities of women around the world along with their professional duties. "In 2019, women in the European Union spent 13 h more per week than men in unpaid care and housework, and 79% of women perform housework such as cooking and cleaning the

house, compared to 34% of men only"(Moreira, et.al 2022). One of the participants said

Being a vice chancellor of the university I need to spend 8 to 9 hours in my office. I have five family members. When I go home from the workplace, I feel a bit tiredness due to long tiresome work hours spent in office. I always feel there is a time shortage as I have suffered from high work pressure and then I am stressed to complete the task in time. I think work itself is a pressure. When I come back home, I have to manage my family responsibilities. I have only few hours to take rest.

Work life balance is a complex problem for the quality of life. Most of the time it become challenging to fulfill all the commitments at both work and in private life.

Equal opportunities

Research on leadership in HEI not only finds discriminatory and exclusionary practices in recruitment, selection and promotion practices, but also that many women report finding the idea of leadership unattractive and difficult to navigate culturally. Leadership and mentoring programs for women in HE are important for women who are breaking the ice and helping to change social norms. One of the participants viewed

> *Being a vice chancellor of the university I feel that women's leadership is challenging in male-dominated sectors, organizations, and contexts where gender segregation reproduces social inequalities. HEIs also represent socially constructed realities that possess robust cultural meaning because of their intellectual purpose and unique structures.*

The point to ponder is that these inequalities are reflected in developed countries where women's leadership invariably highlights the gendered inequalities and barriers within HEIs.

Mentoring

The term "mentor" originated with the ancient Greek, Mentor, who king Odysseus put in charge of caring for his son, Telemachus, when Odysseus left for the Trojan Wars. Through, mentor the goodness Athena encouraged and educated Telemachus. Mentoring can be seen as a way for higher education institutions to invest in their junior faculty and staff members as

the mentoring relationship provides young members of the institution with experienced mentors who foster the professional and personal skills they need to succeed. One of the participants said that

I think senior people take on the responsibility of serving as role models and nurturing the next generation by sharing advice, providing feedback, and encouraging them to develop their leadership potential. Another participant claimed that Often, these mentoring relationships occur informally, but since the benefits of mentoring for individuals and institutions is well established, formal mentoring programs have become a more common systematic method for institutions to encourage junior faculty and staff in their professional development.

One of the vice chancellor stated that the workplace can often become an unsettling place for women without the presence of mentors. The subjective reflections of the participants illustrate the undoubted importance of mentors in developing constant motivation, courage, and inspiration, as well as reducing occupational stress.

Discussion

Intellectual curiosity in the ways that leaders throughout the world lead their organization in these changing situations has been sparked by the realization that leadership as a societal exercise does not exist autonomously from socio-economic and cultural surroundings. Multiple research studies have investigated the effect of TL's on work force and organizational effectiveness. Several outcome variables have positive relationship between such as employee's job satisfaction, commitment, motivation and creativity. Transformational leaders incline to generate relationships that enhance self-esteem of their subordinates and increase incentives, involve their subordinates, cater their needs, and support them to attain their fullest potential (Al-Mansoori & Koc, 2019). Numerous factors influence transformational leadership, and these leaders work to foster a pleasant work environment (Sirisookslip et al., 2015). According to Pihie et al. (2011), women performed best on the subscales of attraction, idealized, impact, inspiration, academic incitements, and individualized cognition. However, there are notably few women in key administrative positions. Literature related to the leadership prominently mentioned that

if TL practiced largely in the organization, the more effective it will be (Mukhtar et al.,2020).

Higher education institutions practice TL as a dominant leadership model (Berkovich, 2016), and many previous researches indicted the significant role of TL in education (Alamir et al.,2019). Empirical and theoretical research recommend that, in a fluctuating societal and technical environment, that affects both faculty performance and student needs, transformational leadership can contribute significantly in future to improve the quality of higher education. In addition to this, it is crucial for women to demonstrate TL in order to encourage women's success in a workplace where males predominate if we want to overcome the stereotype that only men can be leaders. According to contemporary research, women leaders are more transformative than male leaders.

The literature continuously highlights many barricades that hamper women from progressing to top positions in institutions of higher education at the same pace as their male colleagues. The plea for equivalent privileges and representation of female in public sector organizations is a plan in the contemporary era. Several accomplishments have been attained by female in diverse aspects of life, but this state of affairs has not been adequate to motivate societies to admit women's competencies. The belief of the incompetence of female to become leaders does not simply happen in politics and government but also in every sphere of life. Literature reported frequent cases in the working environment where it is not easy for female to compete with men. Gender based discrimination is reinforced by the orthodox doctrine that female are less competent for leadership positions. Such supposition submits that discernment is still continuing. Such circumstances marginalized womenfolk because they are supposed to possess lesser leadership capability than men and regard less suitable. UNESCO (2017) reports revealed women academic leaders faced multiple challenges and obstacles in order to attain highest levels of university administration. Firstly, it is difficult to breakdown the glass ceiling at higher education institutions. Phenomena of the glass ceiling happens when female face difficulty in earning the highest occupational successes. The issue is not exclusively attributable to basic hurdles, but also to the fact that a female susceptibility is captivated by cultural value system. Glass ceiling can be frequently observed in HEI's having biased point of

view about women, which makes it tougher for womenfolk to achieve the uppermost positions because they are considered as different entities than men.

In Pakistan where gender disparity index is very high in every aspect, higher education is no exception. There are a very few women in general public universities working on senior management positions. Bakr and Alfayez (2022) stated that women are practicing transformational leadership styles more often and depict supporting behavior to subordinates' and ensure their participation in decision-making. High quality relation is the antecedent of such behaviors. Similarly, Bawa (2017) finds that women leaders have somewhat lower individualized consideration that is contrary to the finding of this study where individualized consideration is the 2nd highest trait in women leaders practicing transformational leadership in higher education. Women leaders in higher education craft constructive academic environments, upkeep faculty in attaining university objectives, and execute the role of idealistic and visionary leaders. Findings of present study revealed that majority of the women mean scores high on transformational leadership (4Is). Furthermore, it was needed that organizations must offer equal resources and opportunities to both male and female who have the skills of leadership. Women in leadership should use their influence to advocate for change that can make the resources necessary for other women to ascend leadership positions.

Intellectual stimulation is the most common factor among 4Is of transformational leadership that is highly practiced by female in higher education. Intellectual stimulation is a leadership trait that pursues to transfer vision by passing on more perplexing tasks, particularly for those who can motivate the anticipated thirst and opportunities. It can be used as a tactic to increase the performance of subordinates. Such determinations are conceded by female leaders with the intent that followers are enthusiastic and committed to the vision and aims of the organization goals to be achieved. In this situation, Intellectual stimulation is practiced in the milieu of achieving the mission, goals and objectives of higher education institutions. Intellectual stimulation is practiced that leaders and subordinates collaborates to do new and creative ventures for the growth of the organization. The study's findings demonstrate that female leaders

work to provide their staff members the chance to express themselves and come up with fresh concepts in order to boost their excitement and creativity and enable them to think creatively and innovatively. Leaders who aspire to grow are risk-takers who use the organization's vision, purpose, and goals as a guide for subordinates to express their thoughts.

Findings of the present study conform the findings of Othman and Hamid (2023) that majority of females employ a transformational leadership style. Some of them were uninformed that they were applying transformational leadership in performing their routine tasks as a leader to resolve the problem. Leaders having awareness about transformational leadership employ this style consciously. Certainly, female academic leaders have distinctive hindrances when leading university departments. Consequently, the problems they face as a leader have highlighted many additional skills that they consider are indispensable for solving conflicts and handling calamities. Female leaders who own the required features or potentials will achieve their academic leadership responsibilities more efficiently. The diversity of academic duties, containing research, teaching, and supervision, demands that they be execute concomitantly and competently. This study is the part of the Ph.D. project that is related to the identification of the female who are practicing TL in higher educational institutions of Pakistan. The authors used MLQ's for the identification of the transformational leaders. Mainly ross-sectional study was conducted to explore TL that may not adequately reconnoiter the causal relationships among constructs. Thirdly, the findings are extremely contextual (culture in Pakistani HEI's), and thus participants may have internalized about the cultural values and norms.

Conclusions

This research may enrich the existing literature by indicating the level of transformational leadership practices in Pakistani universities. Most of the female leaders in Punjab focused to create conducive and supportive environment for their faculty members to boost their morale and commitment that ultimately enhance quality of women education and increase the women workforce for paid jobs. The importance of the study exists in the potential implications for women aspirant to leadership positions within higher education. Identifying how the dynamic of women

as a leader influences organizational culture and how institutions of higher education design their organizational structure to support female leadership. Rigorous policy formulation along with public can change the existing situation in Pakistani higher educational institutions. There is a dire need to increase women participation in higher education, and it may greatly increase the empowerment of female subordinates and provide doors for their upward mobility. On the basis of the findings and debate, it can be said that women tend to lead in a transformative way in Pakistani universities.

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