

Negotiating Identity and Performing Leadership in Discourse: A Gender-Based Study

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Abstract

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This research adopts a social constructionist perspective and a discourse approach to explore how men and women in leadership positions construct their identities and perform leadership within workplace talk. The key objectives of the study are to analyze uniformity and variation in the discourse features and interactional styles, the role of norms and stereotypes in determining the linguistic choices available to male and female leaders, and the implications of uniformity and variation in their language use. The theoretical framework of this study draws on Judith Butler's Performativity theory (1990) along with West and Zimmerman's concept of 'Doing gender' (1987). The data for this research is collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews conducted with males and females holding leadership positions in the selected research sites. The data analysis reveals that both male and female leaders use a variety of discourse features and employ language as an effective tool to negotiate identity and perform leadership roles within their workplace settings. The analysis highlights that both male and female leaders at times reinforce the normative patterns of interactional style for doing leadership by using discourse features normatively associated with their gender. The analysis also highlights that male and female leaders also contest and redefine the normative associations of discourse features and perform leadership by employing features of discourse that are stereotypically not associated with their gender.

Keywords: Identity Negotiation, Discourse approach, Performativity Theory, Workplace Discourse

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1. INTRODUCTION

The research on language, gender, and leadership within workplace settings has gained considerable attention in recent years. Some of the recent studies have mainly adopted the discourse approach on performing gendered leadership (Angouri and Marra, 2011; Baxter, 2010; Mullany, 2007; Holmes, 2005, 2006.). Every time men and women in leadership positions speak, they are negotiating what it means to be a leader by using a variety of discursive strategies such as assertiveness, humour, and direct linguistic strategies to accomplish their leadership goals, (Clifton, 2012). The discursive strategies adopted by individuals interact with many other aspects of their identity such as gender, class, ethnicity, race, and status (Bargiela-Chiappini, Nickerson and Planken, 2007). All these aspects may act as enabling or constraining forces for allowing certain linguistic choices to people as they exercise leadership within their workplaces. Looking at leadership from this perspective, it can be said that individuals are continuously negotiating and managing their professional identities through various ways in which they interact within their workplace settings (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003).

The social set up in Pakistan is mainly traditional, where social and cultural practices are conducted predominantly on normative patterns. Despite slow and gradual change particularly in the urban areas, the push and pull of normative patterns still characterize the personal and professional domains of the Pakistani society. The roles and responsibilities of individuals are mainly distributed along gender where women hold roles in the domestic/family space, whereas the public/professional sphere is still dominated by men (Roomi and Parrott, 2008; Manzoor, 2015; Rehman and Roomi, 2012). However, trends have started to change over the past three decades, as more women have taken up careers in various professions. This change has a direct and significant bearing on social patterns of Pakistani society in general, but on the social practices of workplaces in particular.

Language and gender are salient dimensions of the social practices that stand out prominently in social interactions where structures of masculinity and femininity seem to act as organizing principles (Antaki and Widdicombe, 1998). Sarangi and Roberts (1999) assert that our social and professional lives are linguistically and discursively mediated. They argue that language plays a central role in the construction of an individual's personal and professional identities because it is through language that we enact who we are and where we belong reinforce the same argument that language provides us with a flexible tool that can be employed in multiple ways for indexing various facets

of our personal and professional identities, Angouri and Marra (2011). They highlight that as individuals make multiple linguistic choices in their communication, their choices have significant implications in claiming, negotiating, and renegotiating their identities. This dynamic and discursive conceptualization of identity presented in the preceding lines is interactionally based, that moves away from the essentialist perspectives on identity. The earlier research has analyzed the relation between language and gender from an essentialist perspective taking into consideration the fixed and static categories of race, class, age, gender, and social status, (Labov, 2006; Lakoff, 1975; Trudgill, 1974). Later studies adopt a socially constructed perspective to explore the relation between language and gender identity (Baxter, 2003; Butler, 1990; Holmes and Stubbe, 2003, 2015; Holmes, 2006; Zimmerman, 1998).

The latter perspective does not view gender identity as an essential, pre-given, fixed social category, but it conceives gender identity as a social construct; as something accomplished in discourse as individuals communicate within various settings (Holmes, 2006). Hence, speakers within an interactional setting are seen as doing and performing gender rather than merely 'being' a particular gender (Coates, 2015). The notion of doing gender and gender performativity (Butler, 1990) has major implications for the present research because it offers a versatile model for examining how people choose to create and assert distinct personas from a variety of linguistic tools (West and Zimmerman, 1987). Workplaces are, thus, important institutional settings for exploration of language and gender identity as they offer insight into interactional enactment of professional identities and the intersection between gender and leadership.

The current study adopts a social constructionist perspective to examine how men and women in leadership positions construct and negotiate their identities through workplace discourse. The social constructionist perspective is well suited for this study because instead of perceiving identity as a fixed, pre-given social category, the social constructionist perspective provides a dynamic and flexible lens that views gender identity as socially constructed which may vary across various contexts. In any society, language plays an important role in constructing the social world because "language is an essential means by which society is created, (Muntigl, 2002, p. 49). The social constructionist perspective brings out this constitutive capacity of language in the creation of the society or social world that has important implications for studies such as the present one, aiming to examine the

relationship between identity and language in performing leadership at the workplace.

Hence, the social constructionist perspective and the discourse approach are well suited for the current study as they provide an appropriate analytical lens for exploring how identity is negotiated within discourse. The study focuses on the discourse features and the discursive strategies used by male and female leaders while performing their leadership roles. The study brings out how they negotiate between their gender and professional identities by employing language as a flexible tool. The discourse approach provides a flexible model for investigation by allowing space for taking into account the variation according to context, roles, and relationships within workplace settings. The very notion of negotiation and executing leadership, which this study aims to explore, is about flexibility and variation, therefore by adopting discourse approach, the current study explores the phenomena of identity negotiation as it takes place within the micro instances of interaction.

The focus of the present study is the features of interactional styles and the discourse features employed by women and men holding positions of authority in the selected universities. The study is confined to focusing on interactional styles only that are perceived to index masculinity and femininity.

This study is limited because the findings presented are based on the analysis of data collected from the selected public sector universities. Another limitation of this study is that the analysis is based on self-reported data collected through interviews from the selected research participants. The analysis is also limited because due to self-reported data, it may involve personal biases and individual perceptions. In order to mitigate the element of personal biases and individual perceptions, the researcher has analyzed interviews of four experienced male and female leaders and has attempted to highlight the merging patterns from their insights. Furthermore, the researcher has also attempted to place the analysis in light of the wider research reviewed for the current study. It is also important to mention here that the self-reported data has important value for this study as it brings out first-hand insights of experienced male and female leaders.

Keeping in view the above contextualization, the research will proceed with the following research objectives:

1.1. Research Objectives

1. To explore the variation and uniformity in the use of discourse features used by males and females in position of authority,

2. To analyze the role of gender norms and stereotypes as enabling or constraining force for the linguistic choices used by men and women while performing leadership roles,
3. To highlight the implications of variation in discursive strategies of male and female leaders.

1.2. Research Questions

1. How do male and female leaders employ various discourse features to perform leadership roles in their workplace settings?
2. What is the role of gender norms and stereotypes in determining the linguistic choices available to male and female leaders?
3. What are the implications of variation in the use of discursive strategies employed by male and female leaders?

1.3. Statement of Problem

For decades, the workplace has been dominated by men who have mostly held positions of authority. Hence, leadership roles and dominant perceptions about how leaders communicate in professional settings have an imprint of perceived masculinity (Baxter, 2010). As more women are entering the professional settings and taking up leadership roles, it has consequences for the workplace interaction and accomplishment of leadership by female as well as male leaders. Using gender as an important lens, this study explores how males and females in a position of authority negotiate and employ various discourse strategies while ‘doing’ leadership. By focusing on the features of interactional styles, the study also attempts to get insights into the role of gender norms and stereotypes as enabling or constraining forces affecting the linguistic choices available to male and female leaders as they do leadership. By highlighting the variation in the use of discursive strategies of male and female leaders, the study elaborates the role of language in negotiation of identity as individuals perform their leadership roles. The study concludes on unravelling the implications of variation in the use of discursive strategies.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The discourse approach to the study of language gender and identity has guided many research studies by stimulating interest in the exploration of

workplace discourse, especially since the 1990s (Cameron, 2001; Collinson, 2003; Holmes, 2005,2006; Holmes and Stubbe, 2003). Burke and Davidson (1994) elaborate that as women occupy managerial and administrative positions, significant change has been observed because women leaders bring in more flexible and alternative models of performing leadership roles. This tendency has affected workplace settings and interactional patterns as female leaders employ a range of polite, persuasive, and assertive features of discourse for getting things done. As for Tannen and West (1994; 1990), as more women reached higher positions and claimed leadership roles which were previously dominated by men, the studies focused on workplace discourse and explored features of interactional styles of women and men to analyze how they performed leadership through discourse (Holmes, 2000; Baxter, 2010; Angouri and Marra, 2011).The studies quoted are important for the present research because such studies established the need and significance of exploring workplace discourse from the gender perspective. These studies are also significant because they give an insight into how male and female leaders negotiated between their gender identity and professional roles; also the focus of the present study.

Adopting a discursive approach, Hall (1995) carried out a research on the expression of fantasy line operators. Reflecting on discursive strategies and the attributes of the operator's interaction styles, the research investigated how gender was performed through talk. Hall's research is significant to quote because it demonstrated the performative potential of language, as the results of the study revealed that both female and male operators used language as a tool for performing different facets of gender identities. Wodak (2003) conducted a study on the language of female parliamentarians to explore how they employed language as a tool in a male-dominated context. The analysis was based on data collected through interviews and the key focus of Wodak's study was on transportable identities. The main findings of the study revealed that the female parliamentarians used a variety of discursive strategies as they oriented to various identities in multiple interactional settings. They switched between I and WE structure, direct and indirect discursive strategies to position and negotiate their individual, national and political identities. They invoked various identities in their interview narratives (e.g., as woman, Swedish, Parliamentarian, EU). Wodak highlights the aspect of multiple identities and how women employ language while orienting to these multiple identities within their narratives. Wodak's study holds particular relevance and provides base for this paper because the current research also focuses on the notion of identity

negotiation while performing leadership roles (negotiation between gender and professional identity as leaders).

Holmes (2006) study on workplace talk provides useful methodological and analytical insights for the present research. Adopting discourse analytical approach, her study focused on the structures of interactional styles of women and men in position of authority. Based on detailed analysis of excerpts from workplace discourse data, the study concludes that both females and males in positions of authority employ rich linguistic repertoire and use a range of discourse strategies for performing leadership. The findings of Holmes study provide a broad-based analytical spectrum for this paper by illustrating that the discursive enactment of leadership has moved a long way from its stereotypical associations with a masculine model of performing leadership.

Baxter's (2010) focused on the language of female leadership in the corporate sector. She concluded that there is no exclusive language of female leadership; rather, women leaders use a variety of discourse features (imperatives, direct and indirect structures for disagreements and disapprovals, *I* and *We* statements for giving directives and orders, and courtesy expressions) conventionally indexed as masculine as well as feminine. Such studies have significant implications for discursive enactment of leadership roles and for normative association of leadership with masculinity because similar studies have found that discourse features are neutral linguistic resources employed by both male and female leaders to position themselves as assertive or collaborative leaders. The findings of Baxter's study provide useful basis for the current paper by giving insights about how leadership is executed discursively.

In order to situate this research paper within the local context, it is also important to review some relevant studies focusing on the discursive construction of identity within the Pakistani context. For example, exploring the performative potential of language, Rahman (2009) conducted a study on the language of call centers in Pakistan and analyzed how call center operators adopted a native-like accent to cater to their foreign clients by performing their desired identities. The study explores the call center operators' dynamic process of negotiating between personal and professional identities by employing language as a flexible resource. The key finding of this study is that identity is not given or fixed but performative and language is central to this performance. This finding brings out the discursive and dynamic aspect of identity that forms

an important basis for the current paper since it aims to explore the construction of identity within discourse.

A more recent study conducted by Hassan and Unwin (2017) focused on the language use of male and female young students in Pakistan. The study explored how the young students constructed and negotiated their identities through mobile phone communication by analyzing the impact of internet-based communication on social media. The study concluded that as youngsters communicate on internet-based spaces through their smartphones, they are found to be contesting cultural norms while constructing various personas. Qadir and Riaz's (2015) explores how Pakistani female politicians construct their gendered political identity in the talk shows and how male politicians respond to these identities positioned by female politicians. The study concludes TV talk shows used by male and female politicians as a discursive avenue for constructing and contesting gendered political identities. Umar and Rasul (2015) conducted a study on Pakistani print advertisements. By analyzing the graphical representations and the lexical choices, this study explored the construction of gender identities of males and females. The key finding of the study is that print media reproduces and reinforces the stereotypical masculine and feminine identities in accordance with the stereotypical notions.

Salam (2020) explored how Pakistani women constructed their gender identities on Facebook through visual and linguistic resources. By conducting discursive analysis of these resources, the study concluded that Pakistani women use Facebook as a discursive site where they employ visual and linguistic choices to reinforce their normative gender identities and also to contest and create dynamic and new versions of gender identity. Hence, the study highlights the discursive power of language in reinforcing and contesting the normative versions of gender identity.

The studies mentioned in this section, both in the western as well as Pakistani contexts, have focused on the discursive negotiation and construction of identity within spoken, written, and visual discourse establishing language as an important resource for construction of identity. However, it is important to mention that whereas in the western context, a number of studies have focused on workplace discourse and discursive performance of leadership, it is hard to find such studies being carried out in the Pakistani context. To best of the researcher's knowledge, the studies focusing on discursive negotiation and construction of leadership identity within workplace discourse are nearly non-existent in the Pakistani context. Thus, the current study aims to fill this gap by presenting gender-based analysis of workplace interaction and the dynamics of identity negotiation and performance of leadership in discourse.

3. THEORETICAL AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

This research mainly draws on Judith Butler's theory of performativity where gender identity is conceptualized as a socially constructed category. Butler adopts performative perspective on gender as she asserts gender does not pre-exist discourse, rather it is performed within it (Butler, 1990). So, given the performative model, the agency and power lie within the discourse and not outside it. Butler's performative perspective on the potential of discourse has relevance for this study by implying that interactional settings are sites where identities are (re)constructed, negotiated, or challenged as individuals engage in discursive practices. According to Butler, 'feminine' and 'masculine' are neither what we are nor traits we have but the effects we produce by way of particular things we *do* (Butler, 1990).

Butler looks at gender not as static and given but as 'repeated stylization of the body' that, over time, results in the appearance of the phenomenon as natural and given (Butler, 1990). Butler's performativity theory, provides a dynamic, flexible, and fluid analytical perspective on gender identity where identity is not seen as a state of being, rather understood as a fluid process of becoming which can change within the discourse. The second theoretical perspective which underpins this study is the notion of 'doing gender' presented by West and Zimmerman (1987). They argued that an individual's gender is not about 'having' certain traits or characteristics but it is fundamentally about 'doing' which happens within interactions, (West and Zimmerman, 1987). Like Butler's performativity theory, the doing gender perspective is also a departure from 'having' fixed traits and identity towards 'doing' which is a flexible perspective with the potential to vary according to contexts and settings.

Although Butler's theory of gender performativity has innovative strength, it has been criticized on various counts. Williams and Harrison (1998) criticize theory of performativity for being equally foundationalists (p. 88). They argue that Butler's theory of performativity is presented as challenging the static, pre-existing conception of gender and present the coming-into-being of gender within the performance. However, they argue that the very performances are also based on the pre-existing notions of gender and individuals recreate the same notions through gendered performances. Stone (2005) raises a point on Butler's notion of subverting gender norms through performativity. He argues that despite making claims about subverting the prevailing gender norms, the basic question about subversion remains unattended in Butler's theory. He further argues that instead of elaborating on

the notion of subversion, the focus in performativity theory remains on the possibility of subversive agency and the desirability of subverting the prevailing gender norms, Mills (2000) and McNay (1999) raise concern on the notion of agency presented in Butler's theory. Both argue that the notion of agency as proposed by Butler is fundamentally negative. They argue that if the power of subject is defined as his ability to repeat or redo and the agency of subject is reduced to reaction and resistance, then the notion of agency is fundamentally negative because it does not account for what makes the actions/performance of individuals uniquely their own.

The concept of 'doing gender' presented by West and Zimmerman (1987) has also received some criticism as researchers made distinctions between doing and redoing of gender. Deutsch (2007) and Connell (2010) critiqued the notion of doing gender and proposed the notion of redoing of gender. For example, Connell (2010) argued that the concept of doing gender does not adequately account for the experiences of trans people. She argues that instead the concepts of undoing gender or redoing gender are the notions that better account for the experience of trans people because they "often attempted to meld together masculine and feminine gender performances" (p, 39). She further argued that trans people resisted the pressures of gender binary by "adapting a hybrid gender style of interacting with others" (p. 42). Connell (2010) also preferred interest in exploring how gender could be undone instead of 'doing gender' which may run the risk of 'doing' gender according to the prevailing gender norms.

Despite all the criticism, the theory of gender performativity and the notion of doing gender have been greatly influential for investigation of gender identity construction. Hence, the theoretical and analytical framework of performativity and doing gender is well suited for this study.

3.1. Research Sample

The researcher has employed purposive sampling and non-probability convenience sampling technique for this study. Adopting purposive sampling as a technique, the researcher selected a sample that is believed to be representative of the given population. The researcher conducted twelve interviews in all and the interviewees included six female senior faculty members and six male senior faculty members. All interview participants held a Ph.D. degree and an experience of more than fifteen years of working in academia. In order to capture the discursive negotiation of identity and performance of leadership, the researcher chose senior male and female faculty members who held leadership positions on various levels as vice chancellors,

deans, and heads of departments. In order to capture the gender dynamics of how leadership identity is performed discursively, the researcher selected three public sector universities as research sites including a women university with predominantly females in the top leadership positions, a gender segregated male-only university setup having only males in the leadership positions, and a mixed-gender setup where both men and women held senior leadership positions. The universities selected for this research are based in Islamabad and Rawalpindi. Since the researcher is a resident of Rawalpindi it was convenient for her to access these academic workplaces which also rationalizes the used of non-probability convenience sampling technique for this study.

3.2. Data Collection

Data for this research has been collected by using interviews as the main tool. The researcher has conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with the help of an interview guide was prepared after a detailed review of relevant literature. The researcher conducted interviews of male and female participants from selected universities who hold positions of authority as VC, dean, head of departments, and chairs so that they can provide first-hand insights about how they negotiate their identity and do leadership by using various discourse features. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis. The extracts relevant to the current study have been taken out from detailed interview scripts.

3.3. Ethical Considerations

The researcher bore in mind important ethical considerations and sought prior permission for conducting interviews. This author got written consent signed before the commencement of each interview. This researcher also requested for prior consent of interviewees for audio-recordings and used a mobile phone as a recording device to ensure the interviewees are not intimidated by unfamiliar recording technology. The researcher has also ensured confidentiality by using pseudonyms for the interviewees during analysis.

4. ANALYSIS

The analysis is underpinned by Butler's theory of gender performativity and the notion of doing gender presented by West and Zimmerman. However, the discursive analysis of the features of interactional

styles is based on the parameters drawn from Holmes listed as widely cited features of feminine and masculine interactional styles (2001, 2006). They have been established as parameters on the basis of extensive research on workplace discourse. For example, many researchers have analyzed workplace discourse by drawing on these widely cited features of interactional styles (Baxter, 2010; Holmes, 2006).

These features are considered as normative and appropriate discursive means that males and females may employ in the workplace to signal their gender or leadership identity. They provide a useful starting point for analyzing the discursive strategies and discourse features of workplace talk as Holmes (2006) asserts that, “they constitute implicit, taken-for-granted norms for gendered interaction against which particular performances are assessed (7).

Table. Widely cited features of feminine and Masculine Interactional Styles
(Adopted from Holmes 2006)

Feminine	Masculine
Facilitative	Competitive
Supportive feedback	Aggressive interruptions
Conciliatory	Confrontational
Indirect	Direct
Collaborative	Autonomous
Minor contribution in public	Dominates (public) talking time
Person/process oriented	Task/outcome-oriented

The in-depth interviews mainly sought insights about the features of interactional styles (Holmes, 2006) of the interview participants, the role of gender norms and stereotypes in determining the discursive choices they employ, and the dynamics of variation and uniformity in the discursive strategies they use as they perform leadership roles. Keeping in view the scope of this paper and space limitations, the researcher has shortlisted four aspects of the interactional styles of male and female leaders for the sake of analysis in the forthcoming section.

4.1. Women and Men holding the position of authority in universities and their communication style

The research on language and gender has come a long way from labelling communication styles and linguistic features with particular genders to viewing them as neutral and flexible resources equally accessible to males and females. In order to get an insight into the communication styles of both

male and female, the interviewees were asked to reflect on the features of interactional styles as they communicate while performing leadership roles. Dr Sonia in paragraph 1.1 talks about her communication style while she enacts her roles as vice-chancellor. She elaborates that initially since she did not have female role models in highest position as hers, she enacted her authority on a *masculine role model* using direct and assertive linguistic expressions in order to prove that she deserves the high position. Para 1.3, Dr. Afia, who is holding a position as dean, refers to her own communication style as *submissive, friendly* and *indirect* elaborating that she is very *careful of offending her subordinates*. She also adds that assertiveness *does not come to her naturally*. Para 1.5 Dr. Sarah refers to her own communication style as a combination of assertive and collaborative depending on the nature and urgency of the task in hand. Para 1.6 Maria shares her observation about how women enact authority in interaction. She elaborates that mostly the interactional style of women in a position of authority is *not assertive or challenging*; rather they try to *have a win-win situation*. Instead of communicating aggressively or assertively, women leaders make *efforts to make everybody work through*. The male respondents also gave mixed responses. Dr Shoab, in para 1.7, states that academic institutions are settings that do not always require you to be an assertive leader, but you have the space to communicate politely because in his view *politeness brings better results*. In para 1.8, Dr. Hashim elaborates that he chooses to enact his leadership role assertively because for him implementation of institutional rules is paramount and if implementation requires him to be assertive, he will comply. In para 1.9, Dr. Malik states that his communication style is a combination of politeness and assertiveness depending on various contextual factors that include the urgency of the task in hand and the pressure from higher authorities.

Commentary: The above analysis highlights that both male and female participants employ variation in their communication styles and discursive strategies for performing their leadership roles. The responses of participants also reveal that the discursive strategies employed by them do not always conform to the stereotypical associations of the features of interactional styles. For example, the female participants reported using direct and assertive discursive strategies, performing their leadership role on a normative masculine model and constructing themselves as autonomous leaders. Male respondents also reported using polite and indirect discursive strategies as they perform leadership roles. Both male and female respondents also reported adopting a person-oriented discursive approach while enacting leadership as they pointed

being careful about offending others, creating a win-win situation and using politeness as a discursive strategy to bring better results. Politeness, indirectness and a person-oriented approach are features of discourse normatively associated with feminine styles of interaction, whereas being direct and assertive are indexed as features of masculine interactional style. The key finding of the above analysis is that both male and female leaders challenge the normative associations of these discourse features by doing gender and performing leadership in unconventional way. This study also finds that both male and female leaders adhered to fixed and fluid accounts of gender and professional identities bringing in new versions of leadership.

The above findings of this research are in line with studies by Holmes (2006) as they reiterate the same argument that the discursive enactment of leadership has moved a long way from its stereotypical associations with a masculine model of performing leadership. Like Holmes (2006), the findings of this paper highlight that the interactional styles of male and female leaders are diverse and flexible depending on various settings, the contextual needs and an individual's approach to performing effective leadership. Hence, the variation in their communication styles makes it hard to put their interactional styles in neatly defined masculine and feminine styles of interaction. By bringing out the dynamic and fluid process of identity construction through discourse, the findings of this study also align with the theoretical foundations which underpin this study because the theory of gender performativity and doing gender are premised on the dynamic and fluid notion of identity construction.

4.2. Gender stereotyping about the interactional styles of men and women and the pressure to adhere to norms of appropriacy

The male and female participants highlighted that the prevailing gender norms and stereotypes about their prescribed interactional styles do have an impact on the way they use language as they enact their leadership roles. In paragraph 2.1 Dr Sonia's response automatically brings in common gender stereotype of learning to '*act-like-a-woman*' and '*not-like-men*', which subtly refers to all the associated expectations of an '*acting-like-a-woman*' approach, for instance, the normative style of interaction where women are expected to be polite and indirect in their communication. Para 2.2, Dr Salma states that women who are in positions of authority and have an assertive style of interaction are labelled as *bull-dyke* with all the negative connotational load. This indicates that when women use assertive discourse strategies to perform

leadership roles, they are at the risk of being stereotyped in derogatory terms, whereas men are spared such stereotyping.

Para 2.4, Dr Asma refers to the role of early socialization in setting different norms of communication for boys and girls. She states that *girls are trained to be humble and polite* as they speak, and they carry this speech style as they perform their professional role, whereas boys are raised *with a notion that they have to be assertive* and that reflects well on their communication style within leadership roles. Para 2.5, Dr Sarah also echoes the same perspective that our training through *socialization and our cultural expectations* do influence the way we use language and the discursive strategies we choose in our personal and professional communication. Para 2.6 Dr Maria elaborates that there are different normative expectations about the use of language as men and women hold positions of authority. The male respondents (para 2.7) also acknowledged the impact of norms and stereotypes on their language stating that they feel *bound* and *controlled* by norms. Dr. Hashim brings out the constraining role of norms as they set standards for *culturally appropriate behaviours*, including the use of language in this case. He asserts that norms are holding us and referring to the power of norms he mentions that *it is not easy to breach the normative patterns*. Para 2.8 Dr Mohsin brings out yet another dimension of the role of norms explaining that if you are a male holding senior position you have to be aware of *gender sensitivity* and you have to *act artificially*, and you cannot *talk freely* with female subordinates and team members. Para 2.9 Dr Wali also reiterates a similar idea that norms do affect your vocabulary as well as the *linguistic choices* we make during the interaction.

Commentary: The above analysis highlights that the choices of discursive strategies available to both male and female leaders are not completely free, but they are constrained by the influence of prevailing gender norms and stereotypes. The important finding of the above analysis is that both male and female leaders are not free to exercise their complete individual agency while choosing discursive strategies. They have to negotiate the discursive choices at times at the risk of being stereotyped in derogatory terms. Whereas the responses of females indicate being more constrained by norms and more at the risk of being stereotyped, men also felt the pressure of adhering to the normative expectations of discursive style of male leaders. The analysis also finds that the labelling of certain features of discourse as masculine or feminine features does not have much value as inherent deterministic truth. But it is a result of socialization where males and females are conditioned to adhere to the

normative associations of discursive styles. Here the finding of this paper echoes Butler's (1990) notion of operating within 'a rigid regulatory frame' as she states, 'Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a rigid regulatory frame' (p, 33). Although agency and power are the basic tenets of Butler's theory of performativity where individuals have agency and power to perform, but this agency is constrained by 'rigid regulatory frame' which refers to the prevailing norms and stereotypes within society.

4.3. Uniformity or Variability in interactional style of men and women holding positions of authority in universities

The research adopting an essentialist paradigm on language and gender centered on identifying certain linguistic features, as features of feminine style of interaction implying that the discourse features used by women are uniform. However, the social constructivist paradigm centers on flexibility in the linguistic choices according to context and setting, hence leading to variation in the use of language. The interview data also reinforces that all male and female respondents asserted that their interactional style is not uniform, rather, it varies according to the need of settings, people involved, topics, and many other contextual factors.

Para 3.1 Dr Samina elaborates that her communication style differs *in every category, in every situation*. Para 3.2 Dr. Salma associates variation with a range of roles and responsibilities that she has to perform as the head. She says there is variation in her interactional styles *because I wear a lot of hats-so variations as they say*. Para 3.4 Dr. Sarah firmly believes that *you cannot have one yardstick for everything*. She states that being in a position of authority you are dealing *with human beings and they are different*. So, as you perform your leadership role in order to get things done you *need to put, every new strategy*. She asserts that as leaders *you need to be flexible*. Para 3.5 Dr Maria also echoes the same that there is variation in linguistic choices and discursive strategies and in her view, it is *context-driven* which she elaborates later that while performing her leadership role, she chooses between cooperative and assertive discursive strategies depending on the attitude of the team members. She states that if her subordinates are not complying with the deadlines, she chooses to use assertive discursive strategies to get things done on time.

The male respondents also reaffirmed variation in linguistic choices. Dr Shoaib, in para 3.6, elaborates that many factors lead to variation in your linguistic choices: the persons involved, the institution, the subject etc. He firmly posits that the linguistic choices and the interactional styles *cannot be homogenous* in all settings and across various contexts. Para 3.7 Dr Hashim

reinforces the same argument that uniformity in interactional styles is *not possible* as the content and the substance of interactions change.

Commentary: The above analysis highlights that discursive enactment of leadership is characterized by flexibility and variation in the discursive styles of male and female leaders. They have to use a wide range of discourse features and linguistic forms to effectively perform leadership according to the needs of context, settings, and the meeting participants.

The finding of this paper reiterates Baxter's (2010) conclusion that men and women in leadership positions are required to have rich linguistic repertoire so that they can use a variety of linguistic means to perform their leadership roles effectively. The above analysis brings the discussion to a significant finding of the current study which demonstrates that since both male and female leaders display variation and diversity in their use of discourse strategies, it reaffirms the function of language as performative. This finding reiterates the performative potential of language as conceptualized by Butler (1990). By highlighting the discursive potential of linguistic means, this finding foregrounds the role of language in discursive performance of leadership.

4.4. Negotiating multiple identities drawing a balance between personal, social, and professional identity

The participants were asked to reflect on their interactional styles in order to get an insight into how men and women in leadership positions use language as a tool to negotiate multiple identities and how they draw a balance between various aspects of their identity. Para 4.1 Dr Sonia, who holds a very high leadership position, states that women like herself in top leadership roles *end up in double bind – in a catch twenty-two situations* as they try to negotiate between their professional role and their personal identity. In her view, this negotiation involves *learning to shift gears*. As her official role requires her to be assertive, she says she has *learned to say no to things* by asserting authority but as she enters her home, her role changes and so does her interactional style hence she has to *shift the gear*.

In para 4.3, Dr Sarah argues that *you have to be in the middle ground* in order to maintain balance between the *expectations of society being a woman* on one hand and *being a leader* on the other. Since the prevailing models of leadership are dominantly masculine with an authoritative and assertive style of interaction, women in leadership positions have to balance society's expectation of having polite and cooperative communication style in their

identity as homemakers and caregivers. Dr Sarah refers to this balance as between *two different spirits*.

The interesting thing to note is that male respondents did not have much to share about adjusting their style of interaction while balancing between personal and professional identities. This might be due to that fact that they can carry their leadership identity back home and in society because societal expectations give them enough space to be assertive in communication in all manifestations of identity i.e., personal, social, and professional. Interestingly, only one male respondent remarked directly on this question which too is not about his personal effort to negotiate between identities, but generally more about females in leadership roles trying to bring *a work-life balance*. He states that society does not want women *to look like men, dressed like men, talk like that*. While referring to societal expectations, he says that since women are seen as *motherly figures* expected to be *soft-spoken and polite*, even as leaders they are expected to be *kind and polite* to their juniors which requires them to draw a balance between what society expects from them as women and what their professional roles require from them.

Commentary: The above analysis indicates that female leaders experience more pressure of drawing a balance between discursive enactment of their gender identity and their leadership roles because both these identities require different discourse patterns. As females, they are expected to employ polite and indirect discourse features whereas their leadership roles at times require them to be direct and assertive in order to accomplish workplace tasks effectively. The traditional model of leadership works on masculine model characterized by being direct, assertive, and autonomous in order to be taken seriously and to get things done (Baxter, 2010); whereas as women they are expected to be polite *motherly figures*. Hence, the study finds that despite having made their way into senior leadership positions, though to a limited extent, women are required to put in extra effort to draw a balance between their gender identity and leadership roles. The study also finds that although politeness, indirectness, and being person-oriented features of feminine discourse style are employed by both male and female leaders as effective discursive strategies, they are still strongly associated with feminine style of interaction, hence, female leaders are under the pressure of being polite and motherly.

5. CONCLUSION

This study has highlighted the performative potential of language by analyzing first-hand insights about linguistic diversity and stylistic variation in the use of language by males and females in positions of authority. The

implication of a performative view of language is significant in conceptualizing the notion of identity as constructed and negotiated within discourse and leadership as a 'doing' rather than 'having'. Importantly, the performative conceptualization also points to an element of individual agency. The study has also highlighted the constraining as well as enabling role of gender norms and stereotypes that affects the language choices available to individuals.

The analysis concludes that it is not easy for both males and females to disrupt the normative patterns and expectations about how they are expected to use language while enacting leadership roles. However, as they choose to use the language beyond normative patterns, they run the risk of being stereotyped even in derogatory terms. The study concludes that despite the constraining influence of prevailing norms, language is employed as a flexible and dynamic tool by male and female leaders as they enact their leadership roles in discourse. An important implication is that even in normative social set-ups such as Pakistan, male and female leaders employ language beyond traditionally labelled and defined patterns. Hence, the study concludes that as men and women employ discourse features from both masculine and feminine spectrums; they challenge and contest the prevailing discourse norms.

The study highlighted that gender is not the sole determining factor that accounts for the differences in the language use of male and female leaders. In addition to structural and social factors such as their training and socialization on different patterns and expectations about language use, other important factors such as power and authority have bearing on the communication styles of men and women. Therefore, the implication here is that females can also be as assertive as men if they have the power and authority.

The identity negotiation is a dynamic and context-specific phenomenon accomplished in discourse by drawing on a range of linguistic features and interactional styles. This suggests that it is imperative to pay attention to the contextual factors as male and female leaders discursively negotiate and accomplish their desired identities.

The linguistic and stylistic diversity in the language use of male and female leaders indicates that they are constantly performing masculinity and femininity by employing discourse features normatively coded as masculine or feminine. This implies that masculinity and femininity are not fixed labels or identities that men or women have and they bring into interaction; rather, they come into being within discourse depending on the linguistic features and interactional styles adopted by individuals.

Due to scope and space limitations, this paper has focused on particular thematic areas and settings for investigating the phenomena of identity negotiation and performance. However, the same type of research can be conducted in other workplace settings such as, medical, nursing, and banking. It would also be interesting and worthwhile to carry similar research in male dominated workplace settings such as, army, air force, engineering, and technical departments. The future researchers can also conduct comparative analysis studies focusing on the language use of males and females in formal and informal written and spoken interactions. These potential research areas will develop more holistic and broader understanding of how language is employed as a discursive resource by male and female leaders.

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ANNEX I

Details of Female Interviewees

Sr.#	Gender	Qualification	Designation	Workplace Set-up	Years of Experience	Duration of Interview
1.	Female-1	Ph.D.	VC	All female set-up	30+	30 minutes and 11 seconds
2.	Female-2	Ph.D.	Dean	All female set-up	15+	42 minutes and 31 seconds
3.	Female-3	Ph.D.	Head of Department	All female set-up	10+	56 minutes and 12 seconds
4.	Female-4	Ph.D.	Head of Department	All female set-up	20+	45 minutes and 28 seconds
5.	Female-5	Ph.D.	Head of Department	Mixed gender set-up	15+	29 minutes and 5 seconds
6.	Female-6	MS	Head of Department	Mixed gender set-up	15+	24 minutes and 35 seconds

Details of Male Interviewees

Sr.#	Gender	Qualification	Designation	Workplace Set-up	Years of Experience	Duration of Interview
1.	Male-1	Ph.D.	Dean	All Male set- up	15+	39 minutes and 25 seconds
2.	Male-2	Ph.D.	Head of Department	All Male set- up	20+	30 minutes and 18 seconds
3.	Male-3	Ph.D.	Head of Department	All Male set- up	10+	31 minutes and 47 seconds
4.	Male-4	Ph. D	Head of Department	All Male set- up	15+	44 minutes and 26 seconds
5.	Male-5	Ph.D.	Head of Department	Mixed Gender set-up	15+	31 seconds and 29 minutes

ANNEX II

Negotiating identity and performing leadership in Talk: A Gender Based Study

Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Name of Participant:

Designation:

Experience

Organization:

Date:

Questions:

1. Brief Introduction about nature and purpose of research
2. Have you held any administrative/authoritative positions? If yes, can you please explain what type of positions have you held in your professional experience?
3. Do men and women communicate in the same way or are there differences in the interactional styles of men and women? What can you tell from your experience?
4. Can you point out the most prominent similarities/differences in interactional styles of male and female in position of authority? (E.g., direct-indirect, aggressive-conciliatory, authoritative-collaborative, etc.).
5. Every society has norms for appropriate styles of interaction for men and women, do you think these societal norms and stereotypes have impact on your professional interactional styles? If yes, can you briefly explain how?
6. How do you draw a balance between your gender identity and your professional role?
7. Is your style of interaction uniform in all situations (do you always communicate in the same way or is there variation according to the context?
8. If there is variation, then what are the factors leading to variation?
9. How do people respond, when you assert your professional authority through your communication? Do you think you get enough space to assert your authority?
10. Is there anything else that you would like to share?

ANNEX III

Table 1. Interactional styles of Women and Men holding position of authority in public sector universities

Para	Name	Gender	Response
1.1	Dr. Sonia	female	She had no role models, female role models to follow. So her attitude was also quite authoritative. And because when you are a woman and you are in a position of authority and you have to show the world that you deserve this position and you have the merit to hold this position. So you are, the role model that you have is male role model.
1.2	Dr. Salma	female	Women have a tendency to look beyond the purely professional what you, you'd call, the human aspect.
1.3	Dr. Afia	female	I might be a bit more submissive, friendly and indirect so I do try to communicate in a way that it is not really directed..... I am careful of offending them- I would be careful about their feelings then I would communicate effectively
1.4	Dr. Asma	female	That is also different within the communication style and language style- if a male is communicating with male is communicating with female. Okay.
1.5	Dr. Sarah	female	I become assertive and I say like this, this is the task, and you don't have any excuse to, refuse it. Right? But sometimes it's more like kind of a coordinating
1.6	Dr. Maria	female	I will not be assertive or challenging in most of the cases and will make everybody have a win-win sort of situation – they won't be aggressive and assertive and out rightly challenging I believe. Just an effort to make everybody work through.
1.7	Dr. Shoaib	male	This is the blessing of being in the educational institution that we are able to, kind of remain polite and be kind you know, of less direct and more, all of those polite politeness expressions. So instead of being kind of authoritative and bossy with the students, with the non-teaching staff, with the teachers - we prefer to be - I prefer to be more polite and because the effect is the same, , the politeness brings better results in the workplace

1.8	Dr. Hashim	male	The first thing that I do is that I don't take my position as something that empowers me to misuse it. I try to do things as for the rules of the university –for everything I consult a rule. And when there is not a rule available for that, I do it with my maximum clarity of mind. And for that, if I'm going to be assertive when I think it's right and it's not existing in the rule, I do it
1.9	Dr. Malik	male	Most of the times my conduct. What you can say in my treatment and my attitude my behavior with my colleagues with my subordinates –that is polite. Sometimes I feel very frustrated, and my tone might be my behavior- it also changes from soft sometimes too hard. It depends on two things One if the deadline is coming very near. And second if there is pressure from higher authorities

Table 2. Genders stereotyping about the communication styles of men and women and the pressure to adhere to norms of appropriacy

Para no.	Name	Gender	Response
2.1	Dr. Sonia	female	I think we have learned to be women. Yeah. Act like women think professionally not like men, but as independent and empowered women and not feel guilty about that because that is also challenging, we start feeling guilty about that power we have, and we undermine our own power.
2.2	Dr. Salma	female	We have so many stereotypes, which concern professional women, if a woman in an administrative position becomes authoritative, you know, says do this, and don't do that. , again, she's stereotyped into either the bull-dyke kind of a position or if she happens to be unfortunate and unfortunate within quote marks , not to be married , the stereotype is because she's got no family. So, she drives us harder marital position has a lot to do with the way that she's perceived. Yes. And so, you know, if you want, let's say, your colleagues or your juniors to work longer hours or to put in more, the stereotype will be because she has nothing else, herself to do. , therefore she will keep us after hours. So it's a matter more of stereotyping. Nobody's going to stereotype a male administrator.
2.3	Dr. Afia	female	I feel as a woman getting angry and assertive is a very tricky thing - like if I was a man – I can become angry or upset at something – as a woman it is seen as my weakness.... they (men) actually get away with this and with me I am seen as a bad person for getting angry although it's a natural emotion.
2.4	Dr. Asma	female	Norms and stereotypes influence because when you train a girl that you need to be humble you need to be polite.so that politeness that humbleness that will become part of her personality. And that will be there. I mean. I mean. While she will be On the working place. And when the boys they're raised with this notion that they can shout and They can assert or something like that. They will definitely be practicing that thing in workplace.

2.5	Dr. Sarah	female	What I think it is most of the time, our training and the expectations – we don't expect from a woman to be assertive. We expect from her to be caring, loving, don't have much say about her herself. So, it's training, it's reinforcement, it's, the culture, the expectations.
2.6	Dr. Maria	female	We expect different behavioral patterns when women have to be in the position of authority and command. She would have to reassure and reiterate that she's the boss there in that set up.
2.7	Dr. Hasim	male	Yeah, we are bound we are controlled by norms. Yeah, we look into the norms and values, like we say, like norms and values are standards- like there is standard for culturally appropriate behavior and norms is the actual demonstration of that. Like what are expected and unaccepted behavior sometimes I believe that the culture is holding us, and it's not that easy that we think of it breaching it when it's necessary
2.8	Dr. Mohsin	male	Your working relation with a female, we have to observe some norms and some values, we cannot talk freely with them, and We cannot behave freely with them. We have to act artificially because the gender sensitivity - if the female staff or female colleagues are sitting, we have to be very conscience, very apologetic.
2.9	Dr. Wali	male	Norms do affect our, you know the vocabulary, the linguistic choices. Women are expected to be more polite, more, you know I mean that's what we feel that women can get anything done in our country as long as they just shed some tears. Men cannot cry in front of superiors but females would

Table 3. Uniformity or Variability in interactional Style of men and women holding positions of authority in universities

Para no.	Name	Gender	Response
3.1	Dr. Sonia	female	It differs. I think in every category, in every situation. It differs, the communication differs. The way you communicate in your professional life is different. The communication strategies change, the style changes.
3.2	Dr. Salma	female	Because I wear a lot of hats-so variations as they say, so yes, there's definitely variation in styles of communication, modes of communication, they vary according to the situations. So, it's a case-to-case basis.
3.3	Dr. Afia	female	there is variation I think I do sometime feel that I have been over friendly I need to assert myself but it's easy for me I can assert myself. It depends on the occasion it depends on how things are going.
3.4	Dr. Sarah	female	You cannot have one yardstick for everything, we are dealing with human beings and they are different. So, their working styles are different. So you need to put, every new strategies..... you need to be flexible.
3.5	Dr. Maria	female	there is variation- Yes, it is context driven in most of the cases If you have a team which is supportive and cooperative with you there will be no need to enact authority and to remind people that you are the head and if there is resistance or people are not complying to the deadlines for example then it needs to be reassured even if the head is a male or a female.

- 3.6 Dr. Shoaib male Of course, it varies from person to person. It varies from department to department, from institution to institution, from subject to subject. All depends on who you are..... there is a lot of variation. You cannot say that it's homogenous – no it can't be homogenous.
- 3.7 Dr. Hasim male In every meeting the substance or the content has to decide about it. Right. And we cannot be uniform in all kinds of different interactions It's not possible
- 3.8 Dr. Malik male I think there is variation. As I told you it depends on cases - case to case basis it varies It depends on the situation. It depends on the environment. It depends on your on a work load..... You have to be very polite and sometimes you must be very assertive. So it depends on the situation.
-

Table 4. Negotiating Multiple Identities-Drawing a balance between personal, social and professional identity

Para no.	Name	Gender	Response
4.1	Dr. Sonia	female	Yes, we try to do our job. We end up in double bind-catch 22 situation- We want to pull ourselves as professionals and as competent professional at the same time. We have to carry all that baggage with us. So it's a very delicate balance that you have to deal with..... I think we have to learn to shift gears.... In this office I have to be assertive. I have learned to say no to things. I have learned to take decisions Quickly.
4.3	Dr. Afia	female	Sometimes I struggle with it, I feel that being myself is very important to me personally so I have managed to kind of make it work for me- with what I have somehow within those barriers- I do actually -
4.5	Dr. Sarah	female	Having two different identities of a homemaker being the traditional, feminine, you know, feminine aura and to a person who is working outside the home and doing, having the work identity, do they go side by side? Do they facilitate each other; do they mitigate each other? How to balance that. Then what I found, and I usually have this thing in myself also what we have to do is you have to balance this on the bases of the personality that you..... have. Personality development of the person is very important to balance the both roles of work and family and being feminine or being masculine kind of things. You will need to be more, and you need to be more in the middle ground for doing both kinds of things. So it's a balancing things. If it was like how to balance would be like two different spirits, the expectations of the society being women- and the expectation of the society being masculine,
4.7	Dr. Shoaib	male	Dr. Shoaib of course we have to bring this work life balance - the society and workplace place balance, and little many things like you don't want women like the society doesn't want them to look Like men - dressed like men talk like that, there are certain things that might be the expectations like that. –so that is a compulsion from the society-and

That is part of your psyche as well, you're making as well because you have learned to speak that way for example women are considered soft spoken by many, and they remain because they are sometimes the things that are psychological like women motherly figures so they are always particularly if it's the juniors will be addressing, they would definitely be kind and soft
