Women Entrepreneur's Leadership Style: Individual Level Qualitative Study Using The Case Study Strategy

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Abstract

This is a qualitative research investigating the leadership style of ten women entrepreneurs who are leading their small and medium businesses in the light of leadership grid and Hofstede's Cultural Profile of Pakistan. The literature presents a specific leadership style of women in leadership positions which is people oriented, nurturing and caring. The current research was carried out specifically on the women leaders in SMEs and the data collected through in-depth interviews from the ten women entrepreneurs who were leading their organization, presented a variety of leadership styles. Furthermore, this research also presents the determinants of their leadership style which can help in developing women entrepreneurs in Pakistan. The research findings presented that majority of the women entrepreneurs in SMEs had high concern for people as well as production and were team leaders. Furthermore, education was the common determinant among the leaders. The contribution of their brought up and work experience also determined their leadership style. The research suggests further quantitative work to be carried out specifically on women leaders in SMEs to find out the leadership style of women entrepreneurs.

Keywords: Women leaders, Leadership styles, SME

1. Introduction

According to the World Bank Report(2012), the female population of Pakistan is reported at 49.19 % in 2011. Therefore, the ratio of men to women in Pakistan is around 51: 49 approx. Keeping in view the high population of women in Pakistan, the percentage of working women is only negligible. In 2008, 21.8 % of females were participating in the labor force in Pakistan while 82.7 percent of men were involved in labor. Out of the 47 million employed peoples in Pakistan in 2008, only 9 million were women and of those 9 million, 70 percent worked in the agricultural sector.³

Keeping in view the above statistics, the percentage of women entrepreneurs among the remaining 30% is negligible; however they are contributing to the economy. In order to develop this part of the population and build up the gap, we need to

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research and investigate issues related to them. Many reports present data about the sources of finance, capacity building, obstacles and other factors contributing to start-ups for women in SMEs. However, the management and leadership style of women entrepreneurs needs attention. Therefore the purpose of the research paper is to focus on the leadership style and the determinants of their leadership style in order to develop them. The objectives are mentioned as below.

Objectives of the Study

The objective of the research is to investigate the leadership style of women entrepreneurs in SMEs.

Research Questions

- What is the leadership style of the women entrepreneurs in SMEs in the light of Leadership Grid?
- Is leadership style of Pakistani women leaders in SMEs in line with Hofstede's cultural profile for the country?
- Why does a specific woman leader in the SME possess that leadership style?
- How are these women managers similar and different in the leadership style from each other?

Literature Review: Women Leadership Style

The main literature of research is related to reviewing the leadership style of women. The findings showed that the leadership style of women is more democratic whereas, men are more autocratic (Shakeshaft, 1989; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Cann & Siegfried 1990; Metcalfe, 1995; Stanford, Oates & Flores, 1995; Blackmore, 1999; Pounder & Coleman, 2002). According to a research, certain characteristics are associated with women leader which are summarized in the table below:

Table: Factors Associated with Women Leaders

Features Associated with Women Leaders	Authors
Participative	Judy, 1990; Eagly & Johnson, 1990
Democratic	Eagly & Johnson, 1990
Understanding & Considerate	Pounder & Coleman, 2002
Giving credit to others	Pounder & Coleman, 2002

According to Blake and Mouton (1964), the leadership style of women on the Managerial Grid may fit on the quadrant called Country Club Leader where the concern for people is dominant.

However, literature reviewed was mostly related to women leaders from the developing countries. Additionally, the sector was not a major element and women leaders and managers from a variety of sectors have been researched. Therefore, the leadership style of women leaders and entrepreneurs in SMEs specifically in Pakistan needs to be researched.

Determinants of leadership style

The literature suggests certain determinants of leadership styles. The following

Table: Factors Impacting Leadership Style

S/No.	Factors Impacting Leadership Style
1	Culture (Smith, Misumi, Tayeb, Peterson & Bond, 1989)
2	Male & female dominated industry (Gardiner & Tiggemann, 1999)
3	Experience & Education (Lord & Hall (2005))

table shows the determinants of leadership style.

An extremely important aspect of one's behaviour is the culture (Smith, Misumi, Tayeb, Peterson & Bond, 1989). Therefore, the Hofstede cultural profile of Pakistan has been studied. It presents the cultural dimensions of Pakistan and points towards a certain behaviour of women in Pakistan. The following table summarizes the cultural profile of Pakistan

Table: Hofstede's Cultural Profile of Pakistan⁴

Dimension	High/ Low
Power distance	High
Individualist /collectivist	Collectivist
Masculine/ Feminine	Masculine
Uncertainty Avoidance	High

Linking Hofstede's cultural profile of Pakistan and literature on women leadership style

⁴ <http://geert-hofstede.com/pakistan.html>

The four dimensions of culture have been analyzed and the proceeding findings have been incurred from the given profile. First of all, Pakistan is high on power distance as generally people accept authority and do not question it further. Therefore, it is proposed that bureaucracy and mechanistic organizations are acceptable. The supervisor is generally autocratic and the subordinate generally do what they are told. The concept of "think manager-think male" by Schein (1973; 1975) can be applied to our culture even in this era. Therefore, according to this concept of Schein, it is inferred that society generally would accept and expect males as bosses and autocracy with ease while women will be expected to have softer skills. Secondly, Pakistan is a masculine society which focuses on competition and achievement. According to the literature these qualities are generally associated with men and women are generally expected to act nurturing. Thirdly, Pakistan is a collectivist society as the relationship between families is closely knitted and the factor of loyalty is of prime importance. Keeping in view the collectivist society, the people tend to maintain the norms of the society. Therefore, different qualities are associated with men and women in Pakistan in general and they stick to it and maintain them. It is proposed that women continue with their soft side while men with their autocratic style in a collectivist culture. Lastly, Pakistan is high on uncertainty avoidance and innovation is resisted. Therefore, it is proposed that women act the way they are expected and men act their way.

Thus, keeping in view the profile of Pakistan, the leadership literature seems to sync well with Hofstede's cultural dimensions, stating that women have high concern for people while men are more autocratic and have high concern for task.

Findings from literature Review

The findings from the literature conducted presents that there is limited research related to women leadership style in the developing countries. Additionally, there is negligible research available on women leadership style in SMEs specifically in both developing countries as well as developed countries. The main findings show that women are people oriented and additionally the literature shows that there is a link between the women leadership style and the women in Pakistan in general according to Hofstede cultural profile of Pakistan.

Identifying Research Gap

The above findings point out towards the research gap and present the need for the research. The findings demonstrate that women leadership style is people oriented and Hofstede's cultural profile of Pakistan tends to point in the same direction. Yet, there is no conclusive research existing so far which proves the proposed link. Furthermore there is no empirical evidence available on women leadership style in SMEs as well.

Therefore, research related to women leadership style in Pakistan is needed. Some ground work is required to explore whether women leaders demonstrate the above mentioned leadership style or not. Thus, there is a need to empirically investigate the leadership style of women in this regard and pave the way for further research work.

For this purpose ten women entrepreneurs were interviewed who were managing their own businesses to investigate their leadership styles.

Methodological Approach

It is a qualitative research based on a case study methodology. In-depth/ semi structured interviews and analytical memos were used. A two phase interview process was carried out for the purpose of triangulation. The data was analyzed through thematic analysis and thematic networks and managerial grid was used to present the data.

Research Findings

The research was focused on ten cases in SMEs and the findings presented a variety of leadership style. The following table shows the profile about each case including name, sector, age, number of years of experience, education. It also includes

Cases	Sector	Age Experience	Qualification	Leadership style according to managerial grid (Score)
Case 1: Naila Haroon	Boutique	54/17 years	Intermediate(Arts)	Country Club Leader(9,2)
Case 2: Naila Humayun	School	53/ 12 years	Masters in Economics	Country Club Leader (9,3)
Case 3: Mehreen Paracha	Boutique	28/ 2 years	Masters in Fashion Designing	Team Leader (8,9)
Case 4: Mariam Humayun	Boutique	29/ 5 years	MBA (Marketing)	Team Leader(9,8)
Case 5: AmberKhan	Food	35/ 9 years	Masters	Team Leader(9,9)
Case 6: Natasha Humayun	School	30/ 1 year	MBA	Country Club Leader (9,4)
Case 7: Naila Khan	School	54/ 20 years	Masters	Team Leader(7,9)
Case 8: Tumkina Kishwar	School	37/ 12 years	Masters	Authority Compliance Leader(3,9)
Case 9: Sadia Yousaf	Food	32/ 2 years	Masters	Team Leader(9,9)
Case 10: Farida Omar	Palour	54/ 6 months	Intermediate	Team Leader (9,9)

the leadership style according to the managerial grid which was concluded after the interviews.

The reason of choosing the above cases was that they were diverse in their experience and age. At the same time education and textile are the major sectors in which women are found, therefore the above cases had education textile and a number of other fields. The table also presents a variety of leadership styles; Six out of ten are Team Leaders who have high concern for both people and production while three out of ten are Country Club Leaders who have high concern for people. Only one is Authority Compliance Leader who has high concern for production.

The leadership style of the ten women entrepreneurs are plotted on the Managerial grid which is as under:

The grid shows that majority of the respondents are Team Leader, where the

Table: Leadership Style of Ten Cases

Leadership style	Cases
High Concern For People	3
High Concern For Production	1
High Concern For Both	6
Total	10

Table: Consolidated Table of Leadership Styles and Determinants at Three levels

Case	Leadership style on the Thematic network /Managerial grid(score)	Individual level	Organizational level	Contextual level
Country Club Leaders				
Case 1: NailaHaroon	High concern for people & low concern for production/ Country Club Leader (9,2)	Education, Fear of God	Nature of job, Nature of organization	Brought up, Culture (Stereotype for women)
Case 2: NailaHumayun	High concern for people & low concern for production / Country Club Leader (9,3)	Experience, Personality	None	Feedback from other
Case 6: Natasha Humayun	High concern for people & low concern for production/ Country Club Leader (9,4)	Education, Age, Lack of Physical strength	None	Brought up, Family pressures,
Team Leaders				
Case 10: Farida Omar	High concern for both / Team Leader (9,9)	Personality, Experiences, Age	None	None

Case 3: Mehreen Paracha	High concern for both / Team Leader (8,9)	Personality, Education.	Mentors, Nature of job	Brought up,
Case 4: Marium Humayun	High concern for both / Team Leader (9,8)	Experience, Education	None	Brought up
Case 5: Amber Khan	High concern for both / Team Leader (9,9)	Personality, experiences,	None	Informal Training
Case 7: Naila Khan	High concern for both / Team Leader (7,9)	Personality, Education, Experience	Nature of job	Brought up
Case 9: Sadia Yousaf	High concern for both / Team Leader (9,9)	Education	None	Family Support
Authority Compliance Leader				
Case 8: Tumkina Kishwar	High concern for production and low concern for people (3,9)	Education, Marital status	None	Family support, Culture (Stereotype for women)

concern for people and concern for production both is high. At the same time, three out of ten are Country Club Leaders. Only one of the respondents was the Authority Compliance Leaders. The grid also shows that none of the respondents were in the Middle of the Road Leader and Impoverished leader.

Determinants of leadership style

The determinants of the leadership styles narrated by the ten cases are presented in the following table. All of the determinants have been divided into individual, organizational and contextual level in order to analyze appropriately. The cases have been classified according to the specific type of leadership style. The following table lists down the determinants while the proceeding tables analyze them appropriately.

Table: Frequency of Determinants

Individual level	Organizational Level	Contextual Level
Education (7)	None (7)	Brought up (5)
Experience (5)	Nature of job (3)	Cultural (Stereotypes for women) (2)
Personality (5)	Organizational culture(1)	Family Support (2)
Age (2)	Mentors (1)	Informal Training (1)
Lack of Physical Strength (1)		Feedback from others (1)
Marital Status(1)		Family pressures(1)
Fear of God (1)		

To analyze the determinants in a consolidated manner, the sum up of all the individual, organizational and contextual level determinants are shown in the table below. It presents the determinants which were common among the respondents irrespective of their styles. The following table shows the frequency of the determinants mentioned:

The ten cases expressed the determinants of their leadership style. Analyzing the table, education is determinant of leadership style of more than half of the respondents. It was followed by experience and personality. Secondly, most of the cases expressed no organizational level determinant that made their leadership style. Some of them admitted that the nature of job determined their leadership style as in private business they need to be profit oriented. Lastly, among the most frequently mentioned contextual level determinant, brought up and the contribution of the parents was present. It was followed by the cultural aspect and family support. However, a single common determinant of leadership style of all of the ten cases was not found.

The key for the table is:

	Mentioned in 1 leadership style only
	Common in all the leadership styles
	Common in two leadership styles

Table: Similar & Dissimilar Determinant

Leadership style	Determinants
Country Club Leader (High concern for people & low concern for production)	Education, Fear of God , Nature of job, Age, experience, feedback from others , Brought up, Culture (Stereotype for women), personality, lack of physical strength & Family pressures .
Authority Compliance (High Concern for production and low concern for people)	Education, Marital status and Family support, Culture (Stereotype for women)
Team Leader (High Concern for Both)	Education, Personality, experience, Organizational Culture, Nature of job, Brought up, Mentors , informal trainings, Family Support, age

Furthermore, to answer the research question three and four which is related to what are the determinants of the specific leadership style and what are the similarities and dissimilarities among them, another table is used to analyze the determinant in detail. There are three colors mentioned in the table which represents the determinants.

Country Club Leader:

The findings in first row of the table show the consolidated determinants of the Country Club Leader. The one high lightened in blue are the determinants which are present in the Country club leaders, and are not present in the Authority compliance leaders and Team leaders. The determinants include fear of God, feedback from others, lack of physical strength & family pressures. The determinants highlighted in pink demonstrate the determinants common in Country Club Leader and one another style.

Authority Compliance Leader

The second row of the table presents the determinants of Authority Compliance Leader. However there was only one Authority Compliance Leader, therefore, the determinants represent the single leader.

The determinant which is highlighted in blue is Marital status. Being single women caused the case to have the leadership style with high concern for production and low concern for people. She believed that people take her for granted as she was a single

lady and she has to focus on the work more in order to show her authority. While other determinants highlighted in pink are common with one more leadership style.

Team leader

The last row of the table shows the determinants of the Team leaders. Mentors are highlighted in blue which is mentioned by Team leaders and is missing in the other two types of leaders. Although only one case among the team leaders mentioned the importance of mentors in determining her leadership style, still it can be researched further. The determinants mentioned in pink are common between the Team leaders and one of the other types of leaders.

The one mentioned in yellow which is 'Education' is the determinant which is common in all the types of the leaders. Although it was not mentioned by all the 10 cases but it was mentioned by all the different types of leaders, which represents the importance of Education in formulating and developing leaders.

2. Discussion

The findings present the three different types of leadership styles possessed by women leaders of SMEs in Pakistan. The literature presented earlier supported a specific leadership style of women which is more people oriented and has high concern for employees. However, the findings of this research emphasizes that there are variations among women leadership style in SMEs. Majority of the respondents showed high concern for both people and production which is contradictory to the research by Shakeshaft, 1989; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Cann & Siegfried 1990; Metcalfe, 1995; Stanford, Oates & Flores, 1995. Additionally, the proposed cultural profile of Hofstede's may not be applied overall. Women leadership style in SMEs is not aligned with the Hofstede cultural profile in totality. The Hofstede Profile of Pakistan points towards the direction that women are nurturing and people oriented in Pakistan while the research findings from the ten cases presents that majority of women entrepreneurs in Pakistan have high concern for both people as well as production. Therefore, further research is needed specifically with respect to women leadership style in SMEs because by developing women entrepreneurs, Pakistan's economy can flourish.

Furthermore, education was the common determinant among all the leadership styles which emphasizes on the importance of educating women in Pakistan. The determinants of the Country Club Leaders highlighted certain weaknesses such as dependence on feedback from others, fear of God and more which pointed out the fact that it might not be a very efficient leadership style in the context of Pakistan.

3. Conclusion and Implications for Researchers and Practitioners

In concluding the findings and analysis of the research, the leadership styles of ten cases in SMEs were discovered and presented on the managerial grid. Additionally, the paper presents the consolidated meta-matrixes for the cases which were analyzed individually during data collection. The findings of the consolidated tables and grid showed the similar and dissimilar leadership styles as well as the similar and dissimilar determinants of these ten cases in SMEs. In individual level determinants education while in the contextual level determinates, brought up was mostly mentioned. Education was one of the similar determent in all the leadership styles.

The last research question has also been answered where the consolidated grid showing the leadership style of all the ten cases is presented. The alignment of Hofstede cultural profile with women leadership style in SMEs in Pakistan is under question now as the findings of the research present that majority of the cases under study had high concern for both people and production, whereas the Hofstede's cultural profile pointed towards only high concern for people.

For researchers there is room for further quantitative research on women leadership style especially in SMEs. This research can be basis for a quantitative research. That can help in preparing a comprehensive database of women entrepreneurs as there is not ample data available. Government departments and the business associations and organizations have lack of information on the total number of women entrepreneurs as well as other information such as their lines of business.

Various attempts have been made by different organizations develop data sets, but the results are far from satisfactory and the information is not regularly updated. It is therefore recommended that a comprehensive database of women entrepreneurs in Pakistan should be prepared and used in future research and action plans.

The determinants of leadership style of women entrepreneurs can help the HR practitioners and consultants to develop those leadership skills. At the same time, Government of Pakistan can develop those skills in the women to produce more women entrepreneurs. Education being the common determinant among the women leaders, can be focused more to develop the women entrepreneurs in Pakistan.

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