



## Discursive Construction of Professional Identity - A Gender based Analysis of Workplace Meetings

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**Abstract-** This article explores the construction of professional identity through discursive analysis of workplace meetings. The study draws upon method of discourse analysis in order to analyze the leadership styles employed by two female and two male heads of department who run meetings as chairs. The study is theoretically grounded in Judith Butler's (1990) theory of gender performativity and West and Zimmerman's (1987) concept of 'doing gender'. The key focus of the analysis is the discursive strategies and discourse features employed by male and female meeting chairs for 'doing leadership' and 'performing' professional roles discursively. The analysis highlights that one male and one female chair display gender congruent leadership styles by employing stereotypical discourse features which conform to traditional gendered expectations. However, the other two chairs (one male and one female) display gender incongruent leadership styles by employing features of discourse which are normatively not associated with their particular gender. On the basis of data analysis it is concluded that male and female managers display a variety of leadership styles and construct their professional identity in dynamic ways. On the basis of data analysis it is also argued that some male and female leader reproduce and reinforce the normative patterns of doing leadership by using discourse features which conform to the normative expectations whereas some male and female leaders employ discursive features which do not conform to the normative associations. Hence the study concludes that their dynamic use of language not only contests the prevailing gender norms but also redefines and transforms the normative gendered expectations.

**Key Words:** leadership styles, identity construction, discursive approach, workplace meetings, performativity theory

### I. INTRODUCTION

The investigation of workplace discourse is regarded as an important area of research for exploring the relationship between language, gender and leadership identity. (Baxter, 2010; Boxer, 2002). Since workplace settings constitute rich and dynamic sociolinguistic contexts, the exploration of workplace interaction has become an important area of interest to sociolinguists. A whole range of sociolinguistic variables play an important role in shaping workplace communication. In addition to various contextual considerations, power, status and gender are some of the key variables which have significant impact on the way communication is carried out in various workplace settings. (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003). It is also important to bear in mind that specific organizational culture and nature of work carried out by the individual organization also has significant impact on what is considered appropriate way of interaction. Hence workplace communication varies from one workplace setting to another. Being shaped by various macro level sociolinguistic variables and micro level organizational contexts and settings, workplaces are important sites for negotiation and construction of professional identity (ies).

In addition to the sociolinguistic variables and the individual organizational factors, the overall socio-cultural context also has an important bearing on organizational practices including most importantly the communicative practices. Since the current study is based on analysis of data collected from the local context of the researcher, which in this case is Pakistan, it is important to bear in mind that Pakistani socio-cultural setup is dominantly patriarchal. Gender is an important and defining social variable within this patriarchal settings and permeates through almost all aspects of human lives. Since the workplaces also operate within larger socio-cultural contexts, gender creeps into workplace settings as well bringing in its associated load of gender norms and stereotypes. Therefore, for the current research, the gender lens has been adopted for exploring the discursive construction of professional identity.

It is also important to elaborate here that workplace discourse has been characterized by strong gendered connotations not only in the patriarchal socio-cultural contexts but also in comparatively more advanced Western contexts. Since, historically men have occupied leadership and managerial positions in majority of workplaces, the workplace norms have predominantly been influenced by the masculine norms ((Baxter, 2010; Kendall and Tannen, 2001; Mullany, 2007). The dominant presence of men in the leadership positions

has consequently lead to the interactional style of men being taken as normative ways of speaking and doing leadership in most workplaces. The masculine model of employing language for performing leadership roles has been institutionalized as the way of enacting authority and power. However, over the past few decades, as the number of women increased in workplaces, the feminine interactional styles have impacted the workplace discourse. Such an impact has played significant role in altering and transforming the present day workplace communication styles bringing in more diverse and dynamic models of leadership. (Cameron, 2003; Coates, 2004; Peck, 2006)

When the discourse approach to construction of professional identity is adopted, the focus of research shifts to the constitutive potential of discourse where language plays an important role in shaping the professional identity of speakers. So in the discourse approach, the focus of research shifts to, "how gender emerges as an outcome of discourse". (Lazar & Kramarae, 2011, p. 221).

Muntigl (2002) points out that language plays an important role in construction of workplace identity as men and women perform leadership roles and interact in their professional settings. They use language as a dynamic and flexible resource to construct their leadership identity in a variety of ways. Sometimes using more collaborative, team oriented and relationally oriented discourse strategies whereas at other times constructing their leadership role by using direct, assertive and unmitigated discourse features (Holmes, 2006). This language based conceptualization of identity construction leads to dynamic and discursive understanding of identity where identity is accomplished within interaction.

In order to place the current study in the research paradigms of language and gender it is important to mention at the outset that in the past few decades the research investigating relationship between language and gender has mainly adopted two main perspectives. The earlier studies have adopted an essentialist perspective which have analyzed the relation between language and gender by considering fixed variables of age, class and race etc. (Labove, 1962; Lakoff, 1975; Trudgill, 1974). However, the later studies, mainly from 1990s onwards have adopted socially constructed perspective. (Butler, 1990; Zimmerman, 1998; Baxter, 2003; Holmes & Stubbe, 2003a; Holmes, 2005; 2006.). In contrast with the essentialist perspective, in the research grounded in the social-constructionism, the identity of an individual is not seen as fixed social category but it is rather conceived as a social construct, something which is accomplished within talk and does not pre-exist. According to Coates (2004), in social-constructionist paradigm, the speakers are doing and performing gender instead of merely 'being' a particular gender. The notion of doing and performing gender are central to the current study as the research in hand is located within the social-constructionist paradigm. Hence, West and Zimmerman's (1987) notion of doing gender and Butler's (1990) theory of gender performativity underpin the current study. These two theoretical concepts have been elaborated in detail in the theoretical framework of this paper.

In light of the above discussion, the research will proceed with the following research objectives.

### **1.1 Research Objectives**

1. To explore the discursive display of gender congruent leadership in workplace meetings
2. To analyze the discourse features employed while displaying gender incongruent leadership style in workplace meetings
3. To highlight the implications of gender congruent and gender incongruent leadership styles for normative perceptions of leadership.

### **1.2 Research Questions**

1. How male and female leaders employ various discourse features to display gender congruent leadership style in workplace meetings?
2. How male and female leaders discursively display gender incongruent leadership styles in workplace meetings?
3. What are the implications of gender congruent and gender incongruent leadership styles for normative perceptions of leadership?

### **1.3 Delimitation of the Study**

This study is limited because it only focuses on analysis of data collected from two selected research sites. The study is also limited because it focuses on the discursive styles of only four male and female managers.

Another limitation of the study is that the focus of analysis is on two key areas which this study aims to explore, which is gender congruent/incongruent leadership styles. Another important limitation of the study which should be kept in mind is that the data analyzed here has been collected from gender segregated male and female workplace setups. Hence the conclusions drawn here may not be generalizable to the dynamics of mixed gender setups.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Meetings constitute an important aspect of workplace interaction as professionals working in various workplace settings spend significant proportion of time in meetings (Barnes, 2007). Angouri and Marra (2011) have argued that almost 25% to 80% of worktime is occupied by meetings. Hence they have termed meetings as a significant communicative event in workplaces. The significance of meetings as an aspect of workplace communication is also evident from the fact that discourse analysts have paid a lot of attention to the analysis of meeting talk. These researchers have examined the various discursive strategies used by professionals for management of workplace meetings (Barbato, 1994; Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris, 1996; Asmuss and Svennevig, 2009). Many other researchers have explored how professionals get things done and accomplish various tasks interactionally within meeting talk (Sarangi and Roberts, 1999; Tracy, 2007; Geyer, 2008). The discourse analysts who have adopted a conversational analysis (CA) approach have focused on identifying patterns, for example identifying patterns in how the meetings are opened and closed. (Boden, 1994; Mirivel and Tracy, 2005; Chan, 2008).

The researchers have also explored the impact of various cultural groups on workplace meeting interactional norms. For example, Holmes, Marra and Schnurr (2008) noted that norms of the opening and closing of meeting differ for different cultural groups. Many other researches analyzing workplace data from various cultural contexts have explored the significance and impact of culture in determining the appropriate ways of interacting in meetings. (Bilbow, 2002; Yamada, 1997). Turn taking has also been an important area of investigation for the researchers (Barnes 2007) whereas some other researches focused on the exploration of discursive ways for demarcating topics in meetings (Bublitz, 1988; Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris, 1996).

The research on workplace meetings has also explored the various discursive approaches adopted by male and female leaders for enacting their authority while managing meeting discourse. For example, while exploring the relational and transactional approaches for performing leadership roles, some discourse analysts have particularly paid attention to the relational dimension of meeting talk. (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003b; Koester, 2006). Mirivel and Tracy (2005) note in their research that solidarity building social talk is an important aspect of meeting openings whereas Holmes (2000) finds that small talk surfaces as an important feature of workplace meetings.

The research focused on various aspects of meeting talk has led to an increased interest in broader dynamics of meetings interaction and how it contributes to the construction of professional and leadership identities of meeting chairs. Discourse analysts have explored the various ways in which male and female leaders employ language as a tool to construct various leadership persona. Hence, meetings have been taken as important sites for constructing professional identity and enacting leadership roles. Some of this research has been conducted on smaller group meetings having three or less than three participants (Vine, 2004; Koester, 2006), whereas other researchers Holmes and Stubbe (2003a); Angouri and Marra (2009) have analyzed larger group meetings focusing on the role of meeting chairs and how they enact power, do gender and give directives and how they open and close the meetings.

Over a period of time, there has also been significant development in the type of data being used for the analysis of workplace discourse. Whereas the earlier research has focused mainly on the analysis of self-reported data (questionnaire and interviews) for investigating workplace talk, the studies grounded in the discursive approach have examined naturally occurring recorded data from workplaces to analyze how male and female leaders actually talk and how they enact leadership by employing various discursive strategies. By examining the naturally occurring talk, the researchers adopting discursive approach have established through their extensive research that professionals employ a range of discourse features and interactional styles in order to enact effective leadership. At times they adopt a relational leadership style by using indirect, mitigated, polite and inclusive discursive strategies to establish and maintain the interpersonal aspects of communication. (Holmes and Marra, 2006; Holmes, Schnurr and Marra, 2007). Whereas, at other times, they have to be transactional leaders using direct, assertive, and

unmitigated discursive strategies in order to accomplish tasks and achieve workplace objectives.(Holmes and Marra, 2006; Holmes, 2009).

Wodak (1997),Baxter (2003,2010) in their extensive research have indicated that male and female leaders have to negotiate a complex path as they work through the social expectations regarding leadership role .While drawing on a combination of discursive strategies normatively associated with masculine as well as feminine style of interaction, both males and females have to construct a satisfactory leadership identity within their particular communities of practice (Holmes, 2006; Mullany, 2006; Schnurr, 2008).

The detailed review of literature presented above indicates that workplace meetings have been explored as important sites for investigating various dynamics of workplace discourse. Most of these studies which have been reviewed above fall within the social constructionist paradigm where one of the key interest lies in exploring how people use language to construct and perform various facets of their identities ,most importantly constructing and performing their identity as a leader or manager. From this perspective, it is useful to view leadership as a performance and a process rather than as an outcome of a leader. This body of research has emphasized the dynamic, performative and interactional features of leadership by identifying the discursive strategies and lexical choices which are used by male and female managers to perform or do leadership. Moving away from the static and fixed notions of leadership of the essentialist research paradigm, the above studies have highlighted the dynamic and transformative aspects of leadership by adopting the social constructionist paradigm.

## 2.1 Researcher's Quest

The notion of leadership has historically and stereotypical been associated with masculinity and men thereby establishing male-as-norm principle for performing leadership roles. This is particularly due to the fact that males have dominated the leadership positions in various workplaces. Hence the association between leadership and masculinity or men is not surprising. In more advanced countries and the western world, as more women have reached to leadership positions in different workplaces, it has transformed the way leadership roles are performed (Mullany, 2007; Baxter, 2010).However in the context of Pakistan there is a huge gap in the research focusing on how the presence of women in leadership positions has affected the interactional patterns and leadership enactment. In Pakistan, academia is one such professional domain, where, in the recent years, women have made to higher leadership positions as vice chancellors, deans, and heads of departments. Keeping in view the presence of women in leadership positions in the public and private sector universities of Pakistan, the researcher has attempted to fill the above mentioned research gap by doing a comparative analysis of how male and female leaders in the selected universities discursively construct their leadership identities. In the patriarchal social setup of Pakistan, leadership is a strongly gendered concept. Hence, by doing a comparative analysis, the researcher aims to explore if female and male leaders use stereotypically feminine or masculine styles of interaction for constructing there leadership identity or are there any variations.

### III. THEORETICAL & ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Since the current study is located within the social constructionist paradigm of research, the theoretical framework used for this study must also aligns with the research paradigm being used. Therefore, this research draws on two key theoretical notions which complement the social constructionist paradigm. The primary theory which underpins this paper is Judith Butler's notion of gender performativity commonly referred as performativity theory (Butler, 1990).

Butler does not see individuals having predetermined, static identities, neither does she see them acting entirely out of pre-determined identity(ies).Rather she sees identity construction as a performance and a process where individuals are seen as (re)constructing,reinforcing,challenging and (re)defining various facets of their identity(ies)within discursive performances. Such a conception of identity has important implications because it means that gender, social and professional identities of individuals are established through performances which are later reinforced and sustained through repeated performances as they engage in discursive practices. So for Butler the agency and power does not exist outside, but it lies within discourse. Hence Butler's theory provides a flexible and dynamic perspective on the process of identity construction which is a fluid process of becoming which can change within discourse.

The second theoretical notion which informs the current research is West and Zimmerman's (1987) notion of 'doing gender'. They argued that gender identity is not about 'having' inherent and static traits but it is about 'doing'. The conception of gender as a 'doing' presents it as flexible which may vary according to

various contexts. West and Zimmerman do not see gender identity as a fixed property of individuals but as an emerging feature of discourse which comes into being within instances of interaction by 'doing'. Since the key focus of this paper is gender based analysis of the discursive construction of professional identity, the above two theoretical notions are well suited for this research because they provide an appropriate analytical lens for exploring process of identity construction within workplace talk.

### 3.1 Data

Data for this research has been collected through observations and audio recordings of workplace meetings from two selected public universities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi. While observing workplace meetings, the researcher took detailed observation notes on semi structured observation sheets which were developed on the basis of detailed literature review. The meetings were audio-recorded by using mobile phone and the meetings data was later transcribed using the technique of intelligent transcription. Since the naturally occurring meeting talk was in Urdu, the meeting excerpts selected for the analysis have been translated from Urdu to English for wider audience. The translations have been reviewed by two experts of Urdu and two experts of English.(See Annexure I).The researcher has selected relevant excerpts from detailed meetings transcripts for analysis of this paper. These excerpts have been presented in table form. (See Annexure II).

Since the study is a gender based discursive analysis, the researcher has tried to capture the gender dynamics of workplace meetings by selecting the relevant research sites. For example, data has been collected from two universities in all, out of which one university is predominantly having female faculty, heads and deans because it is a women university whereas the second research site is a gender segregated, all male campus

### 3.2 Ethical Considerations

Keeping in view the ethical considerations, the researcher sought written permission from management of each research site for collection of required data.(See Annexure III).The researcher also sought written permission from the meeting chair of each meeting. After seeking permission from meeting chair, the researcher sought verbal consent from participants of the meeting for being recorded and observed. The researcher has also attempted to ensure the confidentiality of meeting chairs and participants by using pseudonyms in the analysis.

## IV. ANALYSIS

This analysis is based on relevant excerpts from four different faculty-Head meetings held in the selected public sector universities. Keeping in view the space limitations, the researcher has selected excerpts which exemplify the discursive construction of leadership identity by two male and two female meeting chairs. The excerpts have been chosen by keeping two main factors in view. Firstly, they exemplify two important dynamics of the ways in which leadership identity is constructed and accomplished discursively. The two dynamics include gender congruent discursive style of leadership and gender incongruent discursive style of leadership. These discursive styles have been explained further in the forthcoming analysis section. The second factor for the selection of the excerpts is that the meeting chairs are discursively engaged in the acts of doing leadership which makes the selected data analyzable for exploration of various discursive styles of leadership and how they contribute to the construction of their professional identities.

### 4.1 Gender Congruent Leadership Style

Gender Congruent Leadership Style means when male and female leaders use discursive features which are conventionally associated with their respective gender. The following analysis will focus on the discourse styles of a male meeting chair Dr.Nazim and a female meeting chair Dr.Aisha who are 'doing gender' and 'performing leadership by using discourse features which are typically associated with their particular gender.

#### 4.1.1 Analysis of Meeting Excerpt No.1

**Context:** This excerpt has been taken from a departmental meeting held in a gender segregated all-male setup. The meeting is chaired by male head of department Dr.Nazim. There are total seven participants of meeting, all are male, including the chair, three senior faculty members and three junior faculty members.

The key agenda of the meeting is course allocation of seminar courses and (extra) visiting courses to faculty for the upcoming semester

**Analysis:** This analysis highlights the various discourse features of Dr.Nazim's discursive style. It elaborates how he constructs his leadership persona by drawing upon a stereotypically masculine discursive style. He positions himself as an autonomous and authoritative leader. In the very start, para 1 of this excerpt, *do check this time- it should be only one seminar each-nobody should have two*, Dr.Nazim takes start by using discourse strategies which are typical of masculine style. He gives three unmitigated directives in a row and uses auxiliary *should* to stress the obligation of his directive. By adopting an assertive approach and giving unmitigated directives, he establishes his status as head in the very start of the meeting.

He further continues the same discursive style in para 2. He gives instructions by using discourse features which are coded as stereotypically masculine (Holmes, 2006, p.6). *You people see it, do inform here in advance, there should not be issue like in past, I will not reduce your workload*. He uses an imperative, a firm directive and I statement, by employing all these discourse features he establishes his leadership role within the team and claims his authority as a head. Although he uses indirect structure in the last directive *it will not be withdrawn* it is quite evident from his overall discursive style that the use of indirect structure does not indicate his intension to attenuate the direct force of his instruction.

In para 4 he uses inclusive pronoun **we** twice *we will arrange....* and *so that we engage*, however, despite using inclusive **we** he continues his directives individually and does not invite suggestions or discussion from the meeting participants. This indicates that inclusive pronoun **we** has not been employed by him as a discursive strategy to seek suggestions or build participants consensus. It seems that even plural pronoun **we** has been used by the chair for referring to his authority as a head. In the same para (para 4) he switches back to direct structure *whatever commitment you plan to make-let us know in advance –alright?*. As he closes his directive with *alright* there seems no intension of soliciting comments from the participants, rather he wants to make sure that his message has been received and understood loud and clear. He continues in the same bossy and assertive discursive style *otherwise you will have to face, not the rest*. In this last part of para 2 he issues direct and unmitigated warning signaling the possible consequences of non-compliance. Here he also invokes his authority as head that he has the authority to hold his faculty accountable for not obeying his orders. Here his discursive style becomes quite confrontational which is a feature of discourse associated with masculine style of interaction.

**Commentary:** The analysis highlights that Dr.Nazim adopts conventionally masculine style in doing leadership and constructing his professional identity as head. His style of interaction is completely congruent with a typical masculine discursive style characterized by his use of first person *I* statements, direct structure instructions, imperatives, unmitigated directives, the use of auxiliary *should* for obligation and the use of direct and unmitigated warning. The interesting thing to note in this excerpt is that his authoritative and typical masculine style of interaction is not challenged by any of the meeting participants despite the fact that three of the participants are senior faculty members. Dr.Nazim does not face any resistance from his team members despite positioning himself as an assertive leader. In para 3, the senior most faculty member Dr.Hassan passes only one short remark *we will inform you in advance* which communicates their complete compliance with the directives being issued by the meeting chair. Dr.Hassan uses inclusive *we*, which indicates that as senior faculty member he is speaking on behalf of all other members. Hence, the direct and unmitigated interactive style adopted by meeting chair indexes masculinity and positions him as an authoritative head.

#### 4.1.2 Analysis of Meeting Excerpt No.2

**Context:** This excerpt has been taken from a departmental meeting held in a predominantly female setup. The meeting is chaired by female head of department Dr.Aisha. All participants of the meeting are female except one member who is a junior male staff member from communication lab. The key agenda point which is being discussed in this particular excerpt is dealing with the class room access issue of a wheel chair bound student.

**Analysis:** This analysis is based on leadership style of a female head Dr.Aisha who is chairing meeting in a predominantly female team. She draws upon discourse features typically associated with feminine style of doing leadership. As she starts the meeting discussion, she adopts an inclusive team oriented leadership identity. In para 1 by using inclusive discourse features *let's discuss the issue, we have financial support* she sets a team oriented tone of the meeting signaling that the matter under discussion will be managed as a team. In para 2 she continues using team oriented discursive strategies and plural pronouns **we** and **us** – as she says, *we will accommodate her, we cannot do anything, it will be difficult for us* – by using the plural

pronouns **we** and **us** Dr.Aisha puts emphasis on the importance of teamwork and the group cooperation because the issue under discussion is not a onetime issue as the student has been enrolled for a four year degree program. She is positioning herself as a collaborative leader who takes her team into confidence and values the buy-in of her team members for smooth compliance of decisions being taken collaboratively. Her use of collaborative and team oriented discursive strategies are stereotypically associated with feminine style of leadership.

At the end of para 2 when one female faculty member raises her concern about students safety while moving downstairs *isn't it dangerous mam?* instead of being annoyed or threatened by the direct question from a junior team member ,in para 3 Aisha spontaneously agrees that *it is dangerous* and then she gives a detailed explanation of what measure she has taken to get her concern registered with the administration. She consecutively uses two individualistic **I** structures to clarify her position on the safety concern being raised by the other faculty member *I don't want that actually. See-I have requested the university (administration)*.It is important to note here that unlike the first excerpt where Dr.Nazim uses I statements to assert his authority as a leader, Dr.Aisha's use of I statement does not signal assertion of authority. She is rather using I statement to clarify her position that being leader of the team since she will be held accountable for any unforeseen incident if it happens, she has communicated her concerns to the administration. In the closing line of para 4 she again reverts back to the use of inclusive pronoun **us** *they should give us ground floor class rooms* which reiterates the impression that her use of I statement does not indicate that she is attempting to invoke her authority as a team leader.

**Commentary:** The use of team oriented discursive strategies by Dr.Aisha show that she constructs her leadership identity by enacting her role in an egalitarian and consensus oriented mode of interaction. Such features of discourse are characteristic of feminine style of leadership. The excerpts demonstrate that Dr.Aisha, being leader of the team, pays attention to getting agreement and consent of her team members. Instead of pursuing an authoritative leadership style, she performs her leadership role in feminine and collaborative style. She uses collaborative discourse strategies for doing leadership and does not explicitly evoke her power or status. Her discursive style indicates that she recognizes the importance of supportiveness in achievement of leadership.

## 4.2 Gender Incongruent Leadership Style

Leadership is a gendered concept carrying load of stereotypical associations on the basis of gender. But, at the same time, the prototypical conceptualization of leadership is based on masculine model working on male-as-norm principle adopting masculine style of interaction. However, a leadership style is perceived as incongruent when male and female leaders break normative patterns of interactional styles and use discursive features which are conventionally NOT associated with their respective gender. By breaking the normative patterns, they behave incongruent or inconsistent with the established stereotypes of leadership. The following analysis will focus on the discourse styles of a female meeting chair Dr.Saima and a male meeting chair Dr.Asad who are constructing their leadership identity by using discourse features which are NOT typically associated with their particular gender.

### 4.2.1 Analysis of Meeting Excerpt No.3

**Context:** This excerpt has been taken from the planning meeting of an international conference. The meeting is held in a women university who is hosting the conference. The meeting is chaired by female head Dr.Saima who is also supervising all the committees formed for conference managemnet.The participants of meeting are 4 females and two senior males who are assisting the university in conference arrangements on behalf of the organizing body. The agenda points which are being discussed in this particular excerpt are about organizing city trip and cultural night for international guests/speakers of the conference.

**Analysis:** This analysis captures the interactional dynamics of a meeting which is attended by senior male and female members and chaired by a senior female head who challenges the stereotypical conceptions of leadership by using discourse features associated with a masculine style of leadership. She is performing her leadership role on a masculine model. In para 1 when a senior male member starts the meeting using an indirect and inclusive expression *let's discuss* and floats the agenda points open for discussion.Dr.Saima,the meeting chairs' very first response n para 2 is two direct and unmitigated questions *where do you want to take? How many people?* She sets an authoritative tone of the meeting by her very first response by asking direct questions. In para 3 the male member again responds in an indirect way leaving the final decision to the chair *whatever you people decide*. In Para 4 the chair uses a direct and unmitigated *No* to communicate her disagreement with the male member's suggestion. Although she use a

plural pronoun *we* **we will arrange cultural evening in the university premises** she does it quite autonomously without inviting any further discussion or suggestions. She continues further with direct and assertive expression in para 5 as she further adds to her disagreement. By using direct and unmitigated questions and disagreements Dr.Saima asserts her authority and enacts her power as a leader. She is constructing her leadership identity as an authoritative head who communicates her disapprovals and concerns firmly and directly.

In para 6 the male member Ali indirectly floats his suggestion that conference participants who are coming from other cities and countries would like to have a city trip.Dr.Saima does not even register his suggestion and continues with her directives in para 7. She gives a series of directives firmly by using unmitigated imperatives *keep it for presenters-forget about the participants-only for presenters*. Her directives also signal her disapproval of Ali's suggestion to keep the event open for all participants. At this point in meeting, the discussion could become quite confrontational as Dr.Saima is so far strongly disapproving the suggestions made by two senior males, however the male members continue with an indirect and conciliatory approach by giving their suggestions indirectly. While closing the meeting, Dr.Saima continues with assertive style of leadership and gives instructions and directives firmly. She does not welcome Ali's suggestion to arrange dinner in the hotels outside university premises but firmly announces that *whatever will be done-it will be here-in university premises*. She even concludes the discussion by giving firm directives and clarifying her role as head of all organizing committees having authority to manage the rest *you take prior consent from them- rest we will manage*.

**Commentary:** The above analysis clearly demonstrates that Dr.Saima draws on features of masculine discursive style to perform her leadership role. The discursive strategies used by her do not align with a stereotypical feminine discursive style. For example, direct questions, firm and unmitigated directives, direct disapprovals and disagreements and the use of imperatives are all discourse features stereotypically associated with a masculine discursive style. By adopting discursive features of masculine leadership style, she is challenging the stereotypical notions of performing leadership. Her interactional style is a typical representation of the notion of 'doing gender' and 'gender performativity' because she is performing leadership in a very dynamic and transformative style. Her discursive style is not congruent with the static associations of certain discourse features with particular gender. She enacts her power as a leader by using assertive and unmitigated discourse features thereby constructing her leadership identity as an assertive and authoritative leader. It is also interesting to note here that the two senior male participants of the meeting are using discursive strategies of feminine leadership style. For example indirect structures for giving suggestions and conciliatory approach for absorbing direct unmitigated disapprovals of the female meeting chair. The discursive features employed by male participants also challenges the stereotypical patterns of discourse.

#### 4.2.2. Analysis of Meeting Excerpt No.4

**Context:** This excerpt has been taken from a departmental meeting held in a gender segregated all-male setup. The meeting has been called to allocate course for the upcoming semester and hire visiting faculty for the remaining courses. The meeting is chaired by a male head, all participants of meeting are male including two senior and four junior faculty members.

**Analysis:** This analysis is based on the interactional style of a male chair Dr.Asad who is enacting leadership role in a masculine community of practice but interestingly he is using discursive features typically indexed as features of feminine style of interaction. He opens the discussion by settings a team oriented tone as he says *I am also expecting from my colleagues*. He refers to all the meeting participants as his *colleagues* and instead of invoking his power and authority as head, he positions himself as part of the team. He also signals his recognition for collaborative decision making on course allocation by using **we before we formally allocate these courses** which indicates that he values consensus building within his team. In para 2 he continues with his collaborative leadership by using inclusive pronouns *we, among ourselves and one another*. **We will resolve it together-will discuss it among ourselves-will seek suggestions from one another**. Instead of using **I** statements which indicate individualistic approach, a feature of masculine discursive style, he is using inclusive pronouns which are features of a feminine discourse style.

In para 3 he communicates instructions for being punctual and regular in classes by using an impersonal structure *coming to class on time*. He adopts a conciliatory approach and does not use imperative structure for giving directive. He rather appreciates his faculty members for being experts and responsible and uses an indirect structure to soften and mitigate the instruction further by again using a depersonalized passive structure **It has only to be reiterated as a routine**.



In para 4 while talking about the hiring of visiting faculty he again adopts a collaborative and consensus oriented approach using a series of inclusive **we** structures -*we will have interviews, in consultation with you, we will discuss, we will call, we will allocate courses*. Although the hiring of visiting faculty completely lies within the power of head, Dr.Asad makes it a consultative process and signals that he will not take decisions unilaterally but will discuss and consult his team in this regard. It can be clearly noticed from this excerpt that Dr.Asad is consistently using discursive strategies linked with stereotypic feminine style of interaction.

**Commentary:** The analysis highlights that Dr.Asad displays an incongruent leadership behavior by performing his leadership role on stereotypic feminine model of leadership. His leadership style does not fit the traditional masculine model of an assertive and authoritative leadership He consistently uses solidarity oriented pronouns we, passive, mitigated and depersonalized structures for instructions which positions him as a collaborative leader who values team inclusion and solidarity. The use of these discursive strategies by a male leader not only challenge the traditional conception of leadership but also transform the way leadership can be accomplished in discourse beyond the normative patterns.

## V. CONCLUSION

The detailed analysis above encapsulates the discursive construction of leadership identity accomplished by two male and two female heads as they run meetings in their workplace. The analysis concludes that the male and female meeting chairs adopting gender congruent leadership style performed leadership in normative ways and reinforced the dichotomously gendered display of leadership. The study also concludes that by conforming to the stereotypical speech norms in performing leadership they construct their leadership identity in accordance with the stereotypical images of a male and a female leader. The discursive features used by both these managers do not contest the normative association of discourse features, but rather reinforce the normative patterns. The discursive features of male chair (Dr.Nazim) and the female chair (Dr.Aisha) demonstrate that they adopt a gender congruent leadership style which is very much in accordance with the traditional binary gendered expectations, some of which are enlisted in the widely cited feature of masculine and feminine interactional styles (Holmes, 2006, p.6).Dr.Nazim's discursive style is typically masculine characterized by assertiveness, directness and authoritativeness whereas Dr.Aisha discursive style is stereotypically feminine putting emphasis on inclusiveness, consensus building and collaborative approach.

Through the analysis of gender congruent leadership style, the study concludes that the use of normatively indexed discursive strategies and the display of stereotypical leadership style may still be desired in some settings and contexts. It also implies that in some settings, the stereotypically style of doing leadership may not only be desirable but may also be most effective way of accomplishing leadership goals and getting things done. It can also be concluded that such a stereotypical enactment of leadership may be the most 'unmarked' way of performing leadership roles in some settings and contexts.

Since this study is grounded in the social constructionist paradigm, the second section of analysis which captures the discursive styles of gender incongruent leadership enacted by Dr.Saima and Dr.Asad has significant implications. The analysis of gender incongruent leadership style highlights the dynamic and performative potential of language. It can be concluded from the analysis that male and female leaders are not always confined to the stereotypical enactment of leadership neither are they bound to use normatively indexed discursive strategies for enacting their leadership role and authority. It can very well be concluded from this section of analysis that language is a flexible tool available to both male and female leaders and it can be employed in dynamic ways for performing leadership and doing gender. The analysis also concluded that discourse features cannot be fixed into static associations on the basis of gender. Rather, they are equally available to male and female leaders.

The study concludes that male and female leaders do not always conform to normative prescriptions but they also contest the prevailing gender stereotypes and redefine the prevailing notions by bringing in new versions of reality which in this case is the new ways of enacting leadership discursively. It is also concluded from the analysis that Butler's theory of performativity and West and Zimmerman's notion of doing gender holds relevance even in the patriarchal contexts like Pakistan as Dr.Saima and Dr.Asad carve a space for themselves to enact leadership in gender incongruent style thereby contesting the normative expectations. By highlighting the element of flexibility, agency and power of language user, the study concludes that discursive construction of leadership identity can be accomplished in varied ways.

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