

THE SEEDS OF LEADERSHIP: UNDERSTANDING INDIGENOUS CHARACTERISTICS OF MALE AND FEMALE LEADERS

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To explore the indigenous characteristics of leadership, in-depth interviews with Pakistani leaders $N=20$ (Male $n=10$; Female $n=10$) were conducted. The participants were taken from five different domains. Life story approach was used in the interviews to obtain characteristics of leaders. The interview questions were based on leader centered trait and skill models (Fleenor, 2011). In the qualitative analysis the interviews were coded and the list of codes was established. The final list of characteristics was established using content analysis. The results revealed that honesty, hard work, management skills and passion were the most frequent characteristics of leadership. Those factors which played a very significant role in the life of leaders were also analyzed. They included the role of co-curricular activities, role of parents and teachers, role of support group, reading habit and disciplined environment of home. The current research findings are expected to open new directions for the upcoming researchers in the field of organizational psychology.

Keywords: Characteristics of leadership, Organizational psychology, Trait and skill model, Content analysis

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The lives of great leaders have been a topic of great interest since years (Ligon, Hunter & Mumford, 2008). Questions such as who they are and how they make it to the top, has lead towards need for studies of personal characteristics and factors of leaders that are responsible for their current status. Everyone has personal stories that are rooted in each culture or family history. These life stories also shape lives of individuals and have given unique and personal combination of values, inspiration, and courage (Gill, 2011).

Vries and Treacy (1999) stated that early childhood and family are very significant components of life that greatly influence in shaping personal characteristics; especially leadership potentials. Several scholars linked early life experiences with leadership qualities (Ligon, Hunter & Mumford, 2008). In a study Gill (2011) interviewed more than 100 business leaders and found that seventy percent of them had been school prefects, 50 percent had been sports team captains, 30 percent were head or deputy head (boys or girls), and approximately 90 percent had held at least two leadership positions at school, while 40 percent were holding three. According to Rego and his colleagues (2010) many schools and community organizations started leadership skills programs in early life keeping in mind the significance of that period.

There has been an extensive debate on whether leaders are born with certain traits or they learn the skills throughout their life span. Trait model of leadership solely focuses on the personal traits (or attributes) of leaders, such as physical and personality characteristics, competences and values. This model views leadership from the perspective of the individual leader (Fleenor, 2011). Traits for example weight, height and physique are greatly dependent on heredity, whereas others, such as knowledge of the industry are dependent on experience and learning (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991). It has been observed by Fleenor (2011) *trait* researchers have been compiling and using lists of characteristics that they believed were related to successful leadership. In creating such lists some researchers mixed together very different attributes, for example, lists included some leadership traits that were aspects of behaviors and skills, whereas other traits were related to temperament and intellectual ability.

Trait approach of leadership is one of the early systematic efforts to study leadership. Trait approach focuses on identifying the natural and innate qualities and characteristics possessed by great leaders. Lately, the focus of early trait researches was on identifying the qualities of great individuals but shifted on the importance of situation; and recently has shifted back to the role of traits in effective leadership (Northouse, 2010). Another point of view states that leadership competences can be developed over time through education and experience. Distinct from the *Great Man Approach*, which suggests that leadership is earmarked for only the gifted few, the *Skills Approach of Leadership* advocates that many people have the potential for leadership. If people are proficient of learning from their experiences, they can acquire leadership. The skill approach gives a structure for understanding the nature of effective leadership. One can improve his or her capabilities in these areas through training and experience. Trait and skill approach are similar as well as different in few aspects. The one major feature that makes them similar is that they both have leader-centered perspective. Secondly, like trait approach skill approach is also descriptive in nature (Northouse, 2010).

According to this model by Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, Jacobs, and Fleishman, (2000) skills are competencies that people can learn or develop for example like playing a sport such as tennis or golf. Even, when people don't have natural ability in these sports, they can make improvement with practice and instruction. Similarly, skill model of leadership framed leadership as a set of skills, and consider it as a process that one can study and practice. Whether, they are born with certain traits or have learned skills, researchers agree on the fact that there are certain traits that differentiates leaders from non-leaders. According to Newstrom (2004) the most important characteristics of leaders are the desire to lead, a high level of personal drive self-confidence and personal integrity. In one of the studies by Bligh (2011) Self-confidence Determination, Intelligence, Sociability, Integrity and Emotional Intelligence were found as vital traits of leaders.

In Pakistan, a study on identification of leadership potential in military cadets was conducted in which sociability, dominance, professional competence and dynamism were found to be

significant factors in military leaders (Akhtar, 1992). According to Wali Zahid, (CEO, Skill City Pakistan) the skill of decision making was found at the top in the survey of 150 chief executives (Nasir, 2017). The factors and traits that played important role in the life of women in attaining position as a leader were studied by Malik (2011) through semi-structured interview. The study revealed that women at leading positions are quite ambitious and motivated. The themes that have been explored were family support, inspiration/ commitment, self-confidence, organizational culture, and socio-culture environment.

There are several aspects and domains through which leadership can be viewed, studied or explored. Whether, it is an area of measuring leadership characteristics, or identification of indigenous leadership personality characteristics. Leadership should be studied in context of its environment.

From home to the broadest spectrum varieties of leaders are found in every environment; grandparents, supervisors, bosses, and many more. In a wider perspective, leadership can be observed in different organizations in business, academics, and politics. When it is being discussed in the field of entrepreneurial leadership researches linked early life leadership experiences with business leadership in adulthood (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991). Researchers put in great efforts in exploring different entrepreneurial personality traits. Some of these include a desire for responsibility, confidence in their ability to succeed, the desire for immediate feedback, high level of energy, value of achievement etc. (Daft, 2011). In the area of politics, leadership mostly talks about the role and effects of status, values and the use of power in decision making processes and social relationships (Gill, 2011). According to Fred Greenstein (2004) and Joseph Nye (2008) political leadership comprises of practical wisdom and contextual intelligence, courage and emotional intelligence, ethical vision, the skill of diplomacy, the contemporary art of political communication, and political negotiation and above all organizational skills.

In the present study leaders from five different domains, including political, entrepreneurial, organizational, academic and student population were studied through life story approach. Personality theorists support the fact that stories and narratives

played a significant role in conveying the meaning of lives (McAdams, 2001). According to Ligon, Hunter and Mumford (2000) life story approach is an effective method in studying the lives of leaders.

Most of the research work on leadership in Pakistan is related to military leadership (Akhtar, 1992), relationship of emotional intelligence with leadership (Mir & Abbasi, 2012) and academic leadership (Yasin, Batool, & Ajmal, 2015). Researchers in the field of management had been focusing on leadership styles (Malik, Saleem & Naeem, 2016). In the field of psychology undoubtedly leadership is not a new concept; however, few efforts have been made to search its different domains.

The current research is primarily an exploratory study. The purpose of the present research is to explore the indigenous leaders' characteristics and the factors that play a significant role in the life of leaders. The trait and skill models under the umbrella of life story approach have made the current work more distinctive and unique. This approach will provide an in-depth insight in the current domain in indigenous perspective. Furthermore, current research would also highlight the role of gender in this regard.

In the light of above mentioned literature review, following research objectives have been formulated:

1. The aim of this research is to explore the characteristics of indigenous leaders in detail.
2. To find out the factors that plays a significant role in the life of leaders with respect to both genders.

Method

Research Design

The current work is majorly based on qualitative research design, which in detail highlights the characteristics of indigenous leaders. Moreover, it also aims to provide the basic frequency counts of those characteristics.

Participants

To explore the indigenous leadership characteristics in-depth interviews were conducted with $N=20$ (Male $n=10$; Female $n=10$) Pakistani leaders. The participants were approached from 5 different domains that were politics, academia, entrepreneurship, organization and from student population. Purposive sampling technique was used to approach the participants. It was made sure that both male and female leaders who are in leading position in their respective field were included in the study.

Measures

In the current research, life story approach was used in all the interviews to explore the characteristics of leaders. The questions in the interviews were related to their life relationships; and experiences (for example parents, siblings, schooling, experiences, & relationships with their journey as a leader). The questions were designed to explore the characteristics of leaders.

Procedure

First of all keeping in mind the ethical considerations, consent from each participant was taken. All the interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Through qualitative content analysis all the interviews were coded and the list of codes was established. After summing up the repetitive codes, final list of characteristics was established. In the first step the codes having a frequency of more than one were selected. The lists obtained from both male and female leaders were compared to see the common and different indigenous characteristics of leaders. Apart from indigenous personality characteristics the factors that played a very significant role in the lives of leaders were also identified.

Results

The demographic information such as age, education, birth order, marital status, number of children and number of siblings was taken from each participant. Following tables represent the demographic profile of male and female leaders.

Table 1*The demographic profiles of female leaders*

S. No	Participants	Leadership Domains	Current Status/ Position	Age	Education	Birth Order	Marital status	No. of Children	No. of siblings
1	Y. R	Politics	Former MNA	70	Bachelors	3 rd	Married	3	4
2	M. G	Politics	MPA	31	LL.B	1 st	Single	N/A	2
3	M. U	Entrepreneurship	Owner	36	Masters	4 th	Married	1	5
4	N.I	Entrepreneurship	Owner Beauty Salon	63	Bachelors	7 ^{th*}	Married	3	6
5	H. T	Academia	Vice Chancellor	44	M.Sc Textiles	1 st	Divorced	1	2
6	B.M	Academia	Retried Vice Chancellor	75	PhD Chemistry	2 nd	Married	3	7
7	Y.Z	Organization	CEOM/M Consultancy	54	MPA (Marketing)	2 nd	Single	-	5
8	A.H	Organization	Owners & Chairperson	63	M. Ed	1 st	Married	3	3
9	A.R	Student	Head Girl	16	O Levels	1 st	Single	N/A	1
10	Q.N	Student	Head Girl	23	BS (Mass Com)	1 st	Single	N/A	2

Note. *= Youngest Sibling, MNA= Member National Assembly, MPA= Member Provisional Assembly, M.Ed= Masters in Education, MPA (Marketing)= Masters in Public Administration, CEOM/M= Chief Executive Officer Management/Marketing Consultancy N/A= Not Applicable

The demographic profile of female leaders showed that all the leaders were working at leading positions in their related fields. The age range was between 16 to 75 years. Most of the leaders were with bachelors and master degrees. Among the birth order five out of ten female leaders were 1st born, most of the leaders have 3 children and the average number of siblings were 4.

Table 2*The demographic profile of male leaders*

Sr no	Participants	Leadership Domains	Current Status/Position	Age	Education	Birth Order	Marital status	No. of children	No. of sibling
1	S.M	Politics	MPA	65	Masters		Married	3	2
2	V.H	Politics	MPA	40	MA (Economics)	1 st	Married	3	2
3	R.J	Entrepreneurship	Trainer	65	Masters	2 nd	Married	1	3
4	Y.W	Entrepreneurship	Owner*	40	Masters	1 st	Single	N/A	2
5	M.S	Academia	HOD	35	M.Phil	2 nd	Single	N/A	4
6	A.R	Academia	HOD	49	PhD	1 st	Married	5	9
7	S.A	Organization	CEO NGO	47	M.A	3 rd	Single	N/A	
8	A.S	Organization	Chairperson NGO	60	MBBS	1 st	Married	3	1
9	A.A	Student	Student president	22	BSEE	4 th	Single	N/A	2
10	W.J	Student	Student president	24	BS (Mass Com)	1 st	Single	N/A	2

Note. *= Owner Lawn Brand, MPA= Member Provisional Assembly, HOD= Head of the Department, CEO= Chief Executive Officer, NGO= Non-Governmental Organization

The demographic profiles of male leaders showed that all the leaders were working at leading positions in their respective fields. The age range was between 22 to 65 years. Most of the leaders had masters degrees. Considering the birth order five out of ten male leaders were 1st born, most of the leaders have three children and the average number of siblings was three.

In the current research majorly qualitative analysis was done and it was further extended in frequency analysis. In the qualitative analysis all the interviews were coded and the list of codes was established. The content analysis was done and 272 codes were found and list of the codes with their frequencies was prepared. The final list of codes was constructed after selecting codes with frequency of 3 and more from both male and female interviews. After summing up the repeated codes; the final list of characteristics was established. The lists obtained for both male and female leaders were also compared to see the common and different indigenous characteristics of leaders (see table 3 and 4). Apart from indigenous characteristics the factors that played a very significant role in the lives of leaders were also identified (see table 5 and 6).

Table 3

The common indigenous characteristics of male and female leaders (with verbatim from interviews)

S.No.	Characteristics	f	Examples from interview (Verbatim)
1.	Honesty	1 5	1.....It is the money that is of tax payer.90% of people don't treat it considering as their own.(R.J) 2. Once they announce merit policy and for checking the record the concerned person came for record checking I said to him you can come any time we did not do any fraud to manipulate the records. He said you did not ask for more time lady you are mad or you are dam honest. (B.M) 3.....My Father once said about me "yes he is honest he will definitely do"(M.S)
2.	Hard work	1 4	1.....To prove that those marks were not by chance I worked hard throughout to maintain my position at that time there were no computer we worked whole night to write it with hands(B.M) 2.....Earning money through hard work was taught to us from our childhood(A.H)
3.	Management skills	1 1	1....I can manage my council very well.(Q.A) 2.....Every women runs her home ,manages everything, manages home budget then some take to micro level then to national level, I did my business too we look up to many things.(Y.R)
4.	Passion	1 0	1.....You can say that my work is my passion that's why I am here at this position today(Q.A) 2. The passion to help others was in us I have opened the institute with passion and the passion is still going on (A.H). 3....I had a passion that was from childhood(N.I)

S.No	Characteristics	f	Examples from interview (Verbatim)
5.	Thankfulness to God	9	1. Alhamdulillah ,I am thankful to God that my academics was very good.(Q.A) 2.Allah does what is good for us. I am thankful to God, when we ask for right path he showed us right one. I am following my destiny.(H.T)
6.	Taking Initiative	9	1.....They said if anyone wants to be a Class representative .I raised my hand first.(Q.A) 2...It was first foreign school in Pakistan that I have started(A.H)
7. 5.	Accountability	7	1....As a leader my efforts are to correct myself first.(Q.A)
8. 6.	Humbleness	7	1....I am not a scholar I am just a student,media was also there at that time, to cover parliament they usually came to me and said that madam the work you had done is remarkable but I always said to them that I have not done much may be it is highlighted more(Y.R)
9.	Patriotism	7	1. I was so upset when East Pakistan was separated. I cried a lot why this happened.(B.M) 2.I love my Pakistan(Q.A)
10.	Sense of achievement	6	1.I got highest marks in the test, In MSc got roll of honor (B.M). 2....The time when I went abroad I received fellowship award(H.T)
11. 8.	Optimism	6	1....I always see women excelling in mainstream(Y.R)
12. 7.	Problem solving Skills	6	1....I always think if there is a problem there is always a solution too(Q.A) 2...I am basically a problem solving person(R.J)

S.No	Characteristics	f	Examples from interview (Verbatim)
13.9.	Simplicity	3	1. We never used to have makeup or nail polishand no interest in these things(H.T) 2.....There was a village near Murree me and my wife lived there ,we also lived at village my wife was doing her thesis at that time(R.J)
14.	Health and fitness conscious	3	1. ...I am very much conscious about my health. I do exercise regularly(R.J) 2. ...Our parents developed in usa realization of significance of nutrition and homemade food. (AH) (can see grammatical errors in most of them but since these are verbatims, therefore not correcting)

The results showed that honesty, hard work and management skills were the characteristics that were found with high frequency among both male and female leaders.

Table 4

Characteristics that were found different among male and female leaders

S.No.	Female leaders	f	Examples from interviews (Verbatim)
1.	Communication skills	6	1. I think when you communicate with others it is very important to listen others if you will not listen to others carefully you cannot solve their problems (N.I)
2.	Confidence	5	1...Even if there is a board member I communicate with eye to eye(Y.Z) 2....I always have a confident smile(A.R)
3.	Committed	3	1...I am spending a contended life, honesty and integrity, vision and mission, humanistic and committed and trend setter (Y.Z).
4.	Learning through experience	3	1...Yes we got punishments too.....that was all the part of routine, and we have learnt a lot (A.H)

S.No.	Male leaders	<i>f</i>	Examples from interviews (Verbatim)
5.	Helping others	3	1. When my friends did not have money for fee I paid their fee(Y.Z)
6.	Believe in destiny	3	1.....I am a great believer in destiny (Y.R)
7.	Soft spoken	3	1.....well the way you speak the way you listen to others. People say I am soft spoken person.(N.I)
8.	Accept challenges	3	1. ... Their words pinched me that she can't clear it. And I had decided that I will show her that I can pass the examination (B.M)
1	Non materialistic	4	1....I don't have love for material things.(H.T)
2	Knowledge	4	1....The diversity of knowledge in me is due to my attachment with NGO sector(S.A)
3	Planner	4	1. There was a project with Holland and it was my plan to setup a system of satellite data receiving(A.R)
4	Determined	4	1....My strength is my determination and hard work (Y.W)
5	Organizer	4	1.I organize different workshops and trainings..... (R.J)
6	Intelligence	4	1....Some students are not intelligent but hardworking some are intelligent but not very hard working I was that type(M.S)
7	Self-made	3	1.... Hurdles are mostly finances but I took the scholarship and I was not burden on my parents. I had decided to start my own institute but when I came into the system I faced hurdles(A.R)
8	Persistence	3	1....Persistence is one of my skill that bring me at this position(A.S)
9	Responsible	3	1....Taking trips was my duty I was responsible for that trip when we went to conference(R.J)

S.No.	Male leaders	<i>f</i>	Examples from interviews (Verbatim)
10	Patience	3	1...With the passage of time I am now more patient.(M.S)
11	Calm	3	1...Now I am more cooled down person.(A.R)
12	Sensitive	3	1.....if I say something and due to that someone is benefited so why not. (S.A) 2....High authorities are sometime fed-up but I think almost six people depend on that 15 thousand rupees.(M.S)
13	Team worker	3	1....It was very difficult but me and my team worked hard and achieved (M.S)
14	Bold	3	1...I am bold and blunt, please don't mind (W.J) 2....I appreciate my father in making us strong and bold.(S.M)
15	Role Model	3	1....I think I am no one to judge my colleagues but can groom their personality as a role model (M.S)
16	Good observer	3	1.....When I am not doing something I use to sit and observe people.(W.J)
17	High self-esteem	3	1.....I have a strong profile.(W.J)
18	Learned different skills	3	1.....I have learnt palmistry too from books(R.J)

The result related to female leaders showed that communication skills and confidence have frequency 6 and 5 respectively whereas male leaders have characteristics of non-materialistic, knowledge, planner, determined, organizer and intelligence along with other characteristics.

Table 5*Significant factors in the life of male and female leaders.*

Factors	<i>f</i>
Co-curricular activities	8
Role of parents and teachers	16
Support system	10
Disciplined home environment in childhood, Importance of moral values	12
Schooling	11
Habit of reading books	11

The factors that were found similar in both male and female leaders' lives were co-curricular activities, role of parents and teachers, support system, disciplined home environment, schooling and habit of reading.

Table 6*Table representing the different factors which were found significant in the lives of male and female leaders.*

Factors for Males	<i>f</i>	Factors for Females	<i>f</i>
Financial hardships faced in childhood	5	Role of a male gender	5
Excel in life when freedom is given to choose own field of interest	5	Importance of education	6
Professional jealousy	6	Gender discrimination experienced	6

The factors which were found only in the lives of male leaders were financial hardship in childhood, professional jealousy and excel in life when freedom is given whereas importance of education, role of male gender and gender discrimination were the factors that played a significant role in the lives of female leaders.

Discussion

The main focus of this study was to explore the characteristics of indigenous leaders through qualitative content analysis. Furthermore the findings were strengthened with the

frequencies of the respective characteristics, which was found to be an enriching method for obtaining information regarding the characteristics of leaders (Ameen, 2006). In the current study, life story approach was used to identify the characteristics as well as factors that played a significant role in the lives of both male and female leaders.

In the present research, the identified leadership traits found common in both male and female leaders were honesty, optimism, taking initiatives, sense of achievement, management skills, passion, humbleness, accountability, and problem solving skills. According to the literature there are certain leadership traits such as drive, leadership motivation, honesty and integrity, self-confidence, cognitive ability, knowledge of the business and other traits that are important for acquiring new skills, formulating an organizational vision and implementing it into reality (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991).

According to Zaccaro, Kemp and Bader (2004) the summary of most prevalent studies on leadership qualities show the traits of leader attributes, cognitive abilities, personality, motivation, social appraisal/ interpersonal skills and legal expertise/ tacit knowledge. In a study by Akhtar (1992), on the Identification of Leadership Potential in Military Cadets sociability, dominance, professional competence and dynamics were found as key traits. Personality characteristics of executives were explored in one of the research in Pakistan and the findings revealed that executive scored high on dominance, capacity for status, sociability, achievement, managerial potential and work orientation (Shujaat & Zehra, 1996).

In the current research some characteristics were found in male leaders that were knowledge determination, intelligence, persistence which were also supported by existing literature (Arther, 1934; Bass, 1990; Galton, 1869; Jago, 1982; Middleton, 1941; Northouse, 2007; Stogdill, 1948; 1974; Terman, 1904).

In Female leaders, traits such as confidence was supported by literature (Bligh, 2011; Jago, 1982; Zaccaro, Rittman, & Marks, 2001). However, some traits yielded by present analysis were truly indigenous and rarely found in prior literature, that were reading habit, hard work thankfulness to God, Self-made, patriotism, simplicity, health and fitness consciousness. One of the research surveys on Pakistani leaders' life stated that leaders have the habit of reading, they are hardworking, self-made and simple (Laghari, 2009).

The factors that were identified as significant as well as similar in the lives of both male and female leaders included the role of co-curricular activities, role of parents and teachers, support system, disciplined home environment, and are also supported by literature (Eichler, 1934; Laghari, 2009). A book based on 100 best performing CEOs of Companies of Pakistan stated that, certain factors such as family support and strong belief system play a significant role in the life of leaders (Nasir, 2017).

In one of the researches on Pakistani women educational leaders, the findings revealed that family support plays a very significant role in shaping the thinking to seek career development in women at leading positions. Women also reported that they experienced equal treatment of both genders at home as well as freedom which helped them in building their self-confidence, assertiveness and a strong sense of identity in male dominated society. Women in this study showed the quality of self-resilience. They reported that in polishing their skills their home environment played a very important role, whereas the role of parents and teachers gave them vast variety of strength for personal development. Women in the research reported that they took difficulties as challenges in their lives (Malik, 2011).

Hashmi (2010) worked on the impact of women leaders upon organizational performance. With other findings the research explored the qualities of leaders in Pakistani organizations. Some of the qualities were initiative, foresight and planning, motivation, communication skills, willingness to take responsibility and persistence.

Some factors were found different in both genders. The factors that played a significant role in the lives of male leaders were professional jealousy, financial hardships faced in childhood. The male leaders also reported that they excelled in their lives when freedom was given to them to choose their field of interest. On the other hand, the factors that played significant role in the lives of female leaders included importance of education, gender discrimination and role of a male figure. Madsen (2010) stated in one of her researches on the Experiences of UAE Women Leaders that barriers and challenges that women faced were employer biases, discrimination, and negative perception of women's professional capabilities. The positive and significant role of male figure in the life of leaders was also supported in the research survey conducted with people in leading positions (Nasir, 2017).

Conclusion

In the present research work, the indigenous leaders' characteristics were identified using qualitative method. The present research work is unique and distinctive in various aspects. Firstly it has focused on the indigenous leadership characteristics of Pakistani leaders. Secondly the life story approach under the umbrella of trait and skill models makes it one of its own kind. The most frequent traits identified in both male and female leaders were honesty, optimism, taking initiatives, sense of achievement, management skills, passion, humbleness, accountability, and problem solving skills. With the characteristics of leaders the factors that were identified significant in the lives of both male and female leaders were found to be the role of extracurricular activities, role of parents and teachers, support system, reading habit, and disciplined home environment.

Limitations and Future Recommendations

The study findings have been obtained from a small sample size having an urban background and only considers 5 domains of leadership and therefore isn't generalizable to a large population.

The current research work revealed unique findings in the area of leadership. These findings will act as guidelines in identifying leadership characteristics among individuals as well as in planning training programs for cultivating leadership qualities in the general population.

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