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Linking Leadership Effectiveness and Gender Egalitarianism by Perceived Government Support and Talent Development; Evidence from Public Universities of Pakistan

Khadija Tariq
Management Sciences
Comsats University, Islamabad
&
Seema Khalid
Commecs Institute of Business
& Emerging Sciences, Karachi

Abstract

The purpose of this research is to explore the relationship between gender egalitarianism and leadership effectiveness through the mediation of talent development and moderation of perceived government support. The data is collected from 215 women leaders serving in public universities of Pakistan situated in (Lahore, Rawalpindi and Islamabad) through self-administered and online questionnaires. In this study purposive sampling technique is used and (PLS-SEM) evaluated the relationship between the variables. The results reveal that talent development mediates the relationship between gender egalitarianism and leadership effectiveness but on the other hand, though perceived government support has a significant relationship with women's leadership effectiveness yet does not moderate the relationship between gender egalitarianism and leadership effectiveness. The research demonstrates that higher education institutes should focus on the talent development needs of their women workforce and government support should also play its part by formulating women empowerment strategies to utilize innate women leadership effectiveness capabilities in this paramount sector in the higher education sector in Pakistan.

Keywords: Gender Egalitarianism, Leadership Effectiveness, Talent Development, Perceived Government Support, Higher Education Institutions.

Introduction

Women's involvement in leadership roles has been pondered in all professions including entrepreneurial, administrative, medicine, and academia (Shaukat et al., 2021). Leadership effectiveness can fairly be associated with female leadership characteristics because empirical research maintains that women-managed organizations are more successful with consistent growth rates and fewer failures, and it is because of their innate inclination to empowerment and participation inevitably (Al-Halwachi, 2018). It advocates that offering space to women in leadership

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positions would generate varied talents among leaders centered on involving diverse thinking formats in the institutions (Shaukat et al., 2021). According to research, female board members may be more responsive to stakeholder demand and take managerial initiatives that encourage businesses to spend more on innovation (Lakhal et al., 2024). Female directors may have a greater influence on business decisions than their male counterparts because they are more qualitatively focused, which could improve the success of the organization (Khandelwal et al., 2023; Pandey et al., 2022). Empirical findings based on 81 organizations sampled over 13 years from 2007 to 2019 demonstrate that gender diversity on boards improves corporate innovation (Lakhal et al., 2024). Certainly, there is sufficient evidence to certify that female leaders are comparable to their male colleagues, the reason behind this is their inborn leading style of collaboration and cooperation, which leads to an engaged workforce (Al-Halwachi, 2018). The quality of bravery in leadership, which is essential for motivating people to overcome obstacles and bring about constructive change in companies, is frequently hidden by organizational dynamics and stereotypes, especially when it comes to the stories of women in leadership positions (Bartlett, 2024)**.** The average range of leadership roles held by women is 16.7%, ranging from 3% in Japan to 19% in the US and 30% in France, there are 19% organizations with female senior managers and 6% of CEOs at S&P 500 companies are women; female stays simply inactive in politics too, they occupy only 23% of seats in national parliaments in the world, whereas in the US only 10% of governors and 20% of the mayors of the hundred largest American cities are women; in academic sector less than one-third of full professors are female, these numbers drop to 13.9% in economics and 10.5% in engineering (Yoder, 2018).

Male (i.e., agentic) traits like strength, decisiveness, effectiveness, competitiveness, and assertiveness have long been linked to leadership (Jongen, 2024). The ratio of women leaders in the world's top universities has increased for the first time since 2017, but it is still below 20%, according to a new update from Times Higher Education (Bothwell, 2020). Still, there is a sizable gender disparity in university leadership across the globe is not shocking (Kohtamäki et al., 2024). It is harder for women to advance into leadership positions when they are perceived as lacking the necessary skills (Jongen, 2024). Substantial gender disparities have been discovered in academics, even in the Nordic nations, which are highly regarded globally for gender equality (Kohtamäki et al., 2024). Irrespective of the struggles to elevate the position of women at higher levels, it is noticed that female engagement continued to be low yet in the sphere of higher education at upper levels (Shaukat et al., 2021). The toil, work experience, and outcome for females within the higher education sector are greatly depending on their intersectional individualities (Warren & Bordoloi, 2021). Gender-associated processes of organizations at higher education institutes are held to be accountable for the glass ceilings faced by female academicians; gender disparity in the higher education sector continues to persist as confirmed by the 2.3:1 male-to-female full professor percentage yet in the United

States (Baptist, 2017); while in Pakistan it is 0.03. This has led to an outcome that there would be a latent bias towards women pursuing leadership roles (Shaukat et al., 2021). The responsibility comes on females to struggle for themselves in environments that undermine their voices in structured manners (Warren & Bordoloi, 2021). Thus, the unavailability of talented female leaders in senior roles in the higher education sector has been linked with the tests and troubles in the academic spheres like deficient performance, being discouraged over professional development, personal reservation, and invisible rules in the organization, so on (Croucher et al., 2018; Elkington et al., 2017; Rashwan, 2015; Edwards, 2017). Pragmatically, the proportion of women allocated to associate professors and full professors designations in Australia's universities is about 27 percent as compared to Asian countries (Alajmi & Ahmad, 2016; Pyke, 2013). Compared to men, women confront more intricate and diverse barriers that prevent them from advancing to leadership positions. These barriers can come from a variety of sources (Steele et al., 2024). Gipson et al., (2017) upholds that females are victimized all through the process of choosing a leader and this factor is prevalent all over the world (Samo et al., 2019).

Social constraints obstruct functioning along with the presence of females in leadership positions. Thus, increasing female leadership empowerment should be associated with policy formulation that represents the interests of families, women, and ethnic minorities other than improving living standards, social gender equality, and public investments (Beaman et al., 2012; Cohen & Huffman, 2007; Paxton et al., 2007). The substantial role of government in women's empowerment cannot be renounced. To address gender egalitarianism in the higher education sector, policymakers and the academia have to vigorously engage in endeavours to form constructive action-focused practices to empower women professionals to secure the objective of gender egalitarianism in the workplace (Farooq et al., 2020). These talented individuals are considerably helpful in the university's performance by engaging new students, conveying high-quality coaching and learnings, practicing outclass research, and getting funds for conducting further research (Horseman, 2018; Hazelkorn, 2017; Bradley, 2016). In addition, the benefits for higher education institutes are the formation of talent development practices like talent pools, improving the capabilities of personnel, assisting in proficient planning, and improving human resource performances (Kasemsap, 2017; Wu et al., 2016). Therefore, the primary research question is;

> *What is the impact of gender egalitarianism on women's leadership effectiveness with the mediation of talent development and mediation of perceived government support?*

Review of the Literature

Leadership effectiveness is a well-known idea in the sphere of leadership (Sudha et al., 2016). A noteworthy definition of leadership effectiveness that is wide-ranging refers to the idea of the fruitful individual impact by a person or more that drives to achieving shared goals in a manner that satisfies all the persons concerned (Hardey, 2019). Glass and Cook (2018) asserted that organizations with a woman leader have demonstrated vigorously fair results than those who have a symbolical woman leader or those who have gender inequality (male-controlled) (Glass & Cook, 2018). A study by Haque et al., (2017) maintains that woman leaders successfully utilize transformational leadership style.

It is an established truth that we have trained females sufficiently to function in leadership positions based on their involvement in academic activities more noticeably as compared to males (Shaukat et al., 2021). However, despite having these exceptional leadership capabilities when we search their existing leadership positions in all the 27 nations in the Union of Europe (EU), only 13 percent of higher educational institutes are ruled by females (Gorondutse et al., 2019). Present research established that female around the world holding leadership characteristics comprises just 26 percent of heads of colleges and universities irrespective of their competencies and talent (Szymanska & Rubin, 2018; Lapovsky, 2014; White, 2013). However, on the national level, women possessing superior leadership positions are at the bottom, like three percent in Pakistan (ILO, 2015, 2020). More precisely, women suffer trial and trouble in academia out of their gender and the anticipations and dispositions about their gender (Dess, Marecek & Bell, 2018). Yenilmez affirms that the ratio of woman academicians at the beginning level is mounting, but most of them cannot touch the top, an indication that this profession is not free from gender-related discrimination (Yenilmez, 2016). The same vigorous research was conducted by Songul Demir, who arranged interviews with a hundred women in the academic sector; her study's outcomes found that women bear open gender discrimination each day irrespective of possessing whatsoever title (Demir, 2018).

Outcomes endorse previously hypothesized "funnel structure" of academic developments where findings maintain that higher attritions and rank-stagnations among female faculty and higher persistence and rank-progression among male faculty continue (Baptist, 2017). The inconsistency between the great number of females who secure a higher degree and the underrepresentation of females in superior leadership roles is challenging (Shaukat et al., 2021). Researchers established that governmental support has a persistent effect on performance (Gorondutse et al., 2019). It is equally or relatively more essential to make sure that these females who secure leadership positions avail that authority to form a gender-equal environment for all with an egalitarian viewpoint (Dess, Marecek & Bell, 2018). Therefore, perceived government support is used as a moderator here after

robust literary studies (Farooq et al., 2020; Dess, Marecek & Bell, 2018; Gorondutse et al., 2019; Rana, 2016; IRUM et al., 2015).

It is proposed that an effort to uphold gender equality necessitates changes in the structures of these organizations (Bencivenga & Drew, 2021). Since McKinsey forwarded the phrase War for Talent near the dawn of the 1990s, talent development has been acknowledged as a decisive factor of success for institutions (Scullion and Collings, 2010). For instance, universities' ranking, and performance are linked with the talent of extraordinarily performing staff (Horseman, 2018; Hazelkorn, 2017; Bradley, 2016; Lynch, 2015). Similarly, there are studies on talent development and gender egalitarianism (Lahiri & Sharma, 2019) and some on gender inclusion in academia and talent development (Mohammed et al., 2020; Harun et al., 2019; Mousa & Ayoubi, 2019; Mokgojwa et al., 2018; Paisey & Paisey, 2016).

After a thorough study of the literature about all the variables it can be stated here that there are various studies on female leadership effectiveness and gender egalitarianism, then there are fewer studies on gender egalitarianism in academia and the role of government support (Farooq et al., 2020; Dess, Marecek & Bell, 2018; Gorondutse et al., 2019; Rana, 2016; IRUM et al., 2015). Likewise, there is research on talent development and gender egalitarianism (Lahiri & Sharma, 2019) and some on gender parity in the higher education sector and talent development (Mohammed et al., 2020; Harun et al., 2019; Mousa & Ayoubi, 2019; Mokgojwa et al., 2018; Paisey & Paisey, 2016). However, no research incorporates leadership effectiveness, gender egalitarianism, perceived government support, and talent development; resultantly it is tried here to explore the relationship of these variables for the development of female academicians in Pakistan.

Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses

Role congruity theory postulates that the assessment of women leaders' capabilities relies on women's traditional role expectations contrasted with those of male leaders who show prejudice against women in leadership positions (Eagly and Karau, 2002; Morrison et al., 1987). The theory asserts that a person is regarded as appropriate to a role when specific features of that professional role are matched to the stereotypical societal group of that individual (Eagly and Karau, 2002).

Briefly, the present study attempted to find out the effect of gender egalitarianism which stresses that gender has no role in deciding the distribution of work, and should not affect the evaluation of male and female tasks (Gheaus & Robeyns, 2011) on women's leadership effectiveness which is the practice of influencing others to understand and comply with what should be done and how it should be done productively, and it's also a practice to promote personal and shared endeavour to perform mutual aims (Nabih et al., 2016). Whereas moderation is done between

gender egalitarianism and women's leadership effectiveness by investigating the importance of perceived government support, in the present study government assistance is any type of government support provided to women in higher education institutions (Rasha, 2014). Mediation is done with the employment of talent development, which is elaborated as activities and processes that contain the planned efforts to detect talent requirements that are particularly contributory to the institution's sustainable competitive edge (Collings and Mellahi 2009).

Conceptual Model

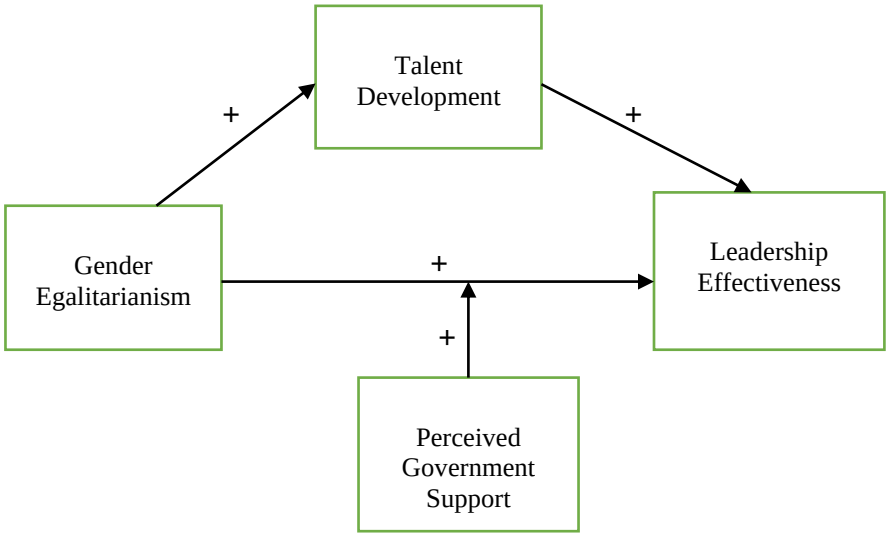


Figure 1

H1: There is a direct relation between gender egalitarianism and women's leadership effectiveness.

H2: There is a significant relationship between talent development and gender egalitarianism.

H3: There is a significant relationship between talent development and women's leadership effectiveness.

H4: Talent development mediates the relationship between gender egalitarianism and women's leadership effectiveness.

H5: Perceived governmental support moderates the relation between gender egalitarianism and women's leadership effectiveness.

Research Methodology:

Materials and Methods

In the present study positivist philosophy comprises collecting data by surveys, observations, and experimentation (Quiñones et al., 1997; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2005). This study is deductive, quantitative, and cross-sectional by nature. The sampling technique employed for this research study is non-probability and data is obtained by purposive sampling because data is to be collected from knowledgeable and professional females to obtain correct results (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The data has been obtained by structured questionnaires and by online mode. The detail of female academicians in leadership roles in the public universities of Lahore, Rawalpindi, and Islamabad was first obtained from the HEC website, then from the websites of said public universities individually. Then they are approached both personally and online due to the pandemic situation. A total of 215 questionnaires were filled out by women leaders of 30 public universities. Using Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS), the data has been evaluated by utilization of Smart PLS-SEM, lastly, results were derived to analyze the proposed hypotheses.

After a comprehensive literary review, the scale for gender egalitarianism was adopted from House et al. (2004). The reliability was tested, and it was good as indicated by the values in Table 1 below. Leadership effectiveness was assessed by the scale selected from (Alkahtani et al., 2011). The Cronbach's alpha value was significant at (0.92) for this variable. To evaluate the perceived government support scale (Al-Shihabi, 2008) and (Rasha, 2014) were adopted and the analysis outcomes were significant with Cronbach's alpha value (0.779), all these were mentioned in (Gorondutse et al., 2019). The talent development scale was obtained from AlKerdawy (2016), and Chami-Malaeb & Garavan (2013) with a significant Cronbach's alpha value (0.894) and mentioned in (Mohammed et al., 2020). All the items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The demographic questions were employed to understand the detail of the selected sample which is provided in the subsequent part of the results.

Results

The sample comprised 100% women so that we could ascertain accurate results from experienced and knowledgeable women faculty. The educational level of this sample was PhD, whereas they were categorized into multiple levels of leadership according to their designation there were Deans 3.9 percent, HoDs 20.6 percent, and Chairpersons 22.3 percent, and 45.5 percent in-charge of the department. While their age lies from 40 to 60. Further details about the demographics are given in tables.

Table 1.

		Frequency	Percentage
Age	40-50	78	33.5%
	50-60	137	58.8%
Designations			
	Deans	09	3.9%
	HoDs	48	20.6%
	Chairpersons	52	22.3%
	In-charge	106	45.5%

Source: Authors' calculations on SPSS

Table 2

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
LE	215	3.5092	.58912	-.564	.166	-.202	.330
GE	215	3.3795	.67806	-.013	.166	-.845	.330
PGS	215	3.6857	.57925	-.057	.166	.084	.330
TD	215	4.4775	.82496	-.121	.166	.038	.330

GE=Gender Egalitarianism, LE= Leadership Effectiveness, PGS= Perceived Government Support, TD=Talent Development.

Table 2 exhibits that the values of the standard deviation of all variables lie near 1 which implies that numeric lie around the mean or data point tends to be near to mean. The mean value of most of the variables ranges from 3.5 which shows that most of the responses of respondents either somewhat agree or somewhat disagree. The benchmark value of Skewness should range from -2 to +2, therefore our collected data is in negative numbers which implies that data is skewed negatively. On the contrary, the benchmark value for kurtosis should range from -3 to +3 and they both depict the symmetry of data and explain whether data is normally distributed or not. In this case, most of the value's range between 0.38 to -.202 which depicts the normality of data under this threshold.

Table 3

	LE	GE	PGS	TD
LE	1	-	-	-
GE	.451**	1	-	-
PGS	.448**	.714**	1	-
TD	.542**	.496**	.489**	1

****Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

To measure the correlation SPSS was employed, and the Pearson's correlation method was used. The benchmark value should exist between -1 to +1. Table 3 above depicts that the correlation values in this research study are positive and significant.

Table 4

	Cronbach's Alpha	Roh A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
LE	0,745	0.761	0.832	0.502
GE	0.920	0.930	0.935	0.520
Moderation	0.893	1.000	0.833	0.218
PGS	0.779	0.773	0.852	0.540
TD	0.894	0.921	0.919	0.555

GE=Gender Egalitarianism, LE= Leadership Effectiveness, PGS= Perceived Government Support, TD=Talent Development.

The measurement model of reliability and validity is calculated by employing values of Cronbach's alpha and Composite reliability, it is calculated by Smart PLS, and the benchmark value should range from 0.6 to 0.7 or higher considered good (Zalma et al., 2015). Whereas the threshold value for composite reliability should be 0.6 or higher (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). However, Table 4 demonstrates that the values of Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability range from 0.745 to 0.920 and 0.832 to 0.935 respectively, which establish that the data is reliable. The value for variance should be 0.5 or above (Henseler et al., 2016) and in this study, it ranges from to. 0.218 to 0.555. Convergent validity is measured by the outcomes of measurement model factor loadings, average variance extracted, and composite reliability and all the calculated values are within the acceptable range.

Table 5

	Beta value	P-value	T-Statistics
GE->LE	0.200	0.010	2.576
GE ->TD	0.642	0.0001	21.369
TD->	0.234	0.007	2.721
GE->TD->LE	0.150	0.006	2.750
GE->PGS->LE	0.184	0.152	1.434
PGS->LE	0.197	0.05	2.794

The threshold value of t-statistics should be 1.96 or higher according to the suggested criterion. In this study, all values are above 1.96 which implies that the relationship among the variables is positive except for moderation, the rest of the beta value lies between 2.576 to 21. 369 which maintains that they have a significant and direct relation. The benchmark values for P are 0.05 so any value lower than 0.05 is significant and below in Table 6 all P values are lower than 0.05 which implies all these relationships are significant and positive except for moderation. Factor loadings are calculated in PLS-SEM and the threshold criterion suggests that loadings of all constructs should be higher than 0.5 (Hair et al., 2007).

Discussion

The first outcome of this study maintains that Gender Egalitarianism has a significant and positive relation with Leadership Effectiveness (T= 2.579, P= 0.010). These findings are consistent with earlier research (Gazzaz, 2017; Alajmi and Ahmad, 2016). Further, this study investigates that Talent Development and Gender Egalitarianism hold a significant relationship (T=21.369, P=0.000). These results assert that the higher education sector should form training arrangements for talented workers who have needed expertise; offer the staff sufficient training prospects and career development programs; additionally support women to become professional through career development possibilities, ultimately it will help to pave the way for gender egalitarianism in higher education (Mohammed et al., 2020). Further, this study evaluates that Talent Development has a significant relation with Leadership Effectiveness (T= 2.721, P= 0.007). These empirical outcomes are consistent with the viewpoint of Yap (2016) who advocates that higher education institutions should offer their highly qualified workforce with career development prospects to constantly develop them (Mohammed et al., 2020). Lastly, the results of the study establish the mediation of Talent Development between Gender Egalitarianism and Women's Leadership Effectiveness which has a positive and significant association (T= 2.750, P= 0.006). These findings are consistent with those found by Mohammed et al. (2020) who established that high-level leadership forwards talented personnel with plentiful possibilities for effective training initiatives (Gorondutse et al., 2019). Even though Perceived Government Support holds a significant relation with Leadership Effectiveness (T= 2.794, P= 0.005). Thus, the supremacy of government support and leadership effectiveness is obvious in the instance of higher education institutions that employ females in their scientific councils and numerous departments by delivering incentives to acquire existing governments' support and to uplift the level of self-confidence of female leaders by engaging them in discourse and scientific discussion which can enable them to be an efficient leader (Gazzaz, 2017; Kalafatoglu et al., 2017; Alajmi and Ahmad, 2016). On the contrary, the final results of this study by the moderation of Perceived Government Support between Gender Egalitarianism and Women's Leadership Effectiveness which holds a negative and insignificant relationship (T= 1.434, P= 0.152). This is because it has been witnessed that government support cannot function beyond the prevalent culture and is in line with the previous studies on gender egalitarianism and government support (Gorondutse et al., 2019).

Conclusion and Implication

The present study will be helpful for the higher education institutes in Pakistan and their personnel as they will anticipate and resolve the matter of gender inequality and root cause i.e., deep-seated cultural gender-driven role segregation. But the noteworthy outcome in this study is that perceived government support is not able to moderate the

relationship between gender egalitarianism and leadership effectiveness which indicates that there is something that leaves this relation insignificant; it is due to the reason that government support is unable to function beyond the dominating culture of Pakistan. The norms and traditions need a firm code of gender-based exclusion in higher educational institutions, at home, and in society (Gazzaz, 2017; Alajmi and Ahmad, 2016). Prinsloo (2017) further maintains that training and mentoring initiatives are vital mechanisms for the development of talent; higher education institutes should regulate future strategies to authorize females by the various stages of their careers to ripen the finest leaders (Galanaki & Papalexandris, 2017).

Limitations and Future Recommendations

This study is cross-sectional by nature; it can be longitudinal; it will be more instrumental and can forward better results. In this research mediator talent development is used as a whole variable but in the future, any dimension of it (performance management, coaching talent, and leadership development) can be measured independently. In the future different mediators and moderators can be employed like impostor phenomenon, perceived organizational injustice, and different leadership styles, etc. for diverse outcomes. Here, we used the purposive sampling technique because data to be obtained from professional and experienced females holding leadership positions, in the future different sampling techniques can be used for comprehensive findings. Finally, other methods of data analysis like AMOS-SEM can be used to evaluate in other settings.

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Khadija Tariq is a Ph.D. Scholar, Management Sciences, Comsats University, Islamabad

Dr. Seema Khalid is an Assistant Professor, Commecs Institute of Business & Emerging Sciences, Karachi