



Gender leadership styles and linguistic practices: The case of Lebanese International University coordinators

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Abstract

Sociolinguistic research is interested in the way people, including leaders, use language to construct and perform social identities. Given that an increasing number of professional women have to do leadership side by side with men, this case study research, which was conducted at the Lebanese International University, studied gender and leadership styles from a qualitative content analytical perspective. More specifically, it sought to determine male and female leadership styles and to investigate their linguistic practices through the analysis of self-reflections and interviews. The researcher used five male and five female coordinators' self-reflections and transcribed interviews that were collected, analysed and categorised to find out any differences in the leadership style and language use of male and female leaders in the academic settings. The findings showed the influence of the genders in their choice of linguistic expressions indicating the noteworthy dominance of the two prevalent dimensions in leadership styles, namely, transformational and transactional.

Keywords: Gender leadership styles, gender linguistic practices, transformational leadership, transactional leadership, Lebanon.

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1. Introduction

Language is a significant means by which the gender is enacted. Gender is not only what individuals have but also rather what members do, partly through their linguistic choices (West & Zimmerman, 1983). Butler (1990) emphasised the performative aspect of gender and explained how linguistic practices continually bring into being individuals' social identities. Under this account, Olsson (2006) defined the term leader not only as a formal role but also as arrays of linguistic practices that may index differently gendered features.

Studying language and gender identity in public contexts such as work and education has been lately spread amongst sociolinguistic researchers. For example, Ashforth (2000) shed light on the juncture between gender identity and language. The study emphasised that gender discourses are shaped by social norms which one has to abide by or accept when communicating with others. In the same regard that one is to behave and talk in agreement with social expectations, Alvesson and Billing (2009) explained how the gendered identity and talk at work are affected by the social context.

In the recent years, many researchers have renowned the importance of gender differences in leadership styles (Eagly & Carli, 2003a, 2003b; Gumus, Bellibas, Esen & Gumus, 2018; McCleskey, 2014; Silva & Mendis, 2017; Wood & Eagly, 2010) and necessitated the importance of understanding the intersection of gender and leadership (Jenner & Ferguson, 2009). Furthermore, research in gender and language in the field of leadership studies suggests that the two disciplines can provide mutually beneficial insights into how leaders can utilise language strategically to become more effective and powerful (Koller, 2004; Mullany, 2007; Schnurr, 2009). In line with the wide frame of sociolinguistic research (Coates, 1997; Tannen, 1990), this research adopts a social constructivist perspective to shed light on the more complex and subtle mechanisms of doing gender and leadership through discourse, mainly in higher education in Lebanon.

1.1. Aim of the study

'Gender stereotypes, in particular, are everywhere. It is in the language that we use, and it is the way we perceive women in the workplace' (Agarwal, 2001).

One school of theory suggests that leaders of different genders have different leadership styles. Men are bestowed with competitiveness; they tend to command and control and like to be perceived as decision makers. They are often averse to discuss issues with staff. Women, however, seek to develop the subordinates by adopting a participative approach and thus lean towards transformational patterns using the interpersonal skills that highly prompt discussions to reach a consensus (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Zaal, 2017). Another school of researchers suggests that there are no variances in men and women leadership styles (D'Ambrosio, 2000; Pavlovic, 2014). Few others claim that we cannot approve that men's leadership skills are more prevailing than women's skills or vice versa, yet it is vibrant that gender difference occurs and individuals should get the most out of them (Radu, Deaconu & Frasineanu, 2017). Such works have clouded the veracity of the prior conclusion.

Reviewing reports issued by the Lebanese Association for Educational Studies and the National Strategic Project for Education in Lebanon (2016), we found that research on formal interactions and gender in Lebanon is still limited and it does not clarify whether females' interactions in institutions exhibit a transformational style, and males exhibit a transactional style, or whether there are no differences in their leadership styles. Hence, this research aims to examine the coordinators' self-reports and to interview them to determine their gendered leadership styles and their daily linguistic practices. We believe that the coordinators' self-perceptions about their leadership style and their recorded lexical and syntactic terms in communication could show different patterns. Therefore, this paper aims to address this gap by conducting a content analysis study of the representations of gender and leadership in gender-multiple higher education institution in Lebanon, the Lebanese International University (LIU).

Thus, the current study has the following questions to answer:

1. What are the leadership skills as perceived by male and female leaders in an educational setting?
2. How do male/female leaders at university perceive their leadership style between transformational and transactional styles?
3. How do linguistic practices in educational settings reveal the leadership styles of women and men in leadership positions?
4. What is the relationship between linguistic practices and perceived transformational and transactional styles?

2. Literature review

2.1. Definition of leadership

The true explanation of leadership has been a polemic issue. Amongst the definitions put forward about leadership, we have Tannenbaum, Weschler and Massarik (1961), who denoted to it as an interpersonal stimulus, implemented in a situation and directed through the communication process to attain a definite end. In 1990, Bass defined it as an interaction between a leader and followers which involves a structuring or restructuring of the situation. Ford, the co-founder of Ford Models, describes leadership as the ability to influence individuals that to mind what you want them to do as if they had assumed it (Karnes, Bean & Wallner, 1993). Other researchers suggest that leadership is the talent of activating others to struggle for common aspirations. Kouzes and Posner (2009) set a five frame practices of standard behaviours, which back up leaders in their effort to mobilise others: modelling, challenging, supporting and reassuring positive emotional reinforcement and inspiring to embrace the vision, whereas others claim that effective leadership necessitates primary skills: vision, empowerment, intuition, self-understanding and value correspondence. Thus, the act of leadership is not only a fixed position but also a varied one with various influencing variables that may affect the result (Ramamoorthy, 2019). In fact, most of this disparity stems from the fact that leadership is a complex phenomenon involving the situation, leader and the followers.

2.2. Educational leadership

Since education is considered as a basic mediator for nurturing a nation's global competitiveness, numerous countries have begun to shift resources and attention into the expansion of operative educational leadership (Bertrand & Rodela, 2018; Gumus et al., 2018; Moorosi & Bush, 2011). Waller and Waller (2014) referred to educational leadership as the exercise of guiding the energies and talents of instructors, students and parents to achieve shared educational goals. It is about building connections amongst various participants such as schools, students, instructors and community in general (Bertrand & Rodela, 2018; Ishimaru, 2017; Marsh, Strunk, Bush-Mecenas & Huguet, 2015). Osseo-Asare, Longbottom and Murphy (2005) considered it as indispensable for presidents, deans, heads of programs and departments in the administrative and academic institutions.

In the flux of conveying educational leadership to the public interest as a matter of extreme importance, Iskander, Pettaway, Waller and Waller (2016) emphasised that educational leadership is vital to a nation's ability to strive in a global economy. Recently, a group of researchers stressed that a useful leadership method is vital to help leaders lead their organisations and faculty members so that they can persist and survive (Lan, Chang, Ma, Zhang & Chuang, 2019).

2.3. Roles and duties of coordinators at the Lebanese International University

The School of Education Handbook of LIU (2018) lists the duties of the administrative staff and faculty. It declares that the department coordinator is appointed by the chair to assist in the administrative and academic functions. His roles include monitoring and reporting on the adherence of the coor-

dinators of the courses to their job descriptions and their abidance by the lawful instructions of their hierarchal superiors. He has to compile the information received from the course coordinators, add his own feedback and send an extensive report on the overall performance of every coordinator and faculty within the program.

The handbook also discusses the roles of the campus coordinator, the representative and the spokesperson of the school at campus level. His/her duties include new faculty recruitment, new faculty orientation and performance evaluation. S/he should oversee and report on the abidance of the school faculty teaching at the campus, for which s/he is responsible by the instructions of administrative character. Campus coordinators have to compile the information received from the course leader and send an extensive report on the overall administrative performance of every faculty member to the chair. The campus coordinator also handles advising for all the programs offered by the school departments at the campus level. S/he provides the students with the plans of study provided for them.

In addition, there are course coordinators. Their roles include offering content support to the chair and handling all the academic details pertinent to a particular course or courses specified by the chair. The course coordinator is responsible to set unified outcomes for the course and prepare, in collaboration with the course leaders working at campus level, the course file(s) to be adopted across all campuses. Furthermore, the course coordinator should oversee and report on the abidance of the faculty teaching of the course(s) by the academic requirements. S/he sends a report on the academic performance of every faculty member to the department coordinator or the chair. Handling all these roles and duties determines the coordinators' status as leaders.

2.4. Leadership styles

Burns (1978) marked a major transition in the development of leadership theory. He was the first to conceptualise transforming leadership as a social process that involves both leaders and followers interacting to reach higher levels of motivation and achieve mutually defined ends.

Transformational leaders are concentrating on the motives of their followers (Li & Hung, 2009). They try to help others achieve their fullest potential by evolving sturdy emotional bonds. They may meet the followers' emotional needs by performing inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation that would generate enthusiasm and cultivate creativity (Jyoti & Dev, 2015; Paschal, 2018). They tend to encourage divergent thinking and innovation and apply individualised recognition and consideration that coach the followers and develop their needs (Belasen & Frank, 2012). Furthermore, Rains (2019) claimed that transformational leaders truly inspire followers and tend to get them convinced to complete their individual contribution.

Transactional leadership is another style conceptualised by Burns (1978). It accentuates a transaction between the leader and the follower, thus focusing on mutual benefits derived from a form of contract where the leader discusses the requirements with the others, specifies the conditions and negotiates the rewards of those who fulfilled the requirements (Bass & Avolio, 1994; McCleskey, 2014). Instead of encouraging followers towards self-realisation, transactional leadership secures and maintains power by focusing on the followers' lower needs (Bass & Riggo, 2006; Zembylas & Iasonos, 2010). It basically motivates people through contractual agreement (Bass, 1985; McCleskey, 2014).

Cherry (2019) reported that research has found that transactional leadership works well in situations where problems are simple and clearly or in crisis situations where the leader assigns defined duties to particular individuals to make sure that things get done. Bass and Avolio (1994) stated that transformational leadership amplifies transactional leadership. Years later, Bass and Riggo (2006) stated that transactional leadership can work for the foundation of building transformational leadership. They also added that the most effective leaders use mutually the transformational and transactional leadership styles (Bass, Avolio, Jung & Berson, 2012; Yukl and Mahsud, 2010). In this regard, it is worth to mention that Yukl (2006) amongst many other researchers also adhered to the same finding that a blend of both the leadership styles could yield greater outcomes.

2.5. Research supporting transformational/transactional leadership styles

The findings of a study on leadership style of managers in universities in Saudi Arabia conducted by Wibraa and Shmailan (2015) presented that the bulk of managers in academic institutes in the Eastern Province and Middle of Saudi Arabia are transformational and secondly transactional. Later, Zhao and Jones (2017) conducted an in-depth study in China on the interplay of leaders' identities and the discourses of gender in education and found that identities are shaped by dominant discourses concerning gender. They also reported that the traditional discourses of gender and leadership were reflected in the respondents' discourses; female Chinese leaders under study showed that they are sensitive and emotional in contrast to males whose responses showed that they are decisive and unemotional.

Much research has shown that women leaders lean towards transformational patterns using interpersonal skills (Baxter, 2015; Rosener, 1990; Zaal, 2017). Female leaders enthusiastically initiate discussions with those involved to reach a consensus decision and sidestep confrontation. Instead, they refer to encouragement and compromise (Flanders, 1994; Fonts, 2018). They show understanding and concern for people and try to develop subordinates by embracing a participative approach (Eagly, 2013; Merchant, 2012; Rigg & Sparrow, 1994). One of the latest studies conducted by Silva and Mendis (2017) revealed that female leaders prefer a transformational style because it naturally shows their aptitudes and helps them meet the requirements of their role as leaders.

An analysis of 45 studies on gender leadership styles revealed that females are more transformational (Shanmugam, Amaratunga & Haigh, 2007), yet they often engage themselves in the contingent reward procedure which characterises the transactional behaviour. However, men manifested more the active and passive management by exception styles which depict the transactional style (Belasen & Frank, 2012; Silva & Mendis, 2017).

Holmes (2006) explained how the linguistic practices can be remarked as a leadership skill. Later, Baxter (2010) explicated that in gender-divided corporations, the language of female leadership is expected to show the characteristics of stereotypical female features, i.e., supportive and cooperative, whereas in gender-multiple corporations, females tend to support their colleagues and use relational linguistic strategies. This supported what Bass and Avolio (1995) had pointed out in their researches that women had a greater inclination to be more transformational leaders than men (Rosenbusch & Townsend, 2004; Silva & Mendis, 2017; Zaal, 2017). Regardless to who tends to be transformational, a study conducted on educational faculty members affirms that the subordinates who are working with transformational leaders have positive results on outer job satisfaction because encouraging with positive reactions, inspiring words and compliments would make the members satisfied (Boamah, Laschinger, Wong & Clarke, 2018; Lan et al., 2019).

3. Methodology

3.1. Research design

This exploratory study used a case study research design that includes self-reflection, interviews and follow-up content textual analysis. Case studies are 'richly descriptive' (Hancock and Algozzine, 2017). Stake (2000) suggested that case studies have become 'one of the most common ways to do qualitative inquiry' (p. 435). Hartley (2004) stated that they consist of collected data, within particular context, to illuminate theoretical issues being studied. Patton and Appelbaum (2003) reported that they uncover patterns, determine meanings and construct conclusions. In this regard, Yin (2003a; 2017) emphasised that a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context and relies on multiple pieces of evidence.

For the data analysis, the researcher used self-reflection in the research field to validate the procedures (Karin, Nystrom & Dahlberg, 2007). These reflections are vital since they emphasise on pursuing assumptions and on illuminating in-depth questioning of the mind (Mortari, 2015). In addition to self-

reflection, interviews were conducted to gain in-depth understanding about gender leadership and linguistic practices. According to Taylor and Littleton (2005), interviews can help the researcher to analyse the speakers' identities in an appropriate context. They help in probing answers by involving them in further explanation and in building on their responses (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2015). Along with self-reflections and interviews, Yin (2014) emphasised the importance of qualitative content analysis in the studies of organisational communication. The use of qualitative research helps in reaching in-depth understanding of a situation (Cooper and Schindler, 2014, p. 144). It is probably the most prevalent approach since it comprises a searching-out of underlying themes in the materials being analysed (Bryman, 2004).

3.2. Sample and data collection

For the purpose of this study, we will take the case of LIU, to study gender leadership style and linguistic practices. Since the aim of this study is not to create generalisations, a convenience and purposive sampling which is a non-probability technique was employed (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016; Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2011). The researcher chose five male and five female higher education leaders from the five schools at the university where she works: School of Education, School of Arts, School of Business, School of Engineer and School of Sciences of the LIU.

This case study research capitalised on the qualitative research design. Following the ethical approval from LIU, coordinators' self-reflections and individual interviews were carried out in April and May, over the duration of the spring semester 2018–2019. The 10 male and female coordinators were asked to elicit self-perceptions on their gendered leadership style. Then, the researcher analysed their descriptions and assessed whether there are indeed designated markers and linguistic practices of female and male language in leadership. In this study, semi-structured individual interviews were developed by the researcher as a follow-up tool to additionally explore the attitudes of coordinators concerning leadership capabilities. The researcher had an interview guide which did not dictate a certain order in which the questions must be asked but helped to stay focused. Coordinators were not provided with a copy beforehand, as this can result in planned out responses.

The interview started with questions about the coordinator's career trajectory. The in-depth questions followed to allow the coordinators tell about their roles, their perceptions on leadership and their stands if they consider themselves as leaders. This was followed by queries about views on men and women leadership styles and their choice of words in leading the subordinates.

With respect to data analysis, the researcher followed Patton (1990) strategy that ensures unbiased data analysis. The interviews were noted down, transcribed by the researcher and then subjected to qualitative content analysis and thematic coding. The process involved cycles of inquiry forth and back between the empirical data and the theory throughout the process (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The first step conducted was going over the interviews slowly to have a general idea about the data collected. Step two was re-reading the interviews and coding the data collected according to the leadership styles. Step three was classifying the codes according to the themes, and step four was to conclude the leadership style for each interviewer and their perception regarding their own style.

To ensure validity, an independent researcher reviewed the interview questions and answers to determine their reasonableness. After reviewing the results, the researcher reached the same conclusion regarding leadership style and linguistic practices. The assistance of an independent person in the coding process and analysis increases the reliability and validity of the results reached (Bengtsson, 2016; Burnard, 1991; Downe-Wambolt, 1992; Graneheim & Lundman, 2004).

4. Findings and discussion

In this case study, the 10 coordinators’ self-reflection and semi-structured interviews that included answers to open-ended questions were recorded. The participants are five males and five females above 35 years with an average of 7 years of experience in higher education.

To answer the first research question about their perceptions of leadership, in general, the coordinators were interviewed and asked if they consider themselves as ‘leaders’.

Table 1. Interviewee responses

Males’ responses	Females’ responses
H.Y: We ourselves do not determine if we are leaders or not. People whom we impact determine if we are leaders. I consider myself as a leader, even if I am not in a position in which I have a legitimate or coercive or reward power. I only use two kinds of powers: referent, charismatic and knowledge power. I have people do what they would not have done otherwise. Hence, my style of managing things is a leading style not a bossy style.	L.N: As a coordinator and adviser, I believe in collaborative efforts as the best way to be successful in creating a quality environment. I maintain respect and give recognition. I look for others with the right skills for help and support. I share my success throughout the team. I establish good communication channels and rapport and listen and respect their opinions.
A.F. Leaders ensure the quality and standards set by the university. The leader is able to move one from one situation to another and drive the best from his team.	M.I. I know how to be in charge or responsible for duties without being bossy. I have the skills to convince people to do tasks without seeming to impose orders. Yet, sometimes, orders are needed.

Regardless of gender, the results show that the ten coordinators in the academic institution consider themselves as leaders due to their knowledge power and their abilities to drive the best from the fellow instructors. Respondents admitted that they have communication skills to convince and direct a team, and they added that the skills could be determined through their impact.

To answer the second research question about one’s identification in one leadership style, the participants were informed about transformational and transactional styles. Table 2 shows samples of the respondents’ answers.

Table 2. Interviewee responses

Males’ responses	Females’ responses
H.Y. I follow transformational style. I can have things done willingly by my team because they believe in my vision. I encourage, trigger and motivate. My approach is engaging, motivational, educational and entertaining. I do not parachute my plans. Together we come up with new ideas. My style is more transformational.	L.N. I am transformational. Leaders stimulate others to use their capabilities to the fullest to reach their objectives. I reduce the power distance between the members of my team and me. I encourage them to extend knowledge by appreciating their effort and supporting their initiative to do things creatively.
A.F. My leadership style varies with the set of goals and the situation I face with my team.	M.I. I encourage all the time, especially before passing orders. I shed light on their positive skills and strength points and then encourage them to keep it up.

Females affirm the claim that women leaders lean towards transformational patterns using interpersonal skills to meet the requirements of their roles as leaders. The five females we interviewed reported that they are transformational, yet one stated that she is transactional but confirmed that women are usually transformational. Males’ responses, on the other hand, oppose the claim that men tend to be transactional. Only one coordinator stated that he is transactional and seeks perfection. He attributed himself with traits that match more with the transformational style; he used the words:

empathy, openness, conscientiousness and agreeableness. One added that the leadership styles vary with goals and a leader may adopt any style based on the situation he/she faces.

To probe the topic more, the researcher asked the participants to provide more views on men and women leadership styles. They were asked if women are more participative and tend to adopt people-oriented goals, whereas men are more directives and tend to adopt task-oriented goals. Table 3 shows the samples of the respondents’ answers.

Table 3. Interviewee responses

Males’ responses	Females’ responses
A.S. Men could be participative as well; on the other hand, women could be directive and authoritative.	Z.N. Women tend to be more encouraging and collaborative, whereas men tend to be task oriented and give directives.
R.A. We are in full diversity system, and we do not see gender differences. Anyway, women are lovelier. Women are not more directive or authoritative than males. Males are so. Women and men adopt transformational and transactional leadership styles depending on the situations.	F.K. Women show more empathy and are leaner. They tempt to be people oriented rather than goal oriented. Men are more authoritative.

Almost all participants (9 of 10) revealed a consensus that women are more participative and tend to adopt people-oriented goals through encouragement, collaboration and motivation. Regarding the perception that suggests that men are more directive and tend to adopt task-oriented goals, all females asserted the claim, whereas two males out of five revealed different views. One coordinator stated that men could be participative, whereas women could be directive and authoritative; another specified that there is a difference between males and men; men may not be directive, while males are so.

To answer the third research question about the linguistic practices and leadership styles, the participants were asked directly about their perception if there are any inherent differences in the language of men and women use in leadership. Table 4 shows a sample of the respondents’ answers.

Table 4. Leadership language

Males	Leadership language	Females
A.S. Men’s language is tougher. They order. They want their work to be done.	Z.N. Women tend to be more encouraging and collaborative, whereas men tend to be task-oriented and give directions. Men’s language is strict and judgemental.	L.N. Women are somehow aware of using linguistic strategies as a means of maintaining effecting leadership. Women used delicate language to dilute possible criticism. They display personal power as a practice to authoritative leadership style. They also try to correct or repair a mistake to build rapport and reduce authority. It is believed that male leaders also use these strategies.
H.Y. Men are assertive, forceful and insistent. Men tend to be less expressive and more straightforward in expressing themselves. However, this depends on the leader’s character. Women similarly to men can develop a better style in communication in which they can deliver the meaning or the message which they want to convey.		

In line with determining how linguistic practices reveal the leadership styles, the participants were asked to describe how and when they encourage, advice, coach, teach and clarify expectations. Table 5 shows a sample of the respondents’ answers.

Table 5. Differences in the linguistic practices

Males' responses	Females' responses
Offer rewards based on agreement	Encourage my team when needed
Wait for deviance then intervene	Coach individuals on regular basis
Check, predict problems and wait	I feel happy when I develop individual needs
Intervene when problems occur	I seek to change and develop individual needs
Give rewards after accomplishments	My target is to encourage self-realisation

The majority of the respondents reveal the differences in the linguistic practices. Both the males and females assert that women motivate, encourage, collaborate, request and dilute possible criticism; they are leaner and show empathy, whereas men order and command. Men's language is more tough, assertive, forceful, insistent, strict and judgemental. They wait for deviance and intervene. Men usually check, predict problems and wait.

To answer the fourth research question about the relationship between linguistic practices and perceived transformational and transactional leadership styles, the participants were also asked to give their input on a case to detect their social power through talk-action that is through words. Each participant had to describe how they deal with instructors' flaws or below average performance. Their descriptions and their choice of words to solve the problem by trying to bring the instructor up with him and her in addition to the recorded interviews and self-reflection were subjected to textual qualitative content analysis in line with Young (2009) study. After several readings of the material, the researcher focused on the words and representations that the coordinators used and filtered them out by classifying them into four different categories presented in the theoretical frame work.

Table 6 shows a sample of the linguistic practices and confirms the influence of gender in the choice of linguistic expressions.

Table 6. Males' Linguistic choices as a measure of transactional leader

Males' Linguistic choices as a measure of transactional leader	
Transactional characteristics	Samples of words and representations
Competitive conversational style and authoritative and assertive style	If you do not develop skills, I may have to promote someone else who can do it better.
Autonomous: enjoy power in conversation	I shall be responsible I want more slip-ups in the agreed schedule; otherwise, I will move this responsibility to someone else in the team. I believe in my vision or in the history of success stories which I have accumulated.
Use commands and directives	I want the papers back.
Use bare imperatives	I assert; I request; I want you to be more mindful of
Use descriptive adjectives that are judgemental	

The results here were not expected. One of the male respondents had earlier stated that he considered himself as transformational; yet when he was put in a situation to see how he could deal with a case related to instructors' flaws or below average performance, his description and choice of words showed the opposite. Thus, we may come up with the conclusion that the respondents' perceptions may contradict with their daily practices as their language shows the opposite.

Table 7. Females’ Linguistic choices as a measure of transformational leader

Females’ Linguistic choices as a measure of transformational leader	
Transformational characteristics	Samples of words and representations
Speaker oriented	Could you tell me more information so that I help I will have to get back with you about that We should move.... Could I see...?
Affectively oriented	I feel ... I know that you are ... but I feel I like your ... I can see why you believe the way you do. I think I understand what you are saying that is right
Person/process oriented	I am concerned about that too. I want the same. How much time do you think we would need to? I name their worries and acknowledge their beliefs Please, let me know as soon as possible if it is possible to get the information I requested in advance.
Facilitative	I know this is tough for you since you are undertaking it for the first time, yet this is the finest way to learn, and I want you to give it your best try.

The same case is repeated here with the female who identified herself as strictly transactional. The language she used in the case presented to her does reveal that she is deeply transformational.

This shows the noteworthy dominance of the two prevalent dimensions in leadership styles, namely, the female transformational and the male transactional which is in line with Zaal (2017) study.

5. Conclusion and recommendations

This research provides several insights. First, in relation to the question if coordinators consider themselves as leaders, their responses match with the definitions put forward about leadership by Karnes et al. (1993) who reported that leadership is the ability to convince people that they want to do what you want them to do as if they had thought of it themselves. According to their job description, coordinators undergo a process whereby they communicate with the instructors to achieve the educational institution goal, which is in line with Burns (1978) who conceptualised leadership as a social process that involves both the leaders and followers interacting together to achieve mutually defined ends.

With respect to the leadership style, the results affirm that women are more participative and tend to adopt people-oriented goals (Eagly, 2013; Merchant, 2012), whereas men are more directive and tend to adopt task-oriented goals (Bass & Avolio, 1995; Rosenbusch & Townsend, 2004; Zaal, 2017). The female respondents’ answers to their leadership styles were somehow similar. All affirmed that women are transformational and are committed to followers and attentive to their needs. Their responses fit with a study conducted by Silva and Mendis (2017), in which they revealed that female leaders favour a transformational style because it naturally demonstrates their ability to meet the requirements of their roles as leaders. It also supports what Radu et al. (2017) study has reported that women are energetic and enthusiastic. They make sure that their employees are well informed and they update their team in terms of their performance, and they set high goals (Radu et al., 2017). Moreover, the results come in line with Zaal (2017) study which concludes that women possess leadership style that is different than the affirmative leadership style of men. Regarding the males’ responses, they contradict many results amongst which are Belasen and Frank (2012) and Silva and Mendis (2017) as well. Yet, they affirm one study conducted by Wibraa and Shmailan (2015) in Saudi Arabia. Both show that the majority of leaders in academic institutions are transformational and sec-

only transactional. They also match with the situational leadership theory which suggests that leadership style may be exercised differently at different levels. This result adheres with Hersey, Blanchard and Johnson's research (2001).

With respect to the linguistic practices, the research shows that there are inherent differences in the language of men and women use in leadership. Men's language is more tough, assertive, forceful, insistent, strict and judgemental, whereas women's language is more encouraging and collaborative. They are leaner and show more empathy. This result applies to Ashforth's (2000) and Zhao & Jones' (2017) studies who found that identities are shaped and constrained by dominant discourses concerning gender and that gender discourses are shaped by social norms. It also matches with Silva and Mendis' study conducted in 2017 which reveals that female gender role, in accordance with social expectations, personifies communicating, caring, supportive and considerate behaviours.

Finally, the findings highlight the influence of gender in the choice of linguistic expressions. Gender is not only what individuals have but also rather what members do, partly through their linguistic choices (West & Zimmerman, 1983). The result is in line with Olsson's (2006) view that a leader is a set of linguistic practices that are socially situated and collaboratively enacted in team contexts and may index differently gendered features. In fact, it also explains what many researchers have recognised regarding the importance of gender differences in leadership styles (Eagly & Carli, 2003a, 2003b; Wood & Eagly, 2010) and the importance of understanding the intersection of gender and leadership (Jenner & Ferguson, 2009).

6. Limitations and future research

Limitation for this research is the scope that was limited to the coordinators' perceptions in one private university in Lebanon. Second, the answers of the coordinators might have been affected by a desire to please and to reflect a stereotype. Consequently, the results of this exploratory study may not apply to other universities nor do they apply to public sector institutions.

For future research, the data collection should have a larger sample size and a discourse analysis of spontaneous conversations and discussions held between the leaders and their subordinates to allow for generalisation. It may consider further leadership styles and conceivably use them to assist in the mentorship of future leaders and, therefore, provide professional development in the areas of transformational leadership for present and future academic leaders. Finally, those who pursue positions in leadership in academia should be mindful to the characteristics of an effective higher education leader and try to develop a deep-down understanding of transformational leadership characteristics.

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