**Recognition and importance of E-leadership in the present emerging technological advancement era in Pakistan**

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| *Keywords*:  E-leadership,  technological advancement |  | A B S T R A C T  The Leaders play the role of bridges between the teams and the senior managers. But conventional leaders have certain deficiencies that are overcome by the skills and characteristics of e-leaders. E-leadership is the novice concept through which leaders manage and control their teams by using the latest technological sources like video conferencing, Skype, and emails, etc. E-leaders have certain skills and traits like quick decision making, time and cost-saving, etc. because of which they monitor their teams in the minimum cost and time. Because of these factors, the morale of the teams is increased and that results in the rapid performance improvement of the company as a whole. This thesis is based on enlightening the recognition and importance of e-leadership in the rapid advancement of technology, in Pakistan. For better understanding and exposure, studies and findings of many scholars have been shared in this regard. Also, for exposing the real benefits and outcomes of e-leadership, the traits and working capacities of conventional leaders have also been discussed in this research work. The main purpose of this thesis is to throw light on the traits and characteristics of e-leaders along with the potential benefits of e-leadership in the context of Pakistan. |

1. Introduction

The inception of the present century has marked the beginning of unique yet novice technological advancements. There is no denying the fact that in today’s world, no-one can even think without technological involvement. The revolution in information technology has further enhanced the dependence of humans on technology. Globalization has added speedy value to the revolution in information technology on one hand but on the other hand, it has increased the level of competition among the firms from all sectors all around the world.

Leadership is among the prime factors that not only play an important role in aligning the management and skills of the employees in a firm but also expedite the revenue generation for the company. Also, most of the firms are teams-oriented and can be controlled through vigilant leadership. Organizational life and productivity are highly dependent on team-work and teams are controlled by leaders (Morgeson, DeRue, & Karam, 2009).

Owing to increased globalization, the network of the companies has also been expanded turning it difficult for the conventional leaders to interact and to incite the enthusiasm in their teams for productivity enhancement in the company. The world is moving a step from the industrial to a more systemized and advanced networked environment. In this transformational phase, many challenges like trust shaking and decision-making, etc. are occurring for the leaders and to such challenges, certain changes within the company networks are required including tight boundary maintenance, and instant communication with the workers, etc. are necessary.

Moreover, the competition among the different firms has also been at the optimum level and there is not enough time and cost to travel into all the segments of a company just for the sake of vigilance and motivation of their teams. Additionally, the lack of abrupt co-ordination via conventional co-ordination tools further increases the problems. These problems are not only of serious concerns in the corporate sector but also in other sectors like in education, and health, etc. (Freitas & Routledge, 2013). These problems with conventional leadership have been addressed via the newly emerging concept in the information and communication technology, i-e. E-leadership.

Communicating, leading, controlling, intimidating, monitoring, and motivating, etc. the teams electronically, is called e-leadership. E-leadership is a newly emerging concept in management. The e-leaders interact with their teams through e-mails, teleconferencing, Skype video calls, and similar electronic modes nationally or internationally (Zaccaro & Bader, 2003). Transformational leadership is considered to be one of the most effective and advanced leadership styles, today (Antonakis & Atwater, 2002).

E-leadership is the outcome of extensive work in Advanced Information Technology (AIT). Because of the novice revolutionary steps in the information technology, e-leadership has been developing as an authentic concept by surpassing conventional leadership (Bruce, Surinder, & Dodge, 2000).

As compared to conventional leaders, e-leaders have certain skills and traits that surpass the conventional approach of leadership (Yukl, William, & Uppal, 2020). These skills and traits include:

* Highly energetic and pressure handlers
* Matured and internally stable
* High level of personal integrity
* Social and quick problem solvers
* Electronically connected with e-teams all the time

E-leaders control and manage their teams in a systematic manner even at distant places and that is the most prime factor that has resulted in the success of e-leadership in the present era. E-leaders scrutinize their teams and monitor their work through electronic sources. E-leadership is the need of time in the present age of technological advancement (Murphy & Rigio, 2003).

By analyzing different dimensions of e-leadership under different demographics like age, gender, etc. it was explored that e-leadership is admired and favorable by all in every type of organization and every person. As per the data collection through questionnaires and interviews, most of the personnel lying within the age bracket of 25-35 favor e-leadership as compared to the personnel who were more than 35 in their ages.

This research paper is meant to enlighten the worth and importance of e-leadership. The skills and traits that are pre-requisite for the success and ensured completion of the projects with the help of virtual teams are also elaborated in this paper. The trends related to e-leadership in Pakistan, are also being discussed in this research paper.

1. Literature Review

As many of the companies are stuck between the industrial and the advanced information technology, the leaders are facing more issues in aligning their teams and improving the productivity of their companies. These issues can be resolved by transforming conventional leadership into e-leadership. E-leaders can not only monitor and interact with their teams virtually but also can expedite the company’s productivity to a greater extent (Malhotra & Majchrzak, Enabling knowledge creation in far‐flung teams: best practices for IT support and knowledge sharing, 2004).

Change in the corporate environment has raised the level of competition among the firms and their survival is not possible without adopting the novice trends and a new revolutionary concept, i-e. e-leadership. E-leaders easily communicate and interact with the virtual teams in any area of the world (Colfax & Diego, 2009).

In today’s world, interaction without information and communication technology is not possible. Interestingly, the concept of e-leadership can be linked with the predicted human capacity to develop modern technology by Thomas Edison in the 20th century. E-leadership is one of the manifestations of advanced information technology in the present world. E-leadership is the outcome of extensive work in Advanced Information Technology (AIT). Because of the novice revolutionary steps in the information technology, e-leadership has been developing as an authentic concept by surpassing conventional leadership (Bruce, Surinder, & Dodge, 2000).

Communicating, leading, controlling, intimidating, monitoring, and motivating, etc. the teams electronically, is called e-leadership. E-leadership is a newly emerging concept in management. The e-leaders interact with their teams through e-mails, teleconferencing, Skype video calls, and similar electronic modes nationally or internationally (Zaccaro & Bader, 2003). The active usage of nonverbal communication has become more possible through e-leadership because of which e-leaders can instantly contact and direct their teams even at distant places (Darics, 2017).

The present age is the transformational era, in which the conventional and old practices are being altered by the new and updated practices in every field. Advancements in information technology led to the development of e-leadership in the World. E-leadership is the next stage of the conventional leadership. The traits of e-leaders are more advanced and more systematic than those of conventional leaders (Gurr, 2004). The transformation of society has brought new challenges and opportunities for leaders. Here the factor of e-traits and the conventional traits arise. For some experience matters and some education matters (Stuhlen, 2010).

Transformational leadership has brought many positive changes in many firms who are using the latest technological tools (Tipu, Ryan,C.James, & Fantazy, 2012). Transformational leadership is another name of e-leadership. Now, the world is shifting from the conventional leadership designs and frameworks to the e-leadership. The transformational trends in the present age are giving way to new technological advancements. Among these, e-leadership, e-teams and e-management, etc. are some important terms to be mentioned. Remote leadership, i-e. e-leadership not only plays an important role in transforming the strength of the teams but also optimize their performances by giving them instant positive remarks (Kelloway, Barling, Kelley, Comtois, & Gatien, 2003). To meet with the challenges of the present age, e-leaders use electronic sources for grabbing the maximum benefit for their firms through tackling certain problems like time and cost, etc. (R.Nydegger & Nydegger, 2010).

E-leaders manage the teams that are at distant places from them but they manage them via electronic networks. These teams are usually called e-teams or virtual teams and are managed through electronic sources like Skype, What Sapp, and other similar electronic sources. The management of electronic teams is quite a laborious task that is performed by e-leaders like highlighted in the work of (S.Shurygailo & Cascio, 2003). E-leaders are not only managing their teams via ICT in the corporate sector but also in education, health, and other different sectors (Mishra, Henriksen, Boltz, & Richardson, 2015). As the present World is transforming from agriculture to the industrial era, the societies are also transforming from the decade-old conventional trends and epochs to the new trends with advanced features (Peia & Piawa,Yan.Chua, 2018).

E-leaders can better monitor and control their virtual teams simultaneously at one time. Together with e-leadership and advanced information technology, not only virtual teams can be better managed but also time and cost can be reduced to a great extent (Kahai, Baker, Sosik, & Avolio, 2013). The performance of e-teams is closely monitored by e-leaders. E-leaders not only monitor and evaluate the performance of their team members but also give them instant responses so that their work may not be affected in any way (Hertel, Geister, & Konradt, 2005). Also, e-leaders have to perform certain roles for the efficient utilization of their team’s skills. These roles include the establishment of trust using electronic sources, ensuring the presence and understanding of all members of virtual teams, management and handling of electronic meetings, and monitoring team-progress, etc. (Malhotra, Majchrzak, & Rosen, Leading Virtual Teams, 2007).

Employee satisfaction is important for the ensured progress of the firm in every sector. For a balanced employee satisfaction and improved efficiency, effective communication is required. Leaders perform the role of bridges between the employees and the top-level management of the firm. Through their effective communication skills, hey not only keep the morale of their teams high but also play a vital role in instigating their satisfaction level at a higher level. E-leaders perform such tasks in no time and improve their team’s productivity by sorting their issues side by side (Madlock, 2008).

Nothing is changed in the matters of e-leadership except the implementation of the set goals using the electronic sources. E-leaders are expected to be more enthusiastic, sharp, and instant decision-makers, and always available for one-on-one communication with the employees. E-leaders indulge themselves with the “Follow the sun” methodology, i-e. the maximum productivity with minimum cost with exceptional knowledge management. Though the traits in e-leaders increase the competitive advantages for the company they have to face certain challenges to meet their goals including:

* Bridging the distance physically
* Building trust within their teams
* Ensuring capacity building and motivating the team-members (DasGupta, 2011).

E-leaders manage their teams in a systemized manner that is the reason e-teams perform well. As a result of these abrupt responses, the teams are well-connected with their leaders 24/7 and perform in the best manner (Avolio & Surinder, 2003). Similarly, E-leadership and virtual teams together with the advanced use of technology, are becoming an exceptionally important part of today’s world. The motivational and abrupt responses of e-leaders not only enhance the morale of their teams but also tie their strengths together for the betterment of the firm (Fan, Chen, Wang, & Chen, 2014).

E-leadership has certain merits including time-saving, abrupt response, controlled vigilance, and use of advanced technology, etc. E-leadership provides face-to-face team-handling and in time response sharing because of which time and cost both are saved and better productivity is ascertained (Purvanova & Bono, 2009).

For the maximum performance of the firm, trust-building among the teams and the team-leaders is very much important. The trust factor is especially worth-mentioning for e-leaders. E-leaders build trust among their teams by giving them instant and positive remarks (Savolainen). Another important aspect is that for the efficient and maximum utilization of e-teams, e-leaders must ensure their social presence so that all the team members may collaborate along with their leaders (Lisa, 2014).

E-leaders can not only align their teams all around the world but also can coordinate with other e-leaders across the borders for the optimum results and for the well-being of their own organizations (Acquiring e-Leadership Skills, 2015). In Pakistan, the initiation and the partial operationalization of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) have opened the door for the advancements in the information and communication technology. As every field is expected to improve in Pakistan in the wake of CPEC, so is the leadership (Khurshid, Rashid, & Zahid, 2018). E-leadership is the outcome of extensive developments in the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Advanced Information Technology (AIT) (O'Regan, Ghobadian, Belitski, Liu, & Li, 2016). Unfortunately, the exceptional outcomes that are blessing the working capacity of firms abroad are not yet explored in Pakistan. That is one of the reasons for the sluggish progress and development of the country as compared to other countries of the World (Awais & Ryan, 2012).

The advanced information technology has also been developing at the optimum level in Pakistan. Where many countries of the World are transforming their ways from the industrial environment to the networked environment, Pakistan is still lagging in the advanced use of information and communication technology. Still, in most of the firms including the public and the private sector, conventional leadership style is being followed not e-leadership style. Most of the professionals in Pakistan even do not have any idea of the term “e-leadership”. Without knowing the worth and the ultimate impact of e-leadership, no-one would be even going for its implementation. E-leadership must be implemented in all the sectors of Pakistan because the implementation at the mass level would result in:

* Time and cost minimization
* Efficiency improvement of the employees
* Increased responsibility of the employees
* Better monitor and control of the employees
* Instant and boundary-less contact with the virtual teams
* Increased productivity of the company (Pulley & Sessa, 2001).

This paper is meant to enlighten the importance of e-leadership as compared to conventional leadership, being performed in most of the countries of the world. The impact of e-leadership would be measured so that the professionals may acknowledge the vitality of e-leadership in Pakistan. In this way, the significance of e-leadership would be magnified so that the latest technological ornaments may be used by the firms (Mohammad, 2009).

1. Materials and Methods

The methodology used in this research is based on qualitative and quantitative techniques. This research can be categorized into three sections (Table 3).

## 3.1 Type and Approach of Research:

The type and approach would be quantitative and qualitative. Data for the quantitative research design has been collected by recording the responses of the personnel who filled the questionnaires. Data for the qualitative research design has been collected and analyzed by using qualitative data analysis and utilizing the data collected through interviews. Quantitative research design uses the numerical values for the analyses of data. For explaining the issues, quantitative research methods are extensively used by collecting data and analyzing it using different statistical techniques (Apuke, 2017). Qualitative research design is the research design that is mostly used in conducting researches in social sciences. The relevant ideas, opinions, trends, and attitudes, etc. are subjectively analyzed through this research method (Kothari, 1985).

## 3.2 Research Design:

For conducting the research and analyzing the data in a systematic manner, a research design is needed. A research design examines to what extent the information that has been collected, is efficient and productive. The main function of the research design is to make sure that the data that has been collected and the problem statement, etc. that you are going to address, is as much efficient as you would require (De Vaus, 2006). The research design that has been used in this paper is based on mixed techniques, i-e. quantitative and qualitative.

1. Conclusion
2. **How far e-leadership been implemented/adopted in Pakistan?**

By analyzing the responses of the professionals who fill the questionnaires, it can be said that e-leadership has been adopted up to the transformation age. Most of the personnel agree with the fact that suitable arrangements must be made for instigating e-leadership in every sector of Pakistan.

1. **What is the attitude of Pakistani Professionals regarding e-leadership and its implementation in Pakistan?**

Most personnel believe that e-leadership has brought new opportunities for all in the present era. Also, most of the professionals consider e-leadership as the major indicator in ensuring success for all the firms in Pakistan.

1. **How do Pakistani Professionals see e-leadership and conventional leadership in Pakistan?**

As per the responses of the personnel in the questionnaires, e-leadership requires different skills. As e-leadership is different from conventional leadership, it requires different skills. They do agree that e-leadership is far better than the conventional leadership in Pakistan.

1. **What are the enablers of e-leadership in Pakistan?**

Keeping in view the responses of the professionals, efficiency, instant contact with virtual teams, quick decision making, education, and, trust-building, are the enablers of e-leadership in Pakistan.

1. **How do e-leadership affect organizational performance?**

By adopting e-leadership in an organization, time is saved, the cost is minimized, quick decision making is materialized, and instant contact with virtual teams is ensured, altogether these factors positively improve the organizational performance of a company.

The present era is considered to be the most important age in terms of technological advancements. Technology has revolutionized this world in every aspect and facilitated humans to a greater extent. E-leadership is the outcome of advanced technological progress. E-leadership is the control and monitoring of teams at distant places by electronic means. E-leaders control and monitor their teams through electronic means and therefore, they can easily handle and make abrupt decisions. Because of these abrupt decisions the organization’s performance improves and results in the optimum outcome at a greater level.

As e-leaders have certain skills including time management, quick decision-making, optimum organizational performance and time and cost-saving, etc. they have an edge over the conventional leadership strategies. For some e-leaders, cost-saving is the ultimate benefit of e-leadership, and for some, quick decision-making.

The viewpoints of different e-leaders and participants of virtual teams, have been manifested in the data that has been gathered by getting questionnaires filled from the personnel belonging to different sectors, particularly, information technology (IT) sector of Pakistan.

In Pakistan, the initiation and the partial operationalization of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) have furthered the advancements in information and communication technology. As every field is expected to improve in Pakistan in the wake of CPEC, so is the leadership (Khurshid, Rashid, & Zahid, 2018). Transformational leadership is another name of e-leadership which means leadership through electronic means. Now, the world is shifting from the conventional leadership strategies and frameworks to the e-leadership. E-leadership is the outcome of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Advanced Information Technology (AIT) (O'Regan, Ghobadian, Belitski, Liu, & Li, 2016). Unfortunately, the exceptional outcomes that are blessing the working capacity of firms abroad are not yet explored in Pakistan. That is one of the reasons for the sluggish progress and development of the country as compared to other countries of the World (Awais & Ryan, 2012).

This paper is meant to throw light on the qualities, traits, and certain characteristics that e-leaders possess. Because of these characteristics, e-leaders perform their tasks in the target time and become able to produce the best results. In Pakistan, leadership is been transformed and personnel are modifying their work from conventional to e-leadership. With results that have been collected through questionnaires, the traits and characteristics along with the ultimate positive outcome of e-leadership have been explored in this paper. This proves that e-leadership is the best way to communicate with virtual teams at distant places and because of characteristics of e-leaders, organizations experience time-saving, cost-saving, quick decision-making, and optimum performance, etc.

4.1 Recommendations:

The present age is experiencing the latest technological progress in every country. Without the utilization of the latest technological and communication tools, no firm can make any progress. E-leadership is the novice tool that is being used by the leaders because of the latest technological requirement. As compared to conventional leadership, e-leadership is the latest technological tool that can be used efficiently for the optimum performance enhancement of the company. Without using the latest technology ornaments, no company can make success. In Pakistan, there is, unfortunately, a great dearth of the latest technology and therefore, the benefits of e-leadership are not yet been properly explored. Under the umbrella of CPEC, every sector in Pakistan is making progress so the information technology sector can also be explored. With the success of information technology, e-leadership can also be developed. Still, there is much that Pakistan must-do for the development and the exploration of e-leadership in Pakistan.

* There must be the inculcation of e-leadership in all the leading firms at the first round in place of conventional leadership. In this way, all the firms would follow the suit and would pursue to embrace e-leadership in place of conventional leadership.
* The conventional leaders and conventional teams must be given training for transforming their patterns and improving their skills.
* Awareness campaigns and workshops must be arranged to change the mindsets of the conventional leaders so that they could adopt the traits and characteristics of e-leaders and the firm could attain optimum productivity.
* The ultimate benefits of e-leadership must be enlightened so that the professionals may urge to adopt the e-leadership in place of conventional leadership.
* The well-educated personnel prefer using the latest technology and technological tools so these personnel must enthusiastically adopt e-leadership.

The adoption and implementation of e-leadership are not possible without shedding light on the benefits of e-leadership. With the rigorous implementation of e-leadership in Pakistan, many positive outcomes would be achieved. The ultimate benefits of e-leadership include:

* The minimization of cost and time
* Improvement of efficiency of the employees
* Better control and close monitoring
* Abrupt contact with virtual teams
* Performance improvement of the company (Pulley & Sessa, 2001).

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