

**Studying Gender Related Views about Speech  
Variations at Pakistan Air Force: A Case Study**

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**Researcher: Shagufta Gul**

**Supervisor: Dr. Ayaz Afsar**

**Reg No: 72-FLL/MPh/Eg/F07**

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Department of English

Faculty of Languages, Literature and Humanities

International Islamic University Islamabad

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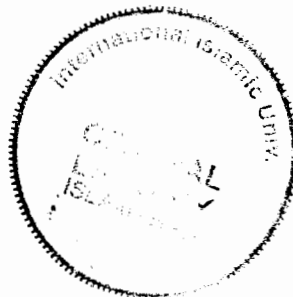
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Philosophy with  
specialization in Sociolinguistics at the faculty of Languages, Literature and Humanities

International Islamic University

Islamabad

Supervisor: Dr Ayaz Afsar

February, 2010



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Dedicated to

**MY MOTHER**

The most courageous lady I have ever seen in my life

**(Acceptance by the Viva Voce Committee)**

**Title of Thesis:** Studying Gender Related Views about Speech Variations at Pakistan Air Force: A Case Study

**Name of Student:** Shagufta Gul

**Reg No:** 72-FLL/MPh/Eg/F07

Accepted by the Faculty of Languages and Literature INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY ISLAMABAD in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Master of Philosophy with specialization in Sociolinguistics

Viva Voce Committee

Dean

  
Chairman/Director/Head

External Examiner

Supervisor *myz npsat*

Member

13-2-2010

## **Declaration**

I hereby declare that **Studying Gender Related Views about Speech Variations at Pakistan Air Force: A Case Study** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been properly referenced. It is further declared that this research, in its entirety, is a product of my personal efforts under the sincere guidance of my supervisor. No portion of the work being presented herein has been submitted to any other university, or seat of learning, in support to any piece of writing for the award of any other degree of qualification.

**Shagufta Gul**

**72 FLL/MPHLEG/F07**

## **Abstract**

In the wake of recently increased interest in language and gender, this study seeks to explore the influence of gender on the speech of male and female officers in the professional setting of Pakistan Air Force. The study demonstrates gender based language differences at workplace. The assumptions put forward by linguists in the field of language and gender were tested, some of which were confirmed while others were refuted. The assumption that females are more polite as compared to males was found to be true. It was also found that females are more helpful. Male officers were found to be more confident in their speech and in the use of taboo words. Females were found to be more emotional. These were the dominant patterns found in the study. Other aspects, like authoritativeness, indirectness in speech, asking for help etc brought varied results. Many speech patterns challenged the commonly held beliefs may be due to different environment of Pakistan Air Force than other walks of life. The scope of this study can be broadened to include other armed forces like Navy and Army and can be used to support and facilitate better and harmonious workplace environment in these institutions.

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**Shagufta Gul**

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# 1. Introduction

The aim of this dissertation is to investigate the relationship between language and gender and to explore the influence of gender on the speech of men and women at workplace. The research is specified to a professional setting, that is, Pakistan Air Force. The reason to choose the professional setting of Air Force for this dissertation was that it is one of the institutions in Pakistan where mostly English language is used for communication.

My interest in this area of research was initiated by theories about language and gender taught to us in the second semester of M.Phil coursework. I had to write a critique of Lakoff's theory of language and gender as an assignment, for which I did some preliminary research in our eastern context. I took interviews from bankers and owner of a construction company. The results were interesting and many of Lakoff's assumption were refuted which developed my interest in this topic. As far as the origin of the field of language and gender is concerned, in the past few decades, there has been a lot of emphasis on how gender influences language use in men and women. A number of studies have been conducted to investigate the differences in male and female language. For example, research has demonstrated that women use more polite forms as compared to men (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Similarly, Labov(1972) and Trudgill (1975) opine that women produce linguistic forms closer to the standard language and use forms of higher prestige more than men. In the same way, Bramley(1997) has investigated the use of avoidance strategies by male and female politicians in answering interview questions and found that women avoid answering questions less. In the field of language and gender research, besides gender, the variables of age, class, education and culture have also been known to influence linguistic behaviour. The main issues discussed in the field of language and gender are:

1. Do women and men speak different languages?
2. Are there specific masculine and feminine styles?
3. Does women's language show lack of confidence and their lower status?

4. Do these assumed language differences in the speech of both genders affect their performance at workplace?

### **1.1 Research Statement**

What role gender plays in the performance of professional obligations at workplace? And whether gender based language differences in the speech of men and women give rise to misunderstandings and confusions at workplace? If yes, what measures can be taken to minimize or eliminate those differences in order to improve workplace environment and working conditions.

### **1.2 Objectives of the Study**

This research aims to:

1. Explore the ways in which gender contributes to the interpretation of meaning in workplace interaction.
2. Investigate interrelationship between language and gender and to see whether there are specific masculine and feminine ways of interacting at a workplace?
3. To suggest ways and means to improve cross-sex communication at a workplace.

### **1.3 Significance of the Study**

This research may contribute towards:

1. Analyzing gender related theories and to see whether they change with the change in a social context
2. Raising the awareness of the people at workplace about different conversational styles of men and women
3. Providing a pathway for further research on the topic of gendered speech in Pakistani context

Recently, many research studies have been conducted in this field such as speech differences of adolescents based on gender, role played by gender in selections at managerial posts, gender role in sports, in nursing etc. The current study, as stated above, is limited to Pakistan Air Force.

Out of the ten Air Force Bases around the country, officers from three bases, that is, the P.A.F Base Peshawar (Badaber), the P.A.F Base Chaklala and the Air Headquarters Islamabad were selected as it was easy for the researcher to access them. The study does not cover all aspects of gender issues. It only focuses on the sociolinguistic aspect of gender, with special emphasis on the language of men and women at workplace.

Access to an Air Force Base is extremely difficult as civilians are not allowed to enter in the base due to security reasons. One can get permission only after long and tedious procedures of identification. This became more difficult for me due to the strained situation near the Indian border in November 2008. The acts of terrorism inside the country made the security checks even stricter. Initially I planned to use observation method but I came to realize that it was rather impossible for a non military person to enter into a base and observe them in their routine work or to make recordings of their speech. Therefore, I had to switch to other methods like interviews and questionnaires.

Many changes were made in the initial plan of research as many times it seemed that to carry out research in such a place was impossible. Persuading the Air Force authorities for such a research also proved to be an ordeal as initially an officer said that the topic chosen seemed ahead of its time and that authorities would never give permission due to the tense situation with India as most of the officers were busy in military exercises. The researcher had to get official letters of approval from the respective base commanders where the research was conducted who gave this approval after the researcher's application was approved by the then Air Marshal. This process took many weeks. Initially, only officers from the flying wing were planned to be included in the research but after embarking upon the research, it was realized that if officers from all wings such as aeronautical engineering, flying, education, administration, ATC (Air Traffic Control) and weather forecast cooperated and filled questionnaires, it would be a great achievement. So the focus of the research was shifted from flying to general P.A.F



setting. Board meetings of officers in the month of March, retirement of the Air chief and the ceremonies of farewell to the old chief and welcome to the new chief at the Headquarters delayed the work. When interviews were recorded at the P.A.F. Base Chaklala, which itself had been such a nerve testing experience as they called the researcher on the day when there were riots in the country due to displacement of the Punjab Chief Minister. When coming back, the researcher got stuck in a road block. If these interviews had been a bit late, it would have been impossible to complete the study as Swat operations engaged officers of Chaklala in air raids and it would not have been possible to take their interviews. Therefore, it was not an easy job, a normal easy going topic and setting. These constraints may be considered while reading this thesis. It is just the first drop of rain and the researcher hopes that further research studies may be conducted in future in this domain and it would not be left just because it is difficult to conduct research in forces due to their confidentiality, difficulties in approaching them and other such reasons.

The differences between women in the West and the East on the basis of culture, context and society are not the focus of the study and this work should not be judged in comparison to the differences in values and norms between the East and the West. In the West, seat in a bus is not offered to a lady just because she is a female. Elderly people whether males or females get more respect and care in the East. Similarly, ladies in the West in some cases are given more freedom, such as they get more exposure right from the childhood, spend adventurous lives and are not restricted to the boundaries of home. The situation in the East is changing but still it is not as liberal as in the West. All these variables are taken as constant and the results may not be generalized to every context and society.

#### **1.4 Limitation of the Study**

Results were limited to a very specific group of people, viz. Air Force officers. This gave the dissertation a more specific look, allowing access to a small group but did not allow for a great deal of breadth. Another limitation of this study was that the researcher was not permitted to observe officers at workplace as was planned and to record and analyze their speech and had to rely on their views through questionnaires and interviews.

A further limitation was the size of focus group and number of questionnaires. The researcher tried to include more Air Force Bases rather than three out of ten but it was hard to collect data from so many Bases within the prescribed time. Ideally the researcher would have conducted more interviews and included more bases to get results that could have given more reliability to the findings.

### **1.5 Organization of the Thesis**

This research work comprises of six chapters. The first chapter includes background and introduction of the research study, its objectives and significance. The second chapter deals with review of literature including key researches carried out in the field of language and gender. In the third chapter, data collection process including questionnaires and interviews is dealt. Data is analyzed in the fourth chapter followed by discussion in the fifth chapter. Chapter six includes findings, conclusion and recommendations for further research which marks the end of the thesis.

## 2. Literature Review

This chapter consists of literature providing background to the study. The discussion begins with a definition of language and gender, followed by a review of different theories which have influenced language, tracing the initial stages of research, leading towards the recent trends in this domain. It includes major research studies carried out in this field and their outcomes, noting the gaps and inconsistencies that led towards the current study. Much research has been carried out in the field of language and gender after 1970s but the researcher has focused only those research studies which are relevant to this work, overlooking other aspects of speech. The impact of these research studies on popular literature is also discussed and the criticism of some researchers on documentation styles and analysis of research studies provide a glimpse as how to authenticate a study before it is presented.

The relationship between language and gender has long been of interest within sociolinguistics and related disciplines. Studies carried out in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in anthropology looked at differences between women's and men's speech across many languages, identifying distinct male and female speech patterns in many cases. As far as the origin of the field of language and gender is concerned, Paulston and Tucker (2003, p.199) opine that the subfield of sociolinguistics known as language and gender studies began as part of much larger women's movement, which was fought against the inequality between the sexes.

However, it should be noted that gender and sex are often confused and used interchangeably, the fact is that these are two different concepts. This difference is highlighted by Anne Oakley who states that sex is biological based, a matter of physiology and something related to glands, hormones and anatomy while gender is not binary like sex and is a combination of many characteristics that can be masculine or feminine depending on the context and our relationship with those involved (1972, p.158).

Therefore, it can safely be said that in the context of language and gender research, gender is not just a synonym for sex. Sex refers to biological distinction while gender is the term to describe socially constructed roles based on sex.

As far as incarnation of the term gender in theories is concerned, Victoria, Janet and Alice (1996, p.3) state that in 1996 and 1997, when feminine scholars pointed out that feminine and masculine behaviours do not necessarily correspond to male and female, theorists borrowed the term gender from linguists to refer to behaviour that was socially acquired rather than biologically innate.

## **2.1 Some Myths about Language and Gender**

Many of our views about the way men and women speak are based on stereotypes which we have learnt at some stage of our life. Stereotypes about how men and women speak actually reveal insights into our attitudes about what men and women are like, or what we think they are supposed to be like. Perceived gender differences are often the result of these stereotypes rather than the result of actual existence of any differences. Graddol and Swan (1989, p.2) hold the same opinion and they further add that such stereotypes have a long history and are perpetuated through proverbs, jokes, journalism and literature.

These linguists believe that many of our views about gender based linguistic differences are purely based on stereotypes and very few language differences are empirically documented. Therefore, the expectations about the way men and women should use language affect the way they actually speak. One of such stereotypes is that women are more talkative than men are. Research focusing talkativeness in both genders, (which will be discussed later) has revealed that this is nothing but just an assumption. Some linguists believe that men and women have a separate vocabulary for colours. According to Lakoff (1975, p.54), men do not notice the fine distinctions between *mauve* and *lavender* because for men, such distinctions are trivial and beneath their notice.

Topics of conversation are also stereotypically associated with a certain sex. Coates (1993, p.44) has discussed a number of all-male conversations claiming that the topics of these extracts are stereotypically masculine such as cars, sports, drinking, politics,

travelling etc. It is also a common perception that female speech is more polite and that they do not use taboo words. Research studies focusing these issues and their respective outcomes are discussed in the following section.

Review of the field of language and gender shows that there are certain reasons behind these age old perceptions about the speech differences of men and women. Old letters, novels, diaries and poems provide us with evidence of folk linguistic beliefs regarding gender differences in language. In this context, Jennifer Coates has commented in the following way:

Academics and scholars are as much the product of time they live in, as are non-academics and their work on language can be as subjected to prejudice and preconceptions, as are the comments of lay people (1993, p.16).

It can be noticed that biased views about women's inferior speech are prevalent since early times as can be seen from the views of an earlier linguist Poole (1646). He commented in his book that "masculine gender is more worthy than the feminine" (Cited in Karlsson, 2007). Since those times, the way men talked was considered as the norm while women's speech was considered as deviant. These assumptions seem to change little with time as can be seen from the views of Cheri Kramaræ who has described male and female speech as follows:

English speakers believe and linguists appear to be no exception that men's speech is forceful, efficient, blunt, authoritative, serious, effective and masterful; they believe that women's speech is weak, trivial, inefficient, tentative, hesitant, hyper polite, euphemistic and is often marked by gossip and gibberish (Kramaræ, 1977, p.43-56).

Review of literature makes it clear that if there are any differences in the speech of men and women at all, there are certain reasons for it. One of the plausible reasons for the supposed speech differences in both sexes is the difference of literacy level. History shows that it was only women from middle classes and above who were likely to be literate during the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Literate here means in the vernacular language. Classical languages like Greek and Latin were not considered necessary for females to learn and only males would learn them, thus limiting female's horizon of education. In

this regard, Coates (1993, 28) states that even Milton, the famous poet, when asked whether his daughters would learn other languages beside English replied, “One tongue is sufficient for a woman”. She further highlights this point and argues that before 19<sup>th</sup> century, women were denied access to any form of higher education beyond the skills of reading and writing (p.28-29).

Different approaches are used by linguists as possible explanations for the differences in the speech of men and women. These approaches are discussed briefly in the upcoming section.

## **2.2 Different Approaches**

The approaches used to study language and gender are briefly discussed here.

### **2.2.1 The Deficit Approach**

The first of the four key approaches to the study of language and gender is the Deficit Approach. Initiated in the early 1970s, this approach sees women as disadvantaged language users, with their language deviating from the male norm. This theory was propounded by Robin Lakoff (1975). The overall picture which emerges from her study is that women’s speech is generally inferior to men’s and reflects their sense of personal and social inferiority.

### **2.2.2 The Dominance Approach**

The second approach is the Dominance Approach. It stands for men’s dominance over women in speech and states that women’s submissive role in society is reflected through their language. Talbot (1998, p.123) states that this approach can be viewed along with the Difference Approach and that the two approaches provided an early model for the analysis of language and gender in social sciences.

### **2.2.3 The Difference Approach**

The third approach is called the Difference Approach. It was propounded by Deborah Tannen (1990, p.123). She believes that men and women grow up in different

subcultures with different social organizations and different rules for speaking. Supporters of this model emphasize differences in male and female speech and overlook similarities. Examples are writers like John Gray (Men are From Mars: Women Are From Venus, 1992) and Deborah Tannen (You Just Don't Understand, 1990). They assert that men and women develop different speech styles during their respective socialization from early childhood and the way they are brought up.

The famous Danish linguist Otto Jespersen (1922) was of the view that men use many expressions which women understand but never pronounce themselves. Similarly women have words or phrases which men never use, or would be laughed to scorn (Cited in Coates, 1993). Another linguist Crawford (1995, p.2-5) believes that men and women are fated to misunderstand each other unless they recognize their deeply socialized differences. She further adds that these differences are located within individuals and include differences in personality, traits, skills, beliefs and attitudes. The researcher aims to explore such views and differences through interviews and questionnaires, and intends to see whether such differences really exist and if so, what their effects are.

#### **2.2.4 The Discourse Approach**

Although there is a great deal of overlap between the three approaches mentioned above, yet they in fact, paved the way for a great deal of early work in the field of language and gender. Linguists now prefer a *discourse* based approach to study language and gender relationships. In this approach, emphasis is laid on the way in which discourse helps to construct gender identities as Cameron states:

Sociolinguists traditionally assume that people talk the way they do because of who they are...but the post modernist approach suggests that people are who they are because of (among other things) the way they talk (Cited in White, 2004).

This new approach displays more interest in men and masculinities and it is more interdisciplinary, focusing on many areas like sociology, psychology and cultural studies. (The current study has followed this model).

Before discussing major research studies and their outcomes, the importance of speech in organizational settings needs to be discussed, as the current study is an attempt to study speech differences between men and women in their official settings. According to Boden, talk plays a crucial role at workplace and it is at the heart of all organizations. Through it, every day business of organizations is accomplished (1994, p.19).

According to Kendall and Tannen, interaction in the workplace is characterized by many constraints, like a history of greater male participation in most work settings especially at the higher ranks, periodic external evaluation in the form of raises, promotions, task assignments and performance reviews and a situation in which participants are required to interact regularly with others who are neither kin nor chosen affiliates (1997, p. 35).

### **2.3 Major Research Studies and their Outcomes**

American linguist Robin Lakoff carried out the groundbreaking study in the field of language and gender and her publication *Language and Women's Place* in 1975 provided a platform for the field. According to Mary Bucholtz (1990, p. 3-4), Lakoff's work has the canonical status as it remained in print continuously for over twenty-five years. She further adds that this book has played a fundamental role in the field of language and gender and has shaped our knowledge of gender in ways in which it resonates with contemporary issues in the field.

According to Lakoff (1975, p.43), two areas manifest gender inequality about females. First, language used about women, such as the discrimination evident from the words "master" and "mistress" (mistress has negative connotations unlike the word master), and second, the language used by women marking their powerlessness, which she called *Women's Language*. She has pointed towards some speech patterns which she felt constituted women's speech. Her assumptions were in consonance with theories originally proposed by Otto Jaspersen (1922, p.246). According to Lakoff, women's speech is characterized by the following aspects, which distinguish their speech from that of men's.

- Hedges: For example, sort of, kind of, I guess...



- (Super) polite forms: For example, *would you please, I'd really appreciate it if...*
- Tag questions: For example, *don't you, isn't it*
- Use of intensifiers: For example, *so* and *very*,
- Empty adjectives: For example, *divine, charming, sweet, adorable*
- Hypercorrect grammar and pronunciation
- Lack of sense of humour
- Apologize more: For example, *I am sorry, But I think that,*
- Special vocabulary (specialized colour terms, sewing, fashion)
- Indirect requests: For example, *oh I am so thirsty* (Indirectly asking for a drink).

Lakoff has listed reasons for the distinctive features of women's. For Example, she says that women use more hedges because they are socialized to believe that asserting themselves strongly is not nice or ladylike behaviour. Similarly, she asserted that women use intensifiers to persuade their addressee to take them seriously (1975, p.54).

Here, we must notice that language is a means to reflect the current linguistic trends in a society. The situation may be different now as compared to the situation in 1975. Number of women using hedges or intensifiers may have decreased or vice versa. Lakoff's work was both criticized and praised by linguists. The famous linguist Janet Holmes (1997, p.316-317) on the one hand criticized Lakoff by arguing that she based her writings on her intuition and observations and on the other, praised her as Lakoff provided a platform for the field of language and gender. Holmes further added that Lakoff identified many linguistic features which were unified by their common function. She argues that other researchers ignored such functional coherence and produced an arbitrary conglomerate of forms.

According to Paulston and Tucker (2003, p.321), Lakoff was true when she said that her study represents the speech of only a small sub-part of a community but it has been of use in indicating directions for further research in this area, in providing a basis for comparison, a means for discovering what is universal in her data and what is not and why. Later, it was proved that what she said was true as her research provided a basis for further studies.

Now, some research studies will be briefly summarized including aspects of language on which, the researcher has based her questionnaire.

### **2.3.1 Use of Prestige Forms and Standard Language**

Research focusing the use of prestige forms by men and women differs. Some researchers like Peter Trudgill (1974) have asserted that women's speech is closer to standard language of higher prestige. He has given the reason for this difference also. He believes that as women are not rated by their occupations, so other signals of status including speech are important while judging their language. He has suggested that since women's social status is less secure as compared to men, so they are evaluated by their appearance and they need to use prestige forms as a need of securing and signalling their social status. Trudgill also believes that women are better in verbal skills (p.43-48). He opine that women have less power, cannot attain influence and respect in ways men can do, so they are forced to use symbolic means including language as a way of presenting an image of themselves as individuals worthy of respect. In this respect, many linguists including Tannen seem to conform to the views put forward by Lakoff.

As far as aspect of politeness in speech is concerned, Dale Spender (1980) argues that women are more polite, less forceful and linguistically more correct participants. She has criticized the manner in which researches are analyzed. As Lakoff and Otto Jaspersen argued that women use intensifiers more often than men do, Spender has challenged the classification of intensifiers and hyperboles. According to her, the result of the research depends on whether a man makes an utterance or a woman. If a woman makes the utterance, one finds the word to be an intensifier and if it is made by a man, the word will be a hyperbole (p.32-39).

### **2.3.2 Use of Hedges and Tag Questions**

Many researchers tested Lakoff's claim that women use more tag questions and some found that experimental data often did not confirm Lakoff's judgments. In this context, one study is very important which was carried out by O' Barr and Atkins in 1980. In their

article "*Women's Language or Powerless Language*", they published the results of their courtroom study, which was carried out for thirty months, observing the ten basic speech differences between men and women that Robin Lakoff had proposed. They found that her assumptions were empirically wrong. They discovered that the differences highlighted by Lakoff and her supporters were not related to gender but to powerlessness, and according to them, any of the sex could be powerless, man or woman, depending on their social status (p. 2-13).

Hedges are linguistic forms such as *I think, I am sure, you know, sort of* etc. Lakoff (1975, p.54) argues that women use more hedges as compared to men and believes that it is because they are uncertain and unassertive while speaking but it is a claim based on no empirical evidence. The purpose of tag questions as mentioned by Lakoff, to signal lack of confidence and uncertainty, is also refuted by later researchers. One such example is of Janet Holmes (1984). She analyzed the use of hedges and distinguished between many functions of hedges like requesting for information, showing concern for the addressee and ensuring smooth interaction. Her findings actually challenged Lakoff's assertion that the use of hedges in females speech stands for uncertainty only.

### **2.3.3 Talkativeness**

Proverbs and sayings in many languages express the view that women are more talkative. However, many researchers claim that the case is opposite and actually, men speak more. Holmes in this context has discussed a study carried out by two Canadian researchers Deborah James and Janice Drakich (1998), who reviewed 63 studies examining the amount of talk used by American men and women in different contexts. Women talked more in only two studies (Cited in Bauer and Trudgill, 1998). According to some linguists, talkativeness is related to social status and men talk more because they enjoy higher status in society. Janet Holmes (1984, p.46) in this context has even proposed to use a stopwatch to calculate the time taken by each sex in conversation as she is convinced that men talk more than women do. She believes that this is because men think that participating verbally will enhance their status and according to Holmes, men are more concerned about asserting their status and power.

Among many such studies focusing talkativeness is Spender's study. Her analysis was very simple. She just counted the minutes taken by each speaker. Although females participating in the research were academic feminists and they thought that they had taken more talking time, results revealed that men took more talking time than women did. Spender also points towards an important aspect regarding women being labelled as chatterboxes. She talks about "gender minefield". She argues that what is permitted for females is not always clear. According to her, when women give their opinions, they are regarded as rude, pushy and aggressive while men who give their opinions are regarded as masterful and forceful. Spender comments on this situation as follows "So women are damned if they do and damned if they do not; damned if they are assertive and damned if they are supportive, hesitant, polite and talk like women"(1980, p.9-21). So, this is the other side of the picture. When we talk of the cultural stereotype of women's talkativeness, in the background is the image of a silent woman presented as an ideal. There is a famous English Proverb "Silence is the best ornament of a woman". This model of silent woman is still presented to girls and teachers encourage girls with a quiet behaviour. Commenting on this situation, Spender asserts that talkativeness of a woman has been gauged in comparison not with men but with silence. She adds that when silence is the desired state for women, then any talk in which women engage is too much (1980, p.42).

### **2.3.4 Politeness, Swearing and Taboo Language**

Before discussing the belief that women's language is more polite as compared to men, one need to know what politeness actually means. Brown and Levinson (1987) define politeness in terms of the concept of face. They opine that we avoid the negative face of others by accompanying requests with apologies. For example, if someone needs milk, then instead of saying "give me some milk", a polite request would be made like; "I am very sorry to bother you but I have run out of milk. Could you possibly lend me half a pint?"(p.27). Such a request makes it possible for the person who is asking to avoid negative face. Similarly, they believe that we satisfy the positive face wants of others by greeting them when we see them; asking them how they are, expressing admiration and approval for what they have been doing and for what they feel about things. To ignore

someone in any social setting is to act impolitely. They believe that women use more polite speech as compared to men. According to them, women's use of language as politeness strategy is a result of their powerlessness (1987, p.30). This view affirms Lakoff's (1975, p.54) claim that women use language to reflect their subordinate position.

Taboo operates in all societies, prohibiting certain linguistic terms in a society. This is a part of structure that maintains social order in society. Jennifer Coates (1993, p.34) states that in Britain, people grow up to believe that women gossip, that men swear more than women, that women are more polite and so on. She opines that research in these areas often directly challenges the cultural stereotypes as much of the folklore associated with male/female speech patterns turns out to be false. She further asserts that the folk linguistic belief that men swear more and use taboo words is also widespread. She has given the example of Danish linguist Otto Jespersen who claimed that women have an intrinsic shrinking from coarse and gross expressions and a preference for refined, veiled, and indirect expressions.

The folk linguistic belief that women avoid swearing and taboo words is very old as can be seen in Elyot's strictures on the upbringing of noblemen's children *The Governour* (1531). Elyot advises that a child of a Gentleman should be brought up by women who will not permit any *wanton* or *uncleane* word to be spoken in the child's presence. To make sure that the child may not hear such word, he urges that no man should be allowed into the nursery (Cited in Coates, 1993). Earlier, Lakoff (1975, p.55) has also expressed the same view by stating that women do not use off-colour or indelicate expressions.

Ronald Wardaugh argues that society actually exerts pressure on the sexes to talk and gesture in specified manners. He believes that the reason behind the polite language of women or their avoiding taboo words is that sometimes one variety is forbidden to one sex and nearly always that sex is female (1992, p.318). Such as in African tribes and some Eastern communities, a female is not allowed to call her husband by her name. Wardaugh comments that such practices are related to the social organizations and norms

of the concerned community and they often lead to women being treated in ways that seem strange to outsiders.

The above discussion shows that majority of the linguists are of the view that female speech is more refined and polite while male speech more coarse and men use more taboo words as compared to women.

### **2.3.5 Interruptions**

According to Coates (1993, p.106), interruptions are violations of turn taking rules of conversation. Next speaker begins to speak while current speaker is still speaking, at a point in current speaker's turn that cannot be defined as the last word. Zimmerman and West (1975) carried out their research, taping 31 conversations involving participants in coffee shops, drug stores and other public places at the campus of the University of California. They found that more interruptions occurred in mixed-sex than in single-sex conversation. They based their research on empirical investigation and not on intuition and observation like Lakoff. In addition, they focused not only on women's inadequacy but on men's oppressive speaking behaviour too. They argued that in interrupting women, men are denying their equal status as conversational partners. They related this interactional behaviour to the greater degree of power available to men, which led to conclude their findings as "there are definite ways in which the power and dominance enjoyed by men in other contexts is exercised in their conversational interaction with women" (Cited in Coates, 1993).

Paulston and Tucker (2003, p.218) have pointed towards another aspect while carrying out research on interruptions. They assert that the phenomenon commonly referred to as interruption is a paradigm case of ambiguity between power and solidarity. They believe that balance and symmetry plays an important role in determining whether an overlap becomes an interruption in the negative sense. According to them, if one speaker repeatedly overlaps and another repeatedly gives way, the resulting communication is unbalanced and the effect is domination, but if both speakers avoid overlap equally, there is symmetry and no domination and so it cannot be termed as interruption.

### **2.3.6 Importance of Context and Community of Practice**

Some linguists are of the view that setting or context in language and gender research is very important. According to Mc-Connel-Ginet, Ruth, and Furman, the problem in language and gender research is that the research is isolated from the social practices in which it is produced, thus confusing the way in which language and gender is related to each other. They have proposed an approach called Community of Practice Approach. According to this approach, the best way to examine the relationship between language and gender is to analyze it within a specific context. (1980, p.462). They define Community of Practice Model as an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavour and common practices emerge in the course of this mutual endeavour (p. 464).

Many linguists have employed this approach. O'Barr & Atkins (1980) examined the relationship between language and gender in courtroom discourse. Mullany (2004) analyzed political interviews to examine the relation between language, gender and politeness. (The present study also aims to explore the role gender plays in shaping language in a professional setting).

### **2.3.7 Insults and Verbal Abuse**

Regarding insults and verbal abuse, there are different perceptions among linguists but this is a common belief that the language of men and women differs in this respect also. Linguists believe that men do not take insults or verbal abuse very seriously unlike women. Holmes (1997, p.333) believed that for men, mock insults and abuse serve the same function, that is, expressing solidarity and maintaining social relationships, as compliments and greeting comments serve for women.

Another linguist Crawford (1995, p.86) holds the same opinion. She asserts that verbal insult is an established and ritual speech activity in research studies in which all-male interactions are observed. She further adds that such differences in speech help us to understand why it is said that men and women belong to different cultural groups.

### **2.3.8 Indirectness**

As far as connotation related to directness and indirectness is concerned, Paulston and Tucker (2003, p.216) argue that most Americans believe that directness is aligned with power while indirectness means dishonesty and subservience and that indirectness in speech is mostly related to women. However, research shows that the American tendency to associate indirectness with female style is not universal. Tannen (2003) conducted research on American men and women of the same cultural and geographical background. The results showed directness in speech of males and females in the same ratio. Perhaps more striking is the finding of Keenan (1974) of Malagasy speaking village on the island of Madagascar where women are direct and men indirect. Women in this tribe handle the bargaining in the market and deal with family arguments and conflicts. Nevertheless, indirectness is highly valued in the tribe. The direct information oriented style, so highly prized in western society, is considered rude and feminine (Cited in Wardaugh, 1992). It is clear that the speech patterns displayed by these tribesmen are displayed by women in many Western societies. So the concepts about women's and men's speech patterns cannot be always generalized. We can conclude that indirectness in itself is not a strategy of subordination and can be used by either sex. In addition, not gender alone is the determining factor behind speech differences as the interpretation of any utterance and its response depends on the setting, on individuals, their status, and their relationship to each other and on linguistic conventions prevalent in a society.

As far as debate about women's indirectness at workplace is concerned, Tannen (1994, p.34) asserts that the behaviour that can be seen by others as lack of confidence may be the indirect way of giving orders by women. Several studies (Coates, 1993; Tannen, 1994; Spender, 1980) have shown that women tend to soften their demands and statements, whereas men tend to be more direct.

There is also this debate that English is a sexist language. Sexism in a language means how language expresses negative and positive stereotypes related to men and women. Practically, research in this area is largely focused on how language conveys negative stereotypes about women and Lakoff has given many examples of sexist words in her work. However, the researcher is not going to probe into the details and discuss the recent



trends in print and electronic media to promote a neutral language, as it is not the focus of the study.

### **2.3.9 Nods and Asking Questions**

There are different perceptions about nods used during a conversation. Researchers like Maltz and Borker (1982) claim that nods like *hmm* a woman use, normally means *I am listening* while nods in the case of male speech means *I am agreeing*. Consequently men often believe that women are always agreeing with them and when they have to see a different response on part of the women, they say that it is impossible to tell what a woman really thinks. Women on the other hand, also seem to misinterpret nods made by men and complain that men never seem to be listening. Commenting on this situation, Maltz and Borker (1982, p.45) argue that the speech differences of men and women show that they come from different subcultures, that they have learnt to speak differently and so when they communicate with each other, it often leads to miscommunication and confusion.

There are different views about the intentions behind asking questions in both genders. According to Preisler (1986, p.56), men ask questions to request for information while women view questioning as a tool for conversational maintenance. He further adds that women take any sign of aggression as personally directed, negative and disruptive and men take verbal aggression as a sign of organizing conversations. He opines that the attitude towards problem solving and seeking advice also differs. According to him, researchers believe that women tend to discuss, share and seek reassurance and sympathize when advice is sought from them while men look for solutions, give advice and even lecture to their audiences.

### **2.3.10 Humour**

Sense of humour is a highly valued quality and a source of debates since decades. It has many functions especially at workplace. One of its functions is to keep the environment of the workplace tension free and it is also a source to maintain good relationship with colleagues and even the boss (provided the user knows the sensitivity of using it with caution when in front of the boss). Humour is displayed in different ways among men and women. Researchers (Tannen, 1990) believe that men's style of humour is usually teasing while women's style is self-mocking. Women may interpret men's style of humour as hostile while men often mistake women's style as being self depreciating, thus rendering them under confident and incompetent. According to these researchers, earlier studies have predicted that women's humour is self-directed while men's humour is directed towards others and that mostly at workplace; men exhibit more sense of humour as compared to women.

### **2.4 Miscommunication at Workplace**

Many linguists believe that differences in the speech of men and women at workplace lead to misunderstanding and confusion. Tannen is one such example. Inspired by Lakoff, this linguist did a lot of research on language and gender at workplace. She wrote many bestseller books like *Talking from 9 to 5: Women and Men at Work* (1994) and *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation* (1990). She opines that women and men though equal, are irreducibly different from each other. Her main argument is that women speak and hear a language of connection and intimacy while men speak and hear a language of aggression and independence. She believes that strategies employed by men and women when indulged in conversation, are different and so are their intentions. She has listed a number of examples and situations to prove her point. According to her, women apologize more at workplace as it serves as conversational smoother and women are more concerned to facilitate the conversation as compared to men (1994). It does not always mean that women are to be blamed for something. She also asserts that women and men differ at workplace regarding their response towards a problem, which she labels as "Trouble Talk" (1994, p.71-72). According to her, when a

woman shares her problem with a female colleague, the listener is supposed to share a similar complaint and sympathize with her while men take trouble talk as literal complaints that just need immediate solution. So her views in this respect are similar to Preisler (1986). Tannen (1994) also believes that women, because of their gender are considered less competent as compared to their male counterparts. Her work, *talking from 9 to 5* is full of such instances. She argues that people at managerial posts are valued highly if they are males. Women, on the other hand, do not get a position of authority and they never get a chance of promotion because they do not act as if they want or deserve it unless others grant them. She also stresses that women if get an authority position, have a difficult time practicing their power. They downplay their authority in order to be on equal footing with their subordinates (1994, p.160-203). According to her, if a female boss is aggressive, other females find her bossy and unapproachable, leading to uncomfortable workplace environment. So female bosses downplay their authority but male bosses do not. "Glass ceiling" is another problem which according to Tannen (p.273), is faced by women at workplace. According to her, glass ceiling is an invisible barrier that prevents women from achieving top positions in the workplace. The reason in her view is because people undermine women on the basis of their conversational style. The solution in Tannen's view is that both genders should practice mutual tolerance and adjustment while speaking to each other (p.240).

Critics though do not deny the differences in the speech of men and women but they have criticized the focus on miscommunication in interactions between men and women. They have argued that Tannen has overlooked the power dimension in such interactions and just focused on gender and that in her attempt to avoid any negative assessment of men's speaking styles, Tannen is surely cementing patriarchy (Cameron, 2007).

Jennifer Coates (1988, p.95) is different from Tannen in her approach as she occupies a feminist position and argues that interpretation of women and men's speech related to power and male dominance has given rise to a rather negative view of women's speech. According to her, early work on women's language has labelled women's speech as tentative and powerless (Jaspersen 1922, Lakoff 1975), but more recently as a reaction,

there has been a move to revalue women's talk positively using terms such as "cooperative".

## **2.5 Role of other Factors on Speech Differences**

It seems that the main reason behind these speech differences is the way men and women are brought up. If the child rearing practices and role differentiation of men and women are made less sexist, we can expect less language differences. Therefore, the problem seems not to be a linguistic rather a cultural one. If there are any differences in the speech of men and women, they seem to be related to the culture and norms. Recently, many steps are taken to eradicate sexism in language and make neutral words, such as, to replace *chairman* by *chairperson*, *policeman* by *police officer*. However, the root cause lies in the cultural setup. In societies where there is less social stratification and less difference in the roles of males and females, we can expect fewer differences in their language. The second point is that gender is but one factor that leads towards such differences. Other factors include education, social class, religion, age, societal norms etc. Bem (1993, p.87) has argued that male female difference is superimposed on so many aspects of the social world and thus, a cultural connection is forged between sex and every other aspect of human experience, including modes of dress and social roles and even ways of expressing emotions. He further adds that gender has been imposed on us a lens. According to him, the error seems to lie in viewing language and gender as simply bipolar distinctions and in believing that there are inherent differences in the speech of men and women.

This belief is further strengthened by overgeneralizations drawn from research carried out on language samples taken from specific contexts. The idea that gender means same across the communities and works independently of social identities should be abandoned. Tannen (1993) believes that in order to come out of this dilemma, future generations will focus more on sophisticated understanding of how language works in conversational interaction and that they will consider language holistically rather as a bundle of isolated variables. She further adds that they will take into account research done in a range of cultural settings thus deepening our understanding of gender, language and the interaction between them (p.34).

## **2.6 Implications of Lakoff's Views on Popular Literature**

In the past few years, a genre of “verbal hygiene” advice has emerged because of assumptions advocated by Lakoff, Tannen and their school, addressing specifically to women and urging them to deal with their “problems in communication”. According to Cameron (1995), verbal hygiene is a collective term for a diverse set of linguistic practices based on a conviction that some ways of language are functionally, aesthetically or morally preferable to others. She states that verbal hygiene comes in two forms; career advice which aims to improve the so-called linguistic deficiencies of women, and relationship advice which deals with communication difficulties in male female interactions. Career advice tells women that they are not fulfilling their potential because of the way they use language and if they want to go ahead in their career, they should adopt the speech of men. This advice comes in many forms like one to one consultancy, training courses and seminars, books, magazines, articles and T.V. programmes. For example, the 1990 women’s magazine *Cosmopolitan* ran an article which told women that they often fail to get respect because of their speech faults like tag questions, hedges, lack of confidence and rising intonation (Cited in Victoria, Janet & Alice, 1996). Obviously, these are all Lakoff’s assumptions. Many other magazines print articles which propagate her views, thus imposing these speech aspects on women.

Criticizing these linguists for overemphasizing women’s speech deficiencies, Cameron argues that they have provided a rationale for convincing women to submit themselves to a series of practices which are of little use and quite oppressive (Cited in Victoria et al, 1996). Such literature draws heavily on research in the field of language and gender and urges women to change their speech styles and adapt their speech to men’s style if they want to get success both in personal and professional lives.

## **2.7 Power Paradigm**

In most societies, a woman achieves status through her father or husband’s position. The situation may have changed a little due to changes in educational level, but even then, men are mostly defined in terms of what they do in society and women in terms of the men they are related to. It is true that in many societies, the criteria and norms for both

sexes are different. A woman is expected to use speech that is more refined and to make fewer mistakes as compared to a man. We are focusing here specifically on language differences; otherwise, the standards are different in many other aspects as dress code for females in most societies is stricter. They face more restrictions in pursuing careers and going out. If a man has a relationship with a woman, it is not considered that bad but if a woman has any such relationship, she is severely condemned in many societies. Therefore, speech difference is just one aspect of this power paradigm that is manifested in many other forms. As mentioned earlier, as long as these differences in status and allocation of roles are present, mere efforts to reduce sexism in language and to produce gender-neutral words cannot eliminate these speech differences.

## **2.8 Criticism on Modes of Research in Language and Gender**

Cameron in an article *What Language Barrier* has shown her scepticism regarding the worth of claims made about the speech differences in men and women. She asserts that researchers highlight differences and neglect similarities and the idea that men and women speak different language is a widespread but false belief. She expresses her concern that these language myths and stereotypes shape our beliefs and influence our actions and that workplace is a domain where these beliefs can have detrimental effects (Cameron, 2007).

According to her, we are stereotypically expecting in any research that there will be differences in men and women's speech. She argues that if a study finds a significant difference between male and female speech, it is considered a positive finding and has a good chance of being published while a study that finds no significant difference is less likely to be published. Cameron has also criticized the sources from where people find information about these speech differences. She believes that sometimes headlines trumpet the so-called facts that on investigation have no basis at all. She has given the example of a 2006 popular science book *The Female Brain*. The writer of this book

claimed that women on average utter 20,000 words per day while men utter only 7,000. According to Cameron, it confirmed the already popular belief that women are more talkative and this assumption was reported around the world. "Mark Lieberman, a professor of phonetics found that there was no actual research behind this claim and it was just guesswork. After this fact was brought into the knowledge of the author of that book, she confessed that her claim was not supported by evidence and promised that it would be deleted from future editions" (2007). After citing this example, Cameron comments that even after confessing, the damage had already been done and the much-publicized assumption that women talk three times more than men would linger in people's memories and get recycled in their conversations while the little publicized retraction would make negligible effect.

Another aspect is to generalize the findings of a study. As it is difficult to generalize findings on the basis of one study, these days linguists are using a method called Meta-Analysis. Meta-Analysis is a statistical technique that allows the analyst to collate many different research findings and draw overall conclusions from them. As different studies vary because of context, method, number of people investigated etc, so Meta-Analysis enables one to aggregate the various results and calculate the overall result. Janet S Hyde (2005), a psychologist and specialist in Meta-Analysis, used this technique to review a large number of studies concerned with all kinds of male female differences. In almost every case, the overall difference was either small or close to zero. Hyde and her colleague Marcia Linn carried out Meta-Analysis of a research dealing specifically with gender differences in verbal ability. The conclusion they came to was that the speech difference between men and women was "about one-tenth of one standard deviation", statistically is negligible (Cited in Cameron, 2007).

## **2.9 Conclusion**

The above discussion leads to the conclusion that language and gender is a field that is proliferating after 1970s. It has passed through many phases, from the linguistic models in which they used different models and approaches and linked reasons behind gender based language differences to dominance or deficit or other models. After Lakoff's work, a great deal of research was carried out in this field. Focusing her work, linguists came up

with varied results, sometimes confirming and at other times, challenging the claims put forward by her. However, this process became a source to diversify this initially secluded field. Now linguists are clearer as not to generalize results and to consider other factors and settings (Community of Practice Model) while carrying out research. Debates have also shown how linguistic literature can shape up the belief of the masses and influence media (verbal hygiene).

As Cameron has mentioned that some linguists generalize the results, or Lakoff was accused of following intuition by Holmes and some other researchers, or as Bem has pointed out that some linguists consider gender as a lense; considering these loopholes found in the research of earlier linguists and broadening the horizon of language and gender can open up new avenues in the field and can make it more practical and helpful especially in the domain of interpersonal communication skills.



### **3. Research Methodology**

In this chapter, methods used for data collection and analysis are discussed. The present research is a case study and focuses on linguistic differences based on gender. Case study is a tool used in research when an in-depth knowledge or information is required. It is actually an empirical enquiry which investigates a phenomenon within its real life context. Anderson (1993, 153-159) sees case studies as being concerned with how and why things happen, allowing the investigation of contextual realities and the differences between what was planned and what actually occurred. Case study is not intended as a study of the entire organization. Rather it is intended to focus on a particular issue, feature or unit of analysis. Case study is commonly used in different fields of social sciences.

#### **3.1 Strengths and Weaknesses of Using Case Study Method**

Case studies have been criticized by some as lacking scientific rigour and reliability and that they do not address the issues of generalizability (Johnson, 1994: p.89). However, there are some strengths of a case study. For example, it enables the researcher to gain a holistic view of a certain phenomenon or series of events and can provide a round picture since many sources of evidence are used (Gummesson, 1991, p.83-156). Another advantage is that case study can be useful in capturing the emergent properties of life in organizations and the ebb and flow of organizational activity, especially where it is changing very fast (Hartley, 1994: 90). Case studies also allow generalizations as the result of findings, using multiple cases which can lead to some forms of replication.

#### **3.2 Data Collection**

Combining many techniques for eliciting data in a case study actually strengthens and confirms the results. In this research study, interviews and questionnaires were used as main data collection tools.

From the start of this research, the researcher was aware that she would require both qualitative and quantitative data because this study is based on the views and opinions of people about gender based linguistic differences, and it is unlikely to get honest opinions

only through quantitative methods, so the research is a triangulation. By combining both qualitative and quantitative methods, the data can be made more authentic and the study more in-depth.

### **3.2.1 Questionnaire**

Closed ended questionnaires were used for quantitative data collection. Questions were designed based on the research in the field of language and gender and from assumptions made about the speech differences of male and female speech. Lickert scale was used for the answers so that the respondents could express how strongly they agree or disagree with the issues discussed. The options provided in Lickert scale were designed making sure that all the probable aspects in any response are covered so as to ensure maximum variability. In designing questionnaires, care was taken to provide an option if the respondent is unaware of the situation about which he/she is being questioned. Questions were designed using simple language and were arranged logically. Double questions, leading or presuming questions, hypothetical and offensive questions were avoided. In order to ensure maximum replies, the researcher tried to make the questionnaire more specific and short so that the respondents so as not to irritate the respondents by too lengthy questions. Moreover, each question was based on one dimension only (For details, see appendix 1). Questionnaires were administered with the help of respective base commanders of the bases from where data was collected. These base commanders would distribute these questionnaires in their wings and would be collected after a week or two after getting them filled by officers.

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### **3.2.2 Distribution**

Questionnaires were filled by officers from the P.A.F Base Badaber (Peshawar), the P.A.F Base Chaklala and the Air Headquarters Islamabad. SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) was used for the analysis of questionnaires. Multi-way frequency analysis test was used in SPSS for data analysis. Sample questionnaire can be viewed in the appendix 1. The respondents were chosen on the basis of access and availability.

### **3.3 Interviews**

Semi-structured interview pattern was chosen. The choice of semi-structured rather than structured interviews was employed because it offers sufficient flexibility to approach different respondents differently while still covering the same topic. Interviews were conducted at the P.A.F Base Chaklala, for which the researcher is grateful to Base Commander Chaklala and Base Commander Islamabad who made this possible. Interviewees included five male pilots, three female pilots, one female aeronautical engineer and one female from administration wing. These officers were sent by the respective base commander. They gave time to the researcher for two days for detailed interviews. Interviews of female officers were conducted first, followed by male officers the next day. Questions were similar to the questions asked in the questionnaires, as the researcher wanted to cross check the information provided by officers through questionnaires and to probe into the background reasons behind the responses. For that purpose, all questions were not closed ended, and respondents were given a free hand to express their views. As stated by Mason (2002, p.225), in qualitative interviewing, the style is conversational, flexible and fluid, and the purpose is achieved through active engagement by the interviewer and interviewee.

Interviews were tape recorded using a portable cassette recorder, to secure an accurate account of conversation and avoid losing data as it was not possible to note down everything during an interview and focus on the discussion at the same time. The researcher took notes where necessary. By explaining the questions, she also made sure that all the participants understood the questions easily and clearly and might not get confused. An effort was made not to gather vague, unclear or confusing information. For this purpose, major questions were followed by sub-questions for further probing. Though the researcher participated in the discussion, yet she took care not to guide the participants in their responses and not to influence their opinions. As Mason (P. 225) puts it, the type of questions an interviewer asks, and the way he or she listens to and interprets the answers given, undoubtedly helps to shape the nature of the knowledge produced.

### **3.4 Transcription**

The researcher recorded 120 minutes of discussion. Respondents were initially provided with a briefing about the purpose of interview and the topic so that they would be clear about it. Details and analysis of data transcribed will appear in chapter 4. The interview responses were transcribed and the researcher penned down each and every word although it took a lot of time but the researcher did not want to lose any clue or relevant detail.

### **3.5 Coding**

For coding, the whole transcribed data was read, irrelevant material was cut and each fragment of relevant information was underlined and labelled. Based on the type of responses, after reading the whole transcribed specimen, five categories were made to analyze responses. Also, an effort was made to make all-inclusive type of categories. The researcher was careful while coding the data not to project personal values and attributes. Interviews were analysed after being coded. Analysis is discussed in the next chapter.

### **3.6 Population/Sampling**

Population for questionnaires included officers from three bases i.e. Air Headquarters Islamabad, P.A.F Base Chaklala and P.A.F Base Badaber while population for interviews included officers from P.A.F Base Chaklala. There are total ten Bases around the country in which three bases were used for getting data. There are around 5000 officers in P.A.F. As far as the rationale of data obtained against the total number of officers in P.A.F is concerned, there are 538 male officers in P.A.F Base Chaklala while 27 female officers. Out of these, 26 male and 16 female officers filled the questionnaires. In P.A.F Base Badaber Peshawar, there are 8 female and 166 male officers out of which 31 male and 6 female officers filled questionnaires. In Air Headquarters Islamabad, there are 616 male and 30 female officers. Out of these, 33 male and 18 female officers filled questionnaires. Total 130 officers' filled questionnaires and ten officers gave interviews.

## **4. Data Analysis**

Two research tools, questionnaires and interviews were used to gather data for this research. Data was collected from three Air Force Bases. The researcher got back 130 filled Questionnaires from these bases. This chapter deals with description of the feedback of questionnaires and interviews.

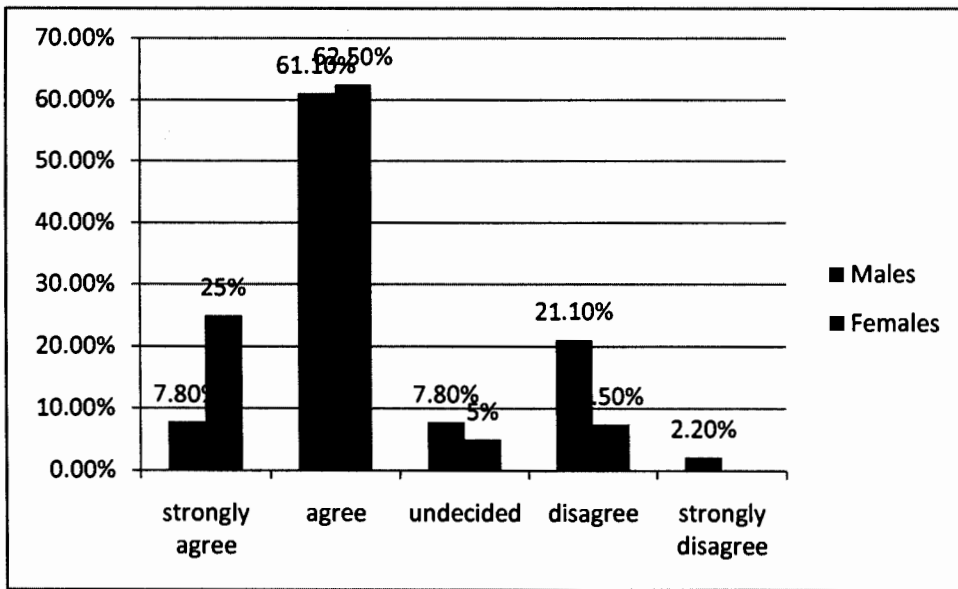
### **4.1 Interpretation of Questionnaire**

Questionnaire comprised of twenty-six questions and Lickert scale with five options was used for the quantitative measurement of the feedback of male and female officers.

The questions of the questionnaire were drawn from assumptions about gender based linguistic differences, specifically at work place that are mentioned in famous books and articles about gender and workplace interactions. For the sake of clarity, data obtained from male and female officers was analyzed separately in order to see if there is any difference of opinion on the basis of gender.

#### **4.1.1 Politeness**

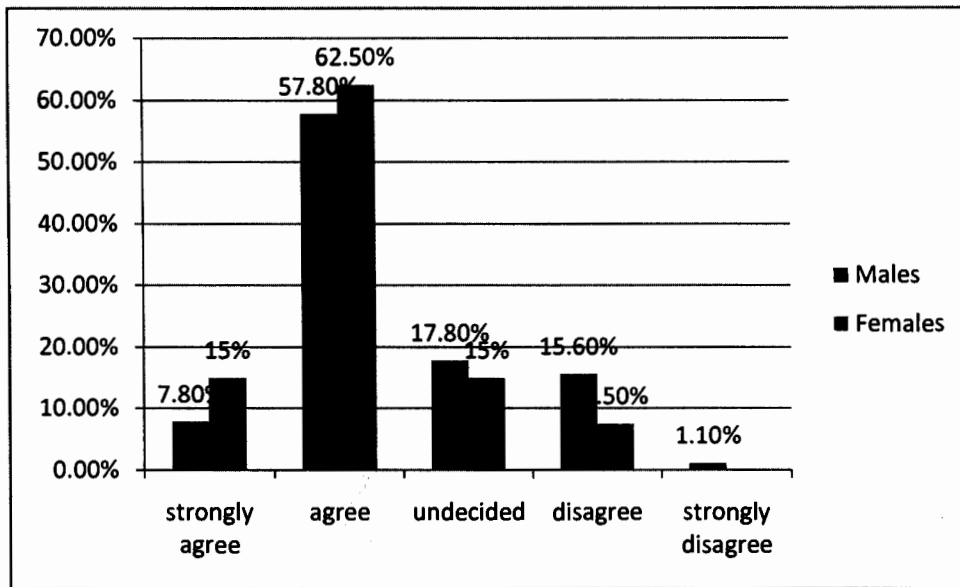
When asked whether it is true that females are more polite as compared to males in their speech, 25% females out of the total 40 officers strongly agreed with the assumption, 62.5% agreed; it was undecided matter for 5% and 7.5% females simply disagreed with the assumption. In case of males, 7.8% out of the total 90 respondents strongly agreed to the claim that females are more polite, 61.1% officers agreed, it was undecided for 7.8%, 21.1% disagreed and 2.2% strongly disagreed.



**Fig: 4.1.1 Politeness**

#### **4.1.2 Consciousness about Grammar and Pronunciation**

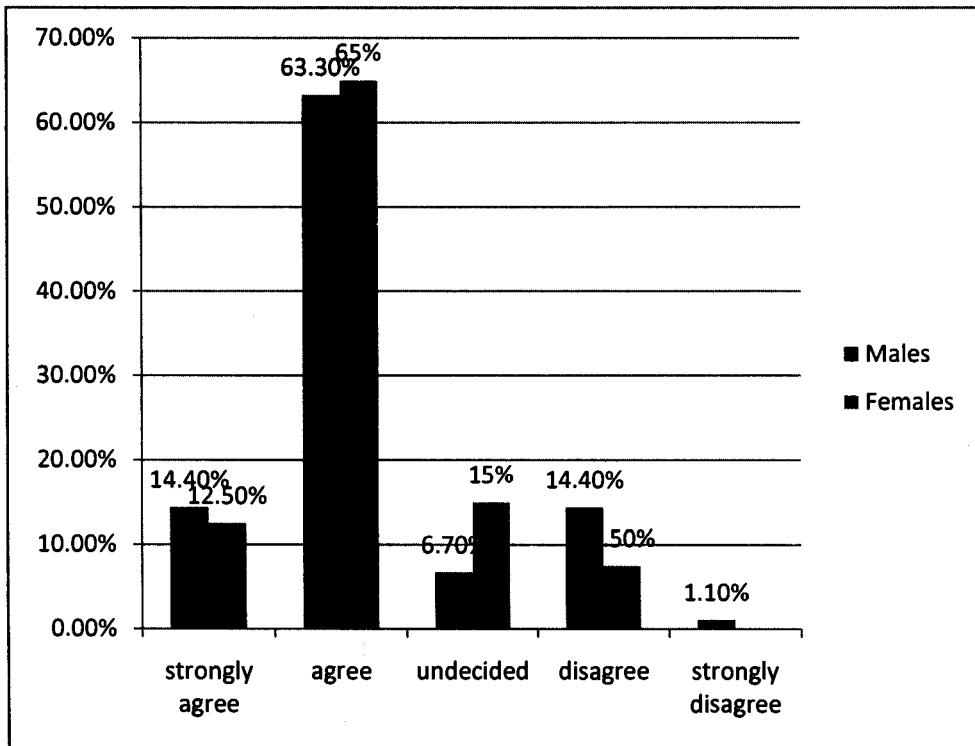
When asked whether it is true that females are more conscious about their grammar and pronunciation as compared to males, 15% females strongly agreed to the claim, 62.5% agreed, it was undecided for 15% while 7.5% simply disagreed to this claim. As far as response given by male officers is concerned, 7.8% officers strongly agreed that females are more conscious about their grammar while they speak, 57.8% agreed, 17.8% were undecided about this claim, 15.6% disagreed while 1.1% strongly disagreed to this claim.



**Fig: 4.1.2 Consciousness about Grammar and Pronunciation**

### **4.1.3 Sense of Humour**

When asked about the claim made by researchers that males exhibit more sense of humour as compared to females, 12.5% females out of 40 officers strongly agreed, 65% agreed that males exhibit more sense of humour; it was undecided for 15% while 7.5% disagreed. In case of males, 14.4% officers out of the total 90 respondents strongly agreed that males have more sense of humour, 63.3% agreed; it was undecided for 6.7%, 14.4% disagreed, while 1.1% strongly disagreed.

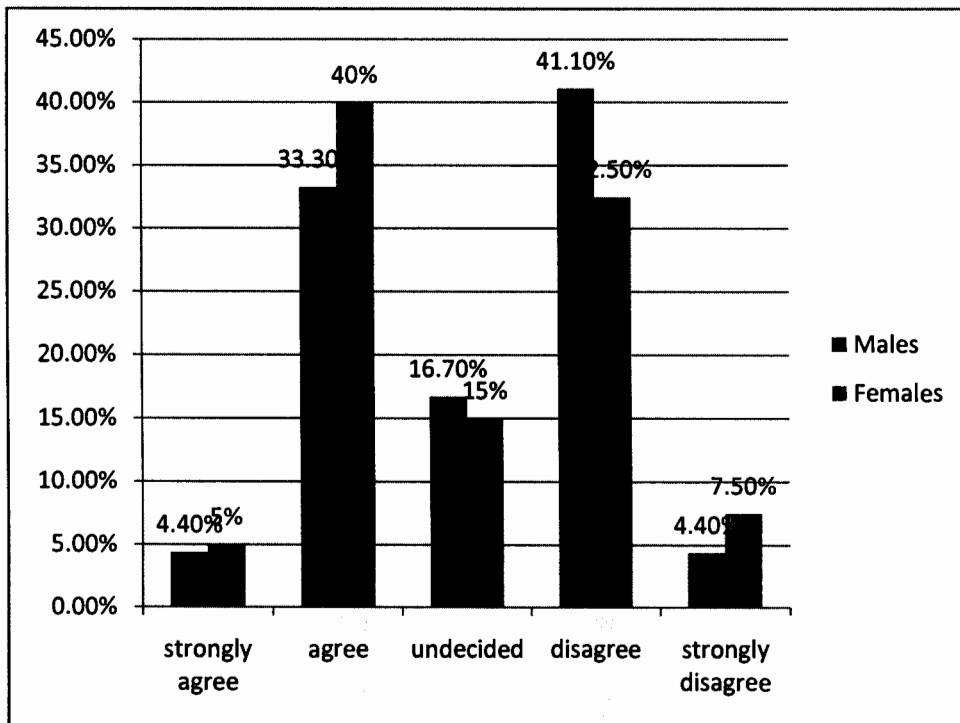


**Fig: 4.1.3 Sense of Humour**

#### **4.1.4 Apologetic Attitude**

When asked whether it is true that females are more apologetic at workplace, the response was as follows; 5% female officers strongly agreed, 40% agreed, it was undecided for 15%, 32.5% disagreed while 7.5% strongly disagreed. In case of males, 4.4% officers strongly agreed to the claim that females are more apologetic, 33.3% agreed, it was undecided for 16.7%, 41.1% disagreed while 4.4% strongly disagreed.





**Fig: 4.1.4 Apologetic Attitude**

### **4.1.5 Indirect Requests**

Among female officers, 17.5% agreed with the assumption that female officers make more indirect requests as compared to male officers, it was undecided matter for 40%, 37.5% females disagreed while 5% strongly disagreed to this assumption.

In case of males, 5.6% officers strongly agreed that females are more indirect in their speech, 44.4% agreed, it was undecided for 20%, 26.7% disagreed while 3.3% strongly disagreed.

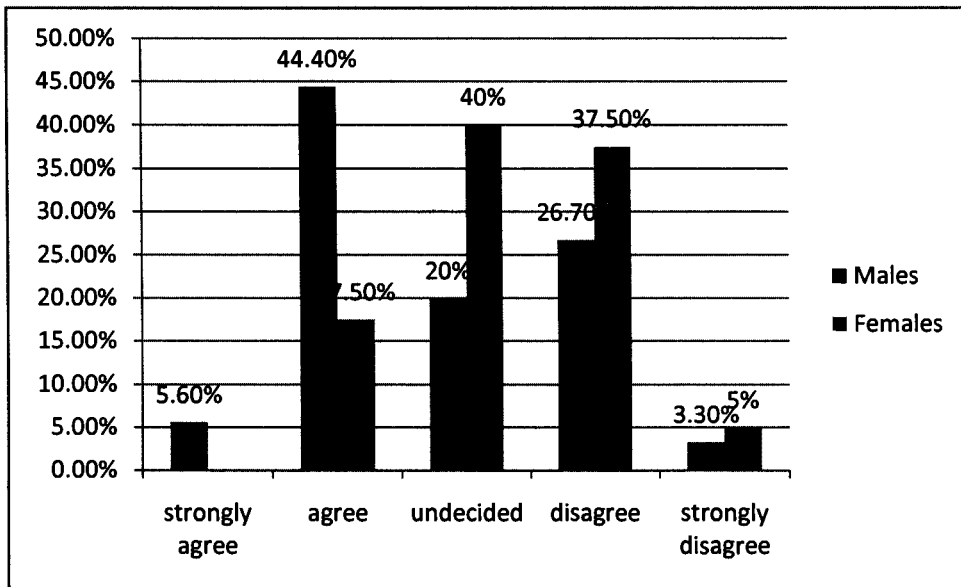


Fig: 4.1.5 Indirect Requests

#### 4.1.6 Confidence in Speech

Among female officers, 5% strongly agreed that male officers are more confident in their speech as compared to females, 40% agreed, it was undecided for 2.5%, 42.5% disagreed while 10% strongly disagreed. In case of males, 11.1%strongly agreed, 54.4% agreed, it was undecided for 4.4% while 30% disagreed.

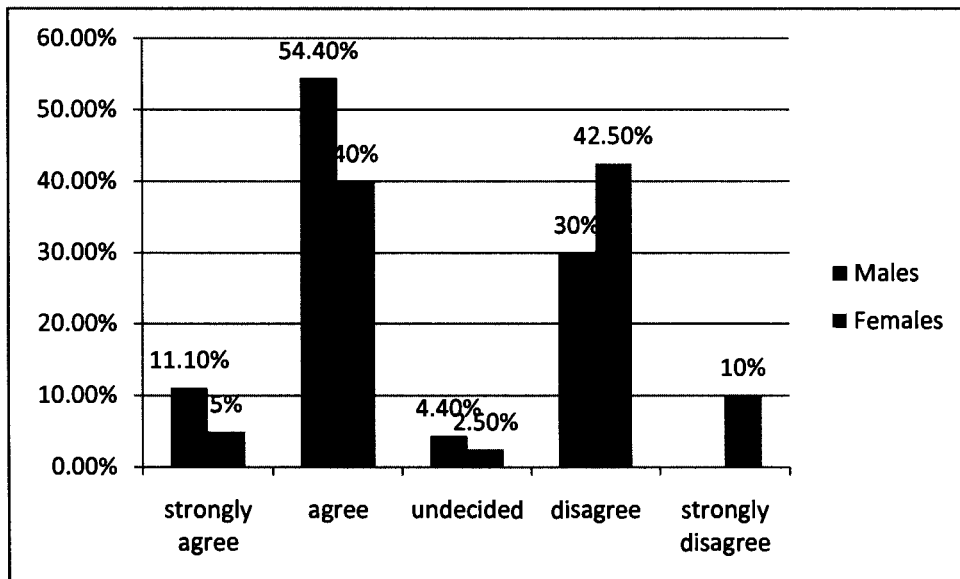


Fig: 4.1.6 Confidence in Speech

### 4.1.7 Problems in Interpreting Nods

It is an assumption that when a woman nods, it means she is listening to the conversation while when a man nods, it means he agrees to what is being said and so it leads to confusions in cross-sex communication. Females' response about this assumption was as follows:

Among females, 20% officers agreed that nods have different meaning for both genders, it was undecided for 25%, a large number of 50% disagreed, while 5% strongly disagreed. In case of males, 2.2% strongly agreed to this assumption, 28.9% agreed, it was undecided for 43.3%, 21.1% disagreed while 3.3% strongly disagreed.

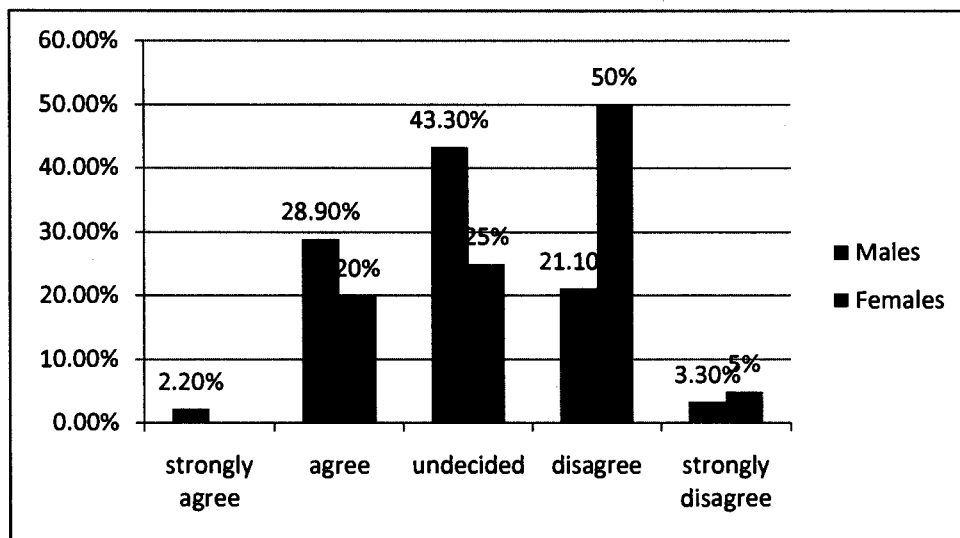
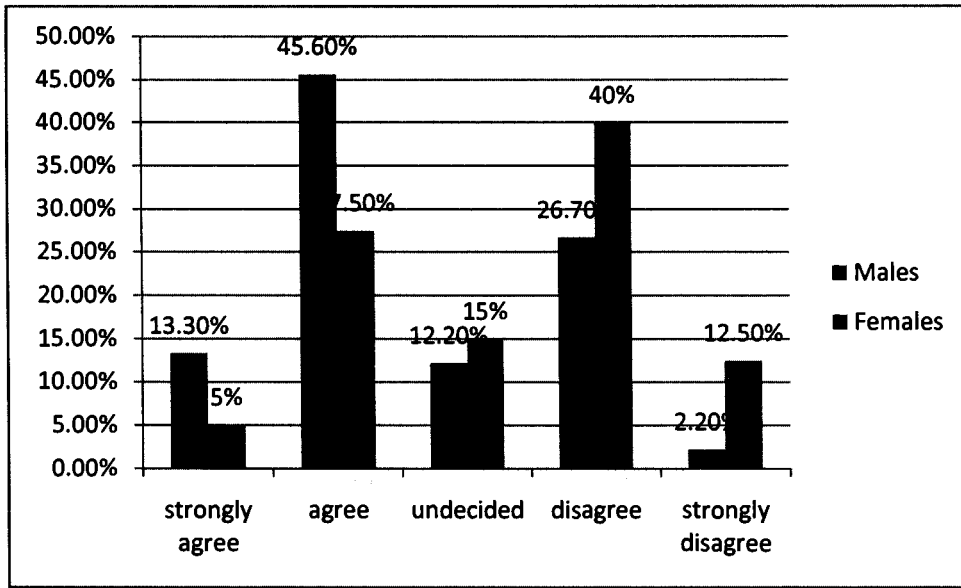


Fig: 4.1.7 Problems in Interpreting Nods

### 4.1.8 Problem Solving vs. Sympathetic Attitude

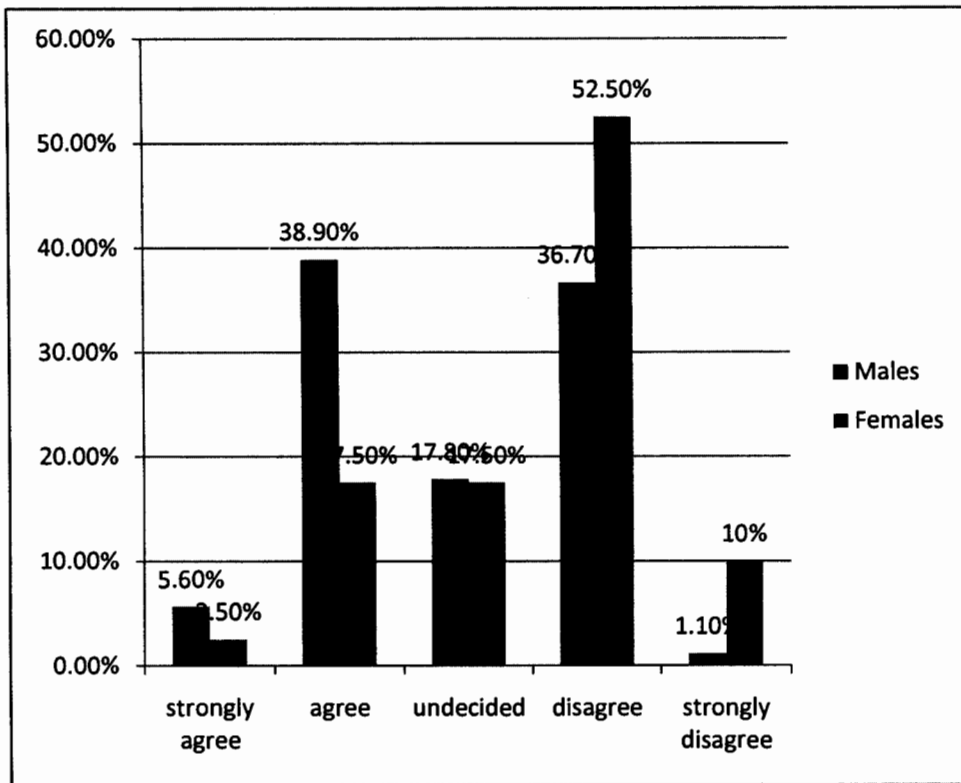
In female officers, 5% strongly agreed with the assumption that male officers show problem solving attitude when approached with a problem while female officers tend to sympathize, 27.5% agreed, it was undecided for 15%, 50% disagreed while 12.5% strongly disagreed. In case of males, 13.3% strongly agreed, 45.6% agreed, it was undecided for 12.2%, 26.7% disagreed while 2.2% strongly disagreed.



**Fig: 4.1. 8 Problem Solving vs. Sympathetic Attitude**

#### **4.1.9 Intention behind Asking Questions**

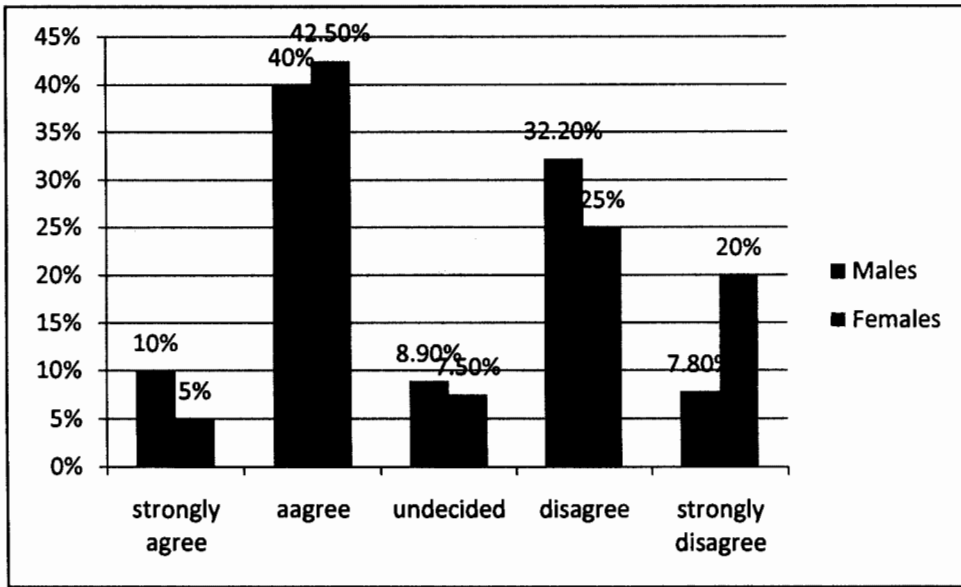
When asked whether it is true that female officers ask questions for conversational maintenance and males ask to request for information, 2.5% females strongly agreed, 17.5% agreed, it was undecided for 17.5%, 52.5% disagreed while 10% strongly disagreed. In case of males, 5.6% strongly agreed, 38.9% agreed, it was undecided for 17.8% , 36.7% disagreed while 1.1% strongly disagreed.



**Fig: 4.1.9 Intention behind Asking Questions**

#### **4.1.10 Asking for Help**

There is an assumption that males avoid to ask for help even when they need it while females frequently ask for help and do not feel hesitation. When officers were questioned about this assumption, 5% female officers strongly agreed to this assumption, a large number of 42.5% agreed, it was undecided for 7.5%, 25% disagreed while 20% strongly disagreed to this claim. In case of male officers, 10% strongly agreed, 40% agreed, it was undecided for 8.9%, 32.2% disagree while 7.8% strongly disagreed with the claim.



**Fig: 4.1.10 Asking for Help**

### **4.1.11 Interest in Details**

Regarding the claim that females are more interested to know the detail of tasks accomplished at workplace while males only want to know about the end results, following was the response: 7.5% females strongly agreed with the assumption, 40% agreed, it was undecided for 7.5%, 35% disagreed while 10% strongly disagreed. In case of males, 10% strongly agreed that females are more interested to know the details, 42.2% agreed, it was undecided for 14.4%, 31.1% disagreed while 2.2% strongly disagreed.

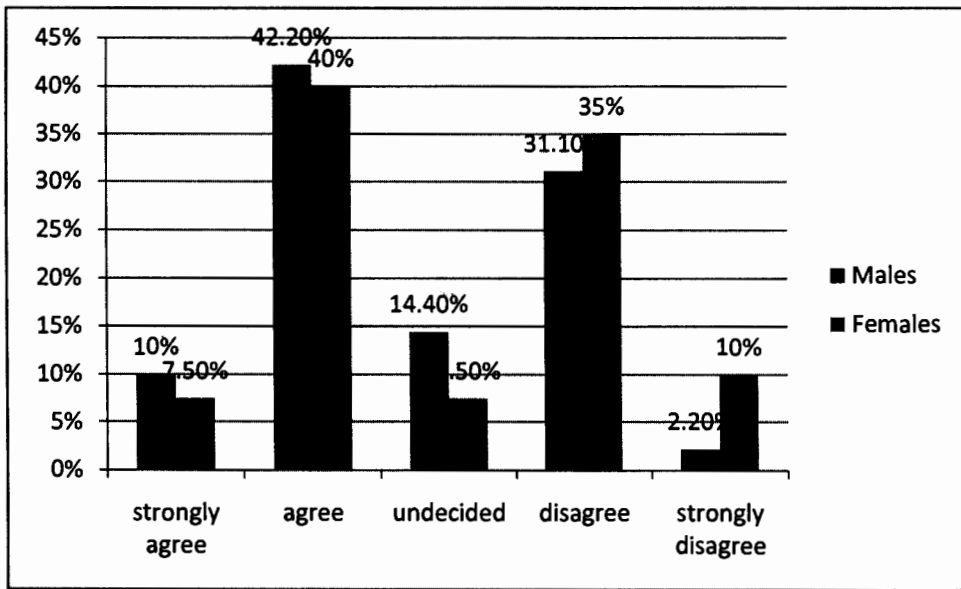


Fig: 4.1.11 Interest in Details

#### 4.1.12 Emotionality

When asked whether it is true that female officers are more emotional as compared to male officers, 5% female officers out of the total 40 strongly agreed, 27.5% agreed, it was undecided for 15%, 40% disagreed while 12.5% strongly disagreed. Among male officers, 18.9% strongly disagreed, 55.6% agreed, it was undecided for 8.9%, 15.6% disagreed while 1.1% strongly disagreed to the claim that females are more emotional.

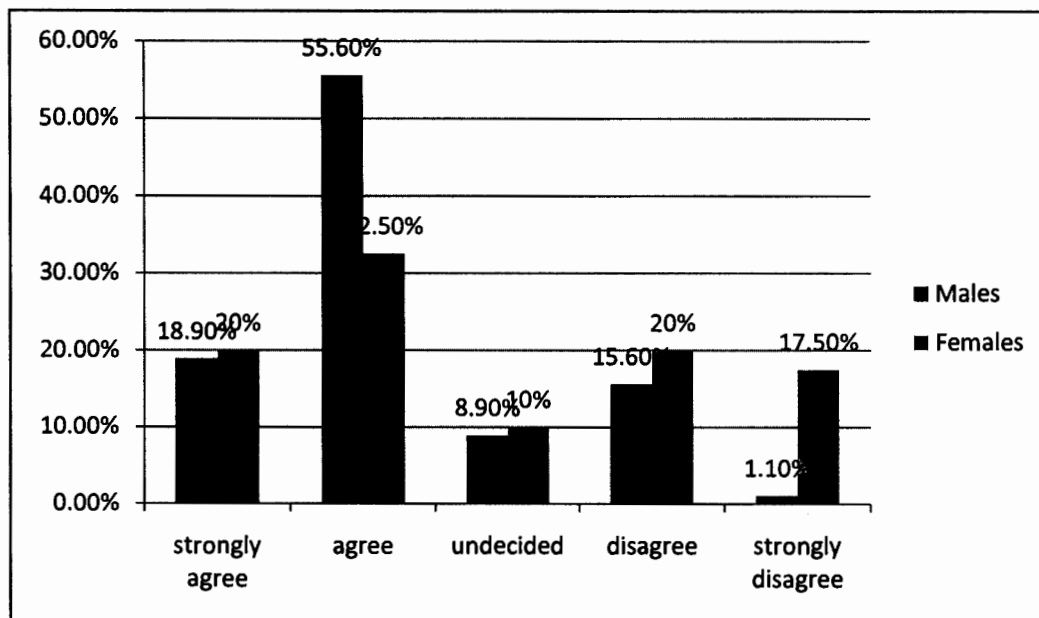


Fig: 4.1.12 Emotionality

#### 4.1.13 Verbal Rejection

In female officers, 17.5% strongly agreed that females are more sensitive to insults and verbal rejection, 45% agreed, it was undecided for 17.5%, 12.5% disagreed while 7.5% strongly disagreed. Among males, 12.2% strongly agreed, 53.3% agreed, it was undecided for 13.3% while 21.1% disagreed to this assumption.

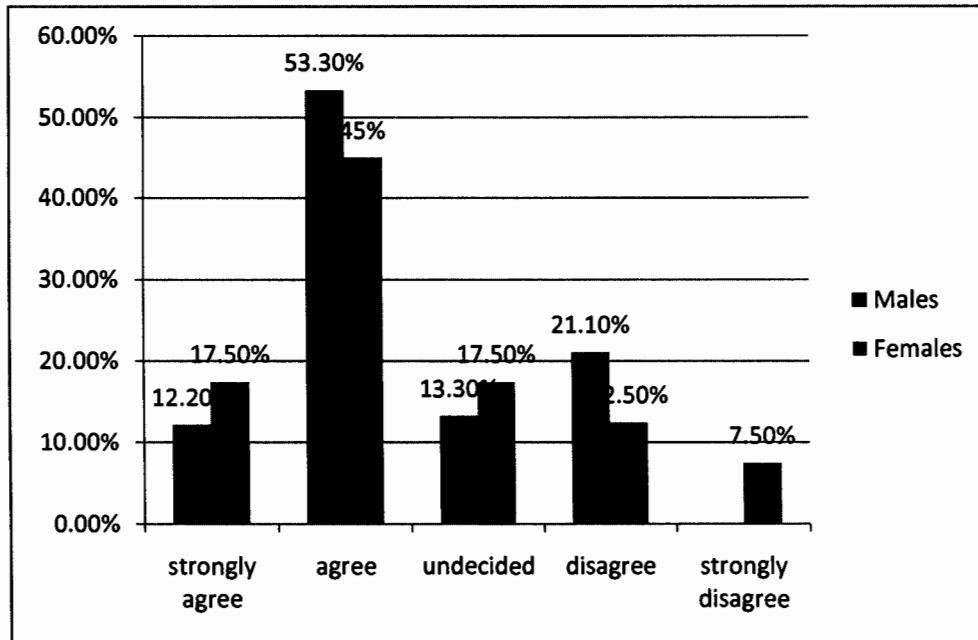


Fig: 4.1.13 Verbal Rejection

#### 4.1.14 Authoritativeness

When asked about the claim that females are less authoritative as compared to males, 10% females strongly agreed with the assumption, 22.5% agreed, it was undecided for 17.5%, 42.5% disagreed while 7.5% strongly disagreed. In case of males, 7.8% strongly agreed, 46.7% agreed, it was undecided for 8.9%, 33.3% disagreed while a negligible percentage of only 3.3% strongly disagreed to this claim.



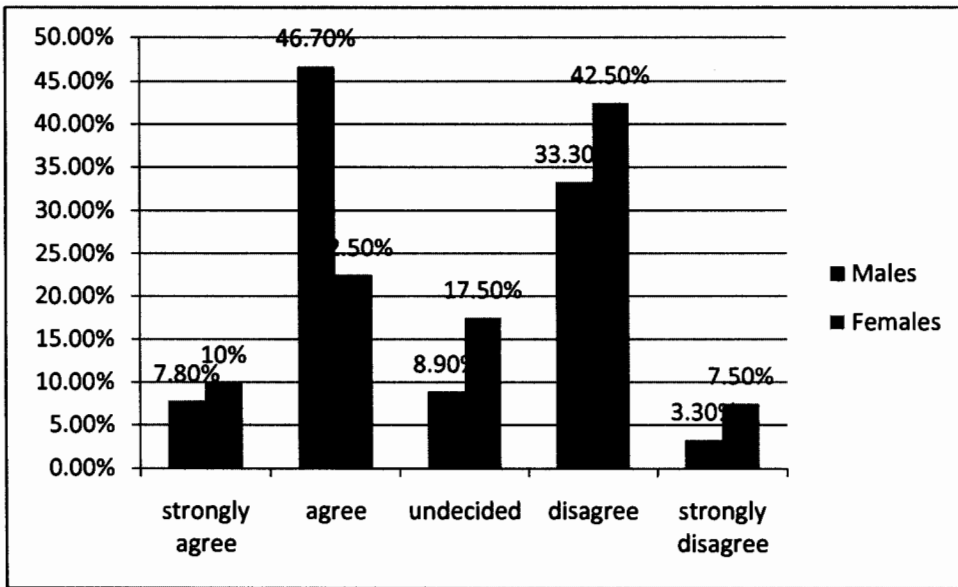


Fig: 4.1.14 Authoritativeness

#### 4.1.15 Downplaying Accomplishments

Among females, 2.5% strongly agreed with this assumption that females downplay their accomplishments at workplace, 12.5% agreed; it was undecided for 10%, 40% disagreed while 35% strongly disagreed. In case of males, 8.9% strongly agreed, 30% agreed; it was undecided for 18.9%, 37.8% disagreed while 4.4% strongly disagreed.

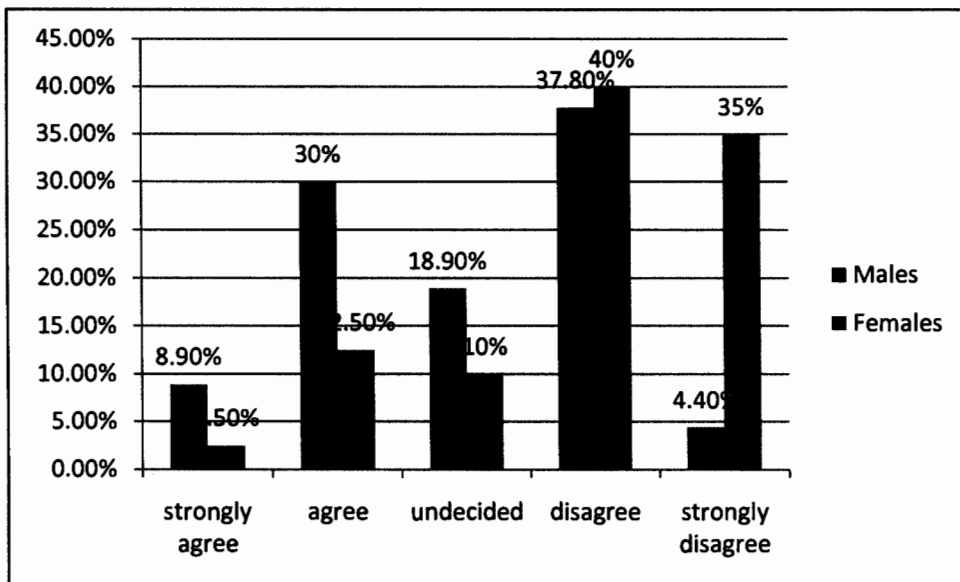


Fig: 4.1.15 Downplaying Accomplishments

#### 4.1.16 Cooperativeness

As far as the assumption is concerned that female officers are more helpful at workplace as compared to male officers, 22.5% female officers strongly agreed, 42.5% agreed, it was undecided for 10%, 20% disagreed while 5% strongly disagreed. In case of males, 5.6% strongly agreed, 35.6% agreed, it was undecided for 20%, 34.4% disagreed while 4.4% strongly disagreed.

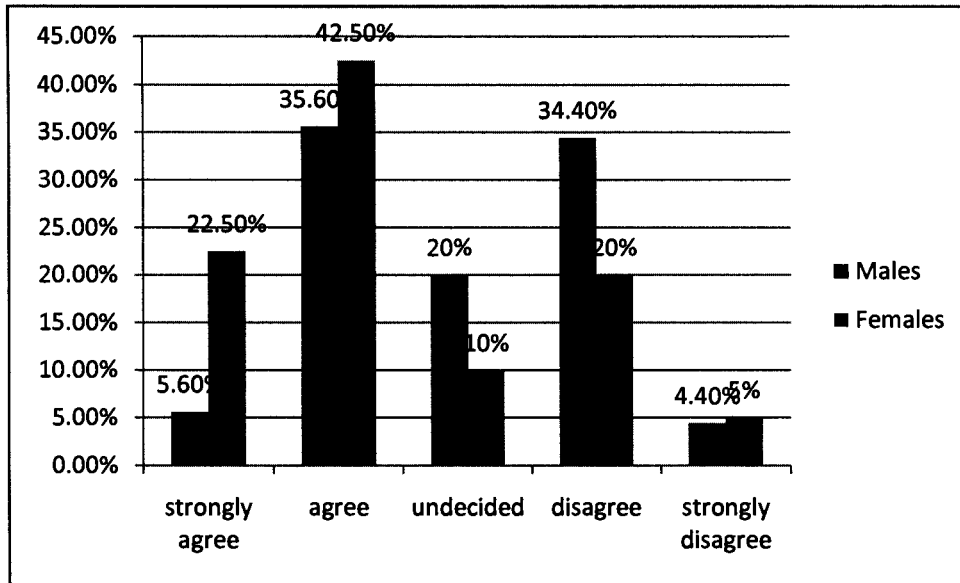
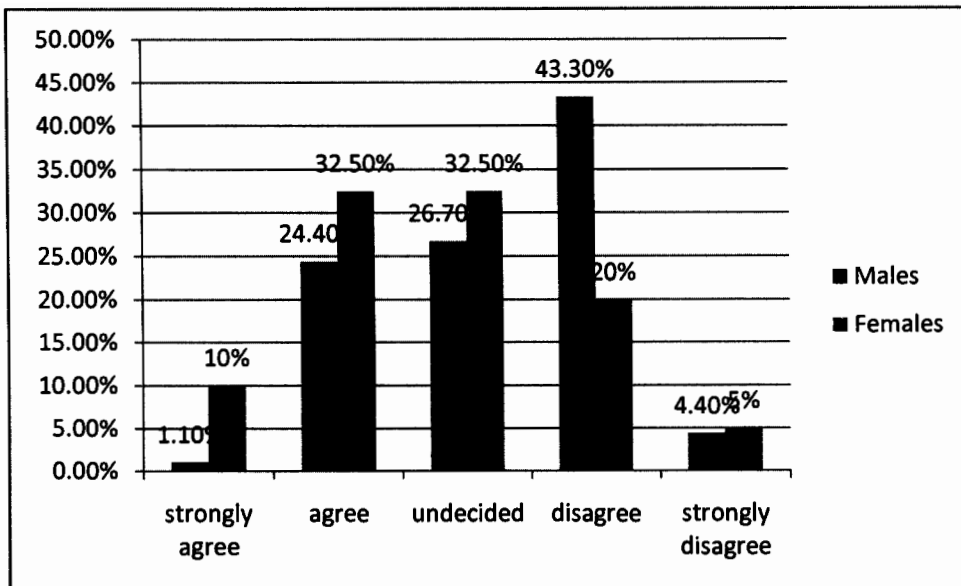


Fig: 4.1.16 Cooperativeness

#### 4.1.17 Promotion of Females

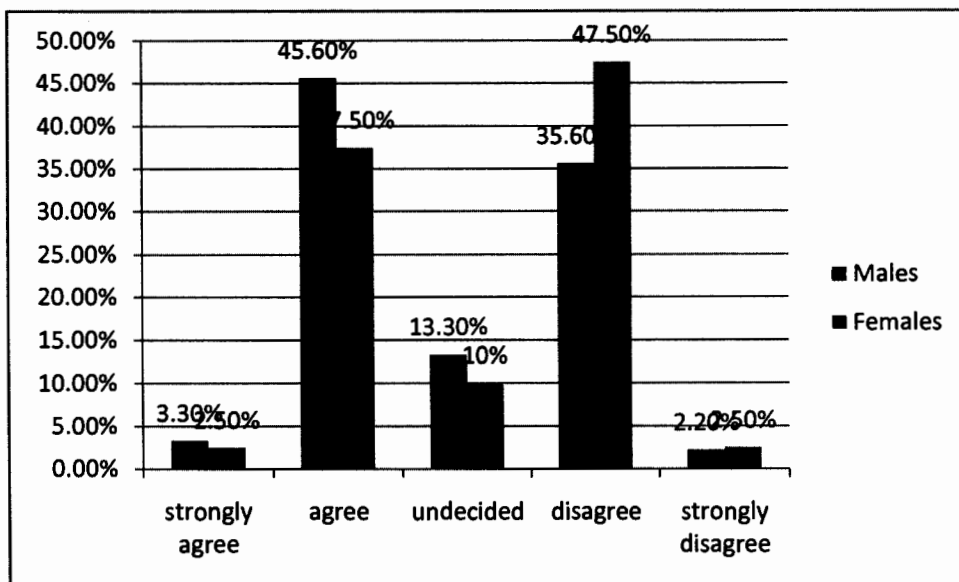
As far as the claim is concerned that females at workplace are not considered seriously for promotions, 10% female officers strongly agreed to the claim, 32.5% agreed, it was undecided for 32.5%, 20% disagreed while 5% strongly disagreed. In case of males, 1.1% strongly agreed, 24.4% agreed, it was undecided for 26.7%, 43.3% disagreed while 4.4% strongly disagreed.



**Fig: 4.1.17 Promotions of Females**

### 4.1.18 Female's Orders

When asked whether it is true that orders given by female officers are taken as suggestions instead of commands, 2.5% female officers strongly agreed to this claim, 37.5% agreed, it was undecided for 10%, 47.5% disagreed while 2.5% strongly disagreed. In case of males, 3.3% strongly agreed, 45.6% agreed, it was undecided for 13.3%, 35.6% disagreed while 2.2% strongly disagreed.



**Fig: 4.1.18 Female's Orders**

#### 4.1.19 Interruption

In response to the question whether male officers interrupt more as compared to female officers while speaking, 17.5% female officers strongly agreed, 30% agreed; it was undecided for 17.5%, 32.5% disagreed while 2.5% strongly disagreed. In case of males, 7.8% strongly agreed to this claim, 43.3% agreed, it was undecided for 15.6%, 32.2% disagreed while 1.1% strongly disagreed.

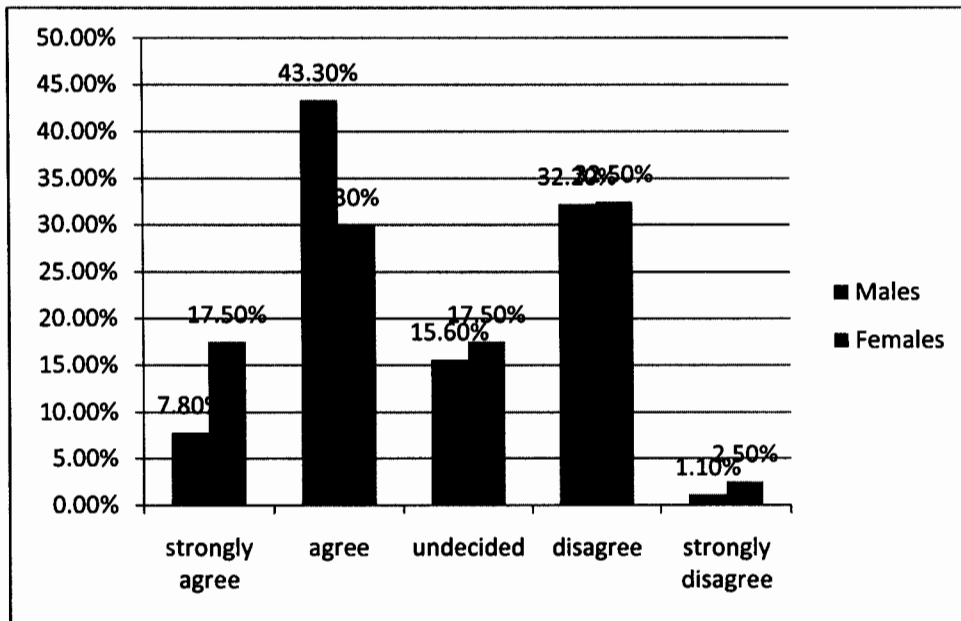


Fig: 4.1.19 Interruption

#### 4.1.20 Taboo Words

Among females, 22.5% strongly agreed with this assumption that taboo words are used more by male officers as compared to female officers, 57.5% agreed, it was undecided for 7.5%, 10% disagreed while 2.5% strongly disagreed. In case of males, 4.4% strongly agreed to this claim, 60% agreed, it was undecided for 17.8%, 15.6% disagreed while 2.2% strongly disagreed to this assumption.

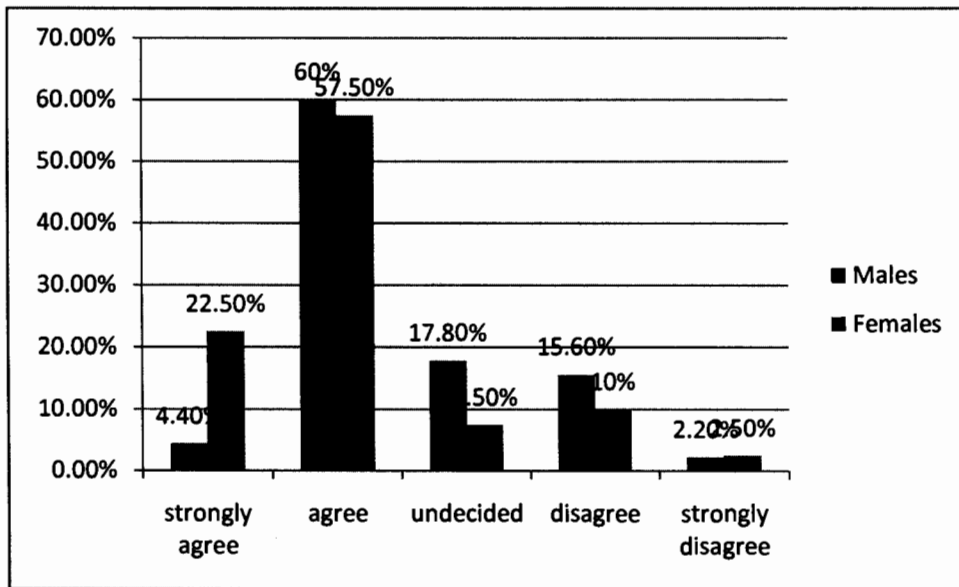


Fig: 4.1.20 Taboo Words

#### 4.1.21 Talkativeness

Regarding the assumption that females are more talkative, 2.5% females strongly agreed with this assumption, 32.5% agreed, it was undecided for 12.5%, 37.5% disagreed while 15% strongly disagreed. In case of males, 17.8% strongly agreed that females are more talkative as compared to males, 48.9% agreed, it was undecided for 4.4%, 25.6% disagreed while 3.3% strongly disagreed.

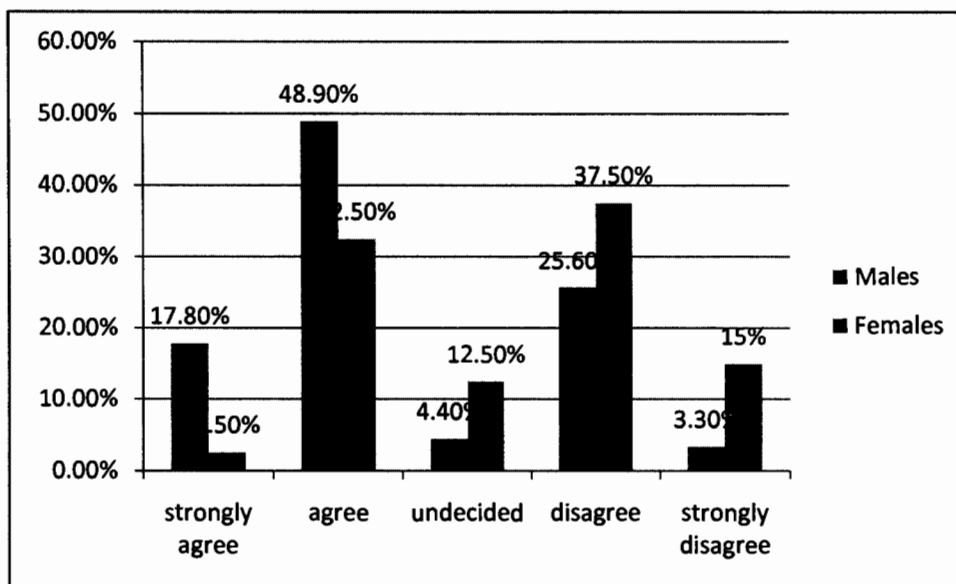


Fig: 4.1.21 Talkativeness

#### 4.1.22 Female Bosses

In response to the claim that females prove to be poor bosses, 2.5% female officers strongly agreed, 5% agreed, it was undecided for 5%, 47.5% disagreed while 40% strongly disagreed. Among males, 5.6% strongly agreed to this assumption that female officers prove to be poor bosses, 38.9% agreed, it was undecided for 15.6%, 36.7% disagreed while 3.3% strongly disagreed.

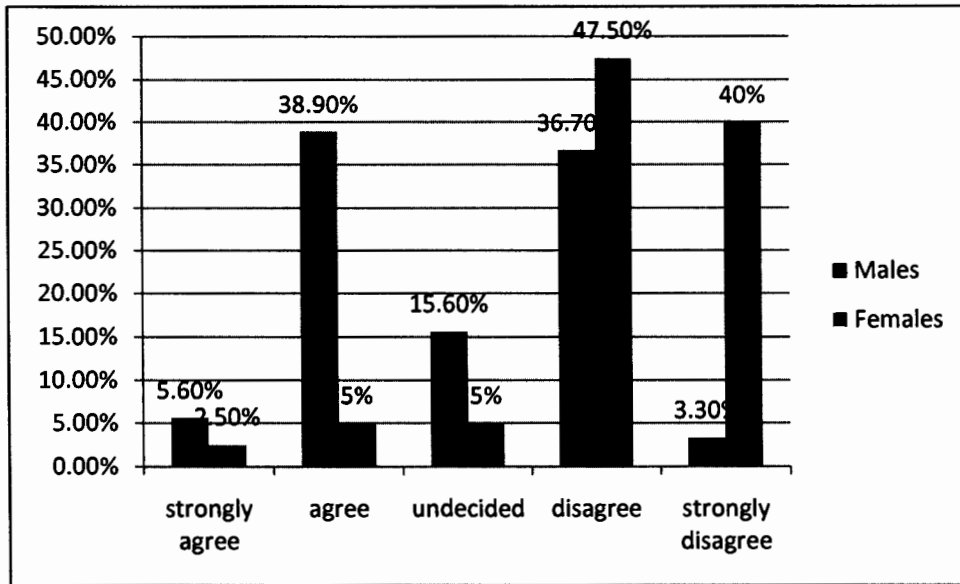


Fig: 4.1.22 Female Bosses

#### 4.1.23 Verbal Skills

Among females, 12.8% strongly agreed to the claim that females are better in verbal communication as compared to males, 41% agreed, it was undecided for 30.8% while 15.4% disagreed. In males, 2.2% strongly agreed with this assumption, 35.6% agreed, it was undecided for 12.2%, 42.2% disagreed while 7.8% strongly disagreed.

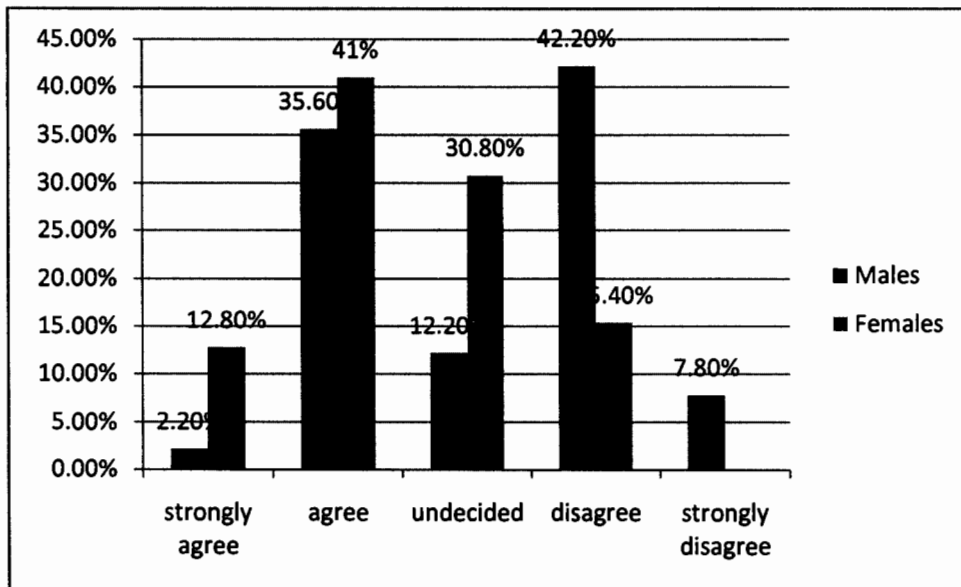


Fig: 4.1.23 Verbal Skills

#### 4.1.24 Gender based Linguistic Differences

When asked whether as a whole, the language of males and females differs at workplace or not, 32.5% female officers agreed while majority (i.e 76.5%) disagreed. Among male officers, 52.8% strongly agreed that the language of male and female officers differs, it was undecided for 1.1% while a large percentage of 46.1% disagreed.

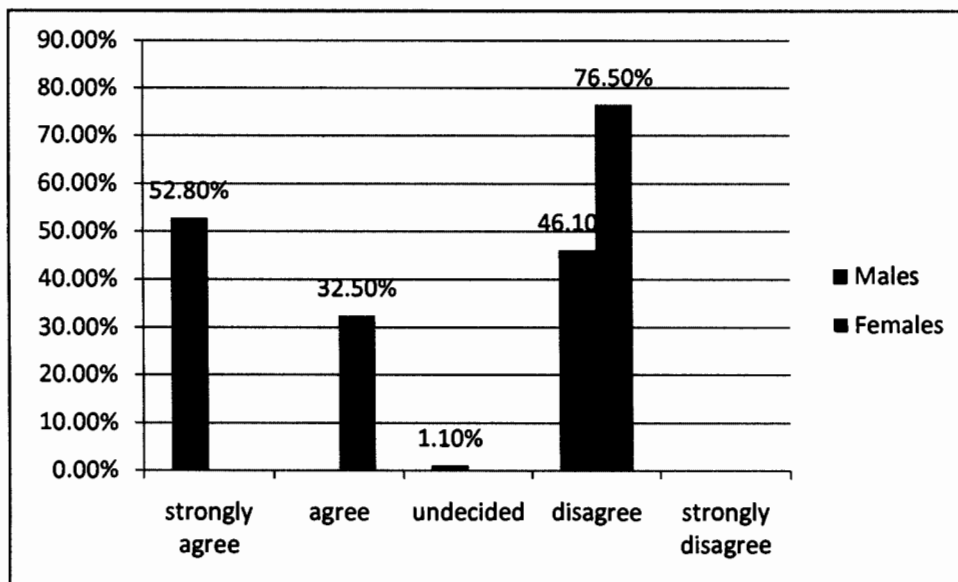


Fig: 4.1.24 Gender Based Linguistic Differences

### 4.1.25 Misunderstandings

When asked if any linguistic differences lead to misunderstandings at work place, 7.5% females agreed to the claim that gender based linguistic differences lead to misunderstandings and confusions at workplace, it was undecided for 7.5%, a large percentage of 82.5% disagreed while 2.5% strongly disagreed. In case of males, 1.1% strongly agreed, 26.7% agreed to the claim, it was undecided for 13.3%, 57.8% disagreed while 1.1% strongly disagreed to the claim that any gender related speech differences lead to confusions at workplace.

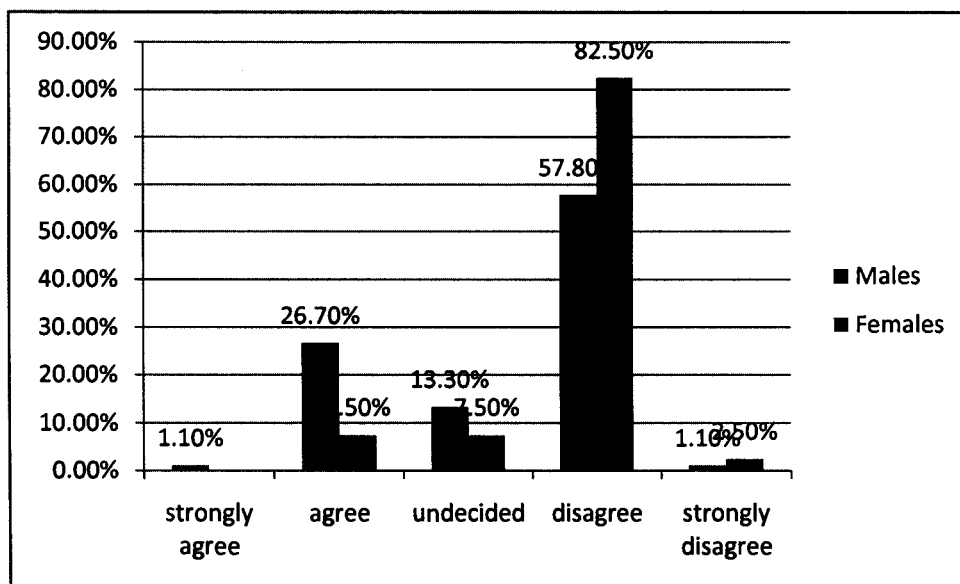


Fig: 4.1.25 Misunderstandings

### 4.2 Results of Interviews

Interviews that were taken were transcribed and then similar patterns were sorted out. They are shown graphically and the ratio of responses is shown in percentages. Lickert scale with five options was used but it should be noticed that these interviews were open ended. However, five options were designed later and added on the basis of responses of the interviewees. Results are shown below.



### 4.2.1 Politeness

Regarding the high ratio of politeness in the speech of female officers as compared to male officers, 60% male officers out of the total five respondents agreed to the claim that female officers are more polite in their speech as compared to male officers, while 40% disagreed. All of the five female respondents disagreed with this assumption. The reasons which they gave for their replies will be discussed in the discussion section.

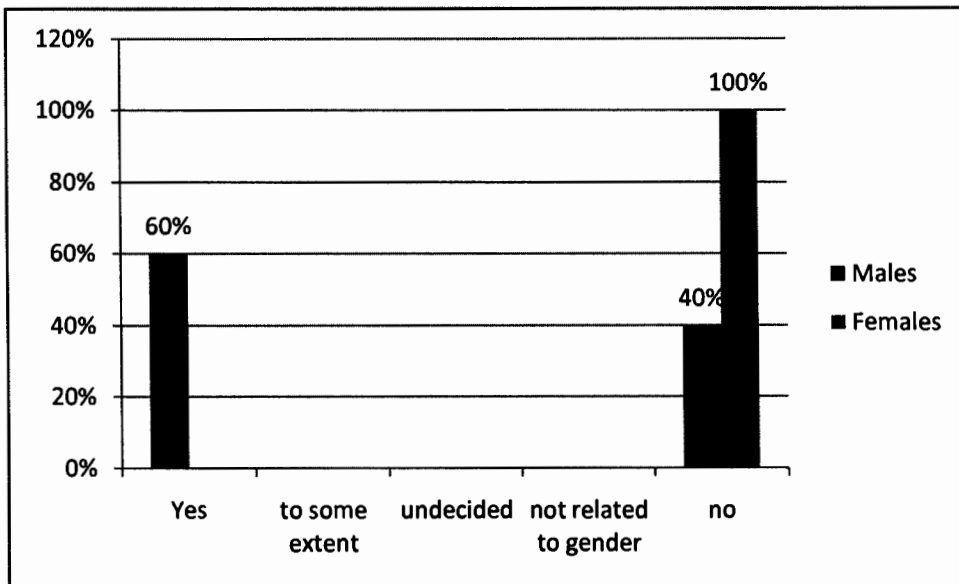
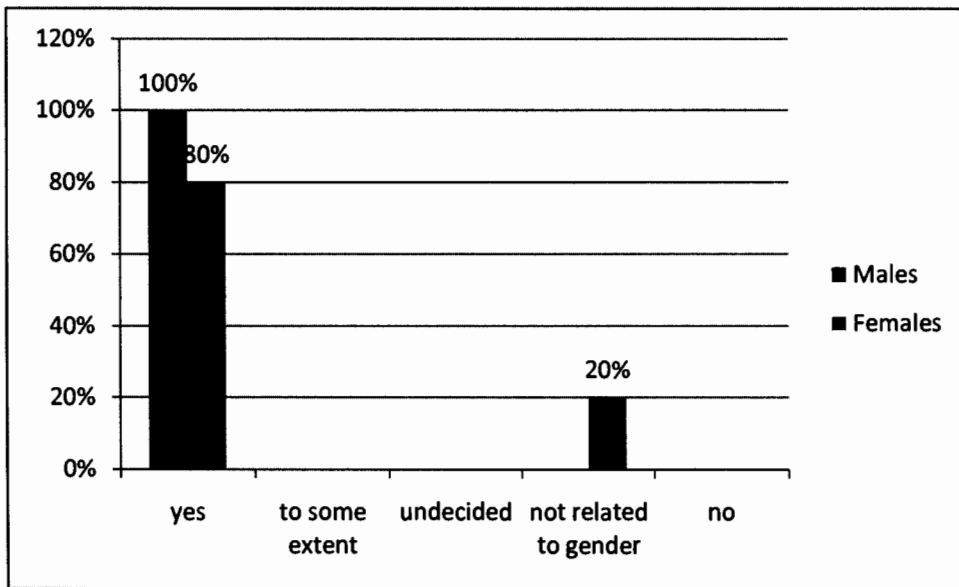


Fig: 4.2.1 Politeness

### 4.2.2 Consciousness about Grammar and Pronunciation

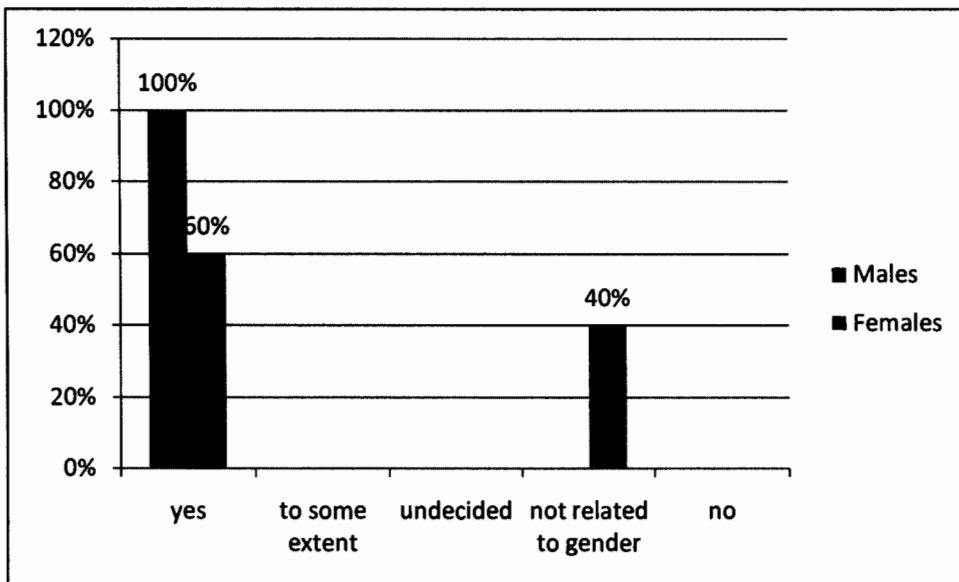
Response of the interviewees showed that all of the five male officers (i.e 100%) disagreed to the claim that females are more conscious about their grammar and pronunciation when they speak at workplace, while four out of the total five (i.e 80%) female officers agreed with this assumption and according to the remaining 20%, consciousness about grammar was not related to gender.



**Fig: 4.2.2 Consciousness about Grammar and Pronunciation**

### 4.2.3 Sense of Humour

All of the five male officers (i.e 100%) agreed to the claim that male officers show more sense of humour at workplace as compared to female officers whereas in case of females, 60% female officers agreed to this claim and for the remaining 40%, humour is not something related to gender.



**Fig: 4.2.3 Sense of Humour**

#### 4.2.4 Apologetic Attitude

Among male officers, 40% agreed that females apologize more as compared to males when they make any mistake, it was undecided for 20% (this option shows the response when the interviewees had not faced any such situation and had no idea about the issue and were confused), while 40% disagreed. In case of females, 60% agreed that females apologize more at workplace while 40% females disagreed to the assumption.

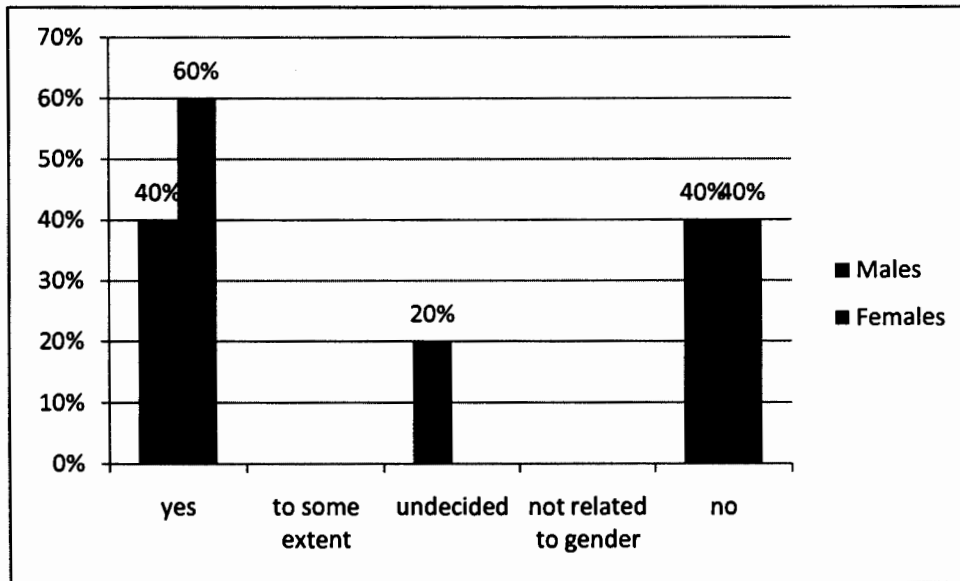
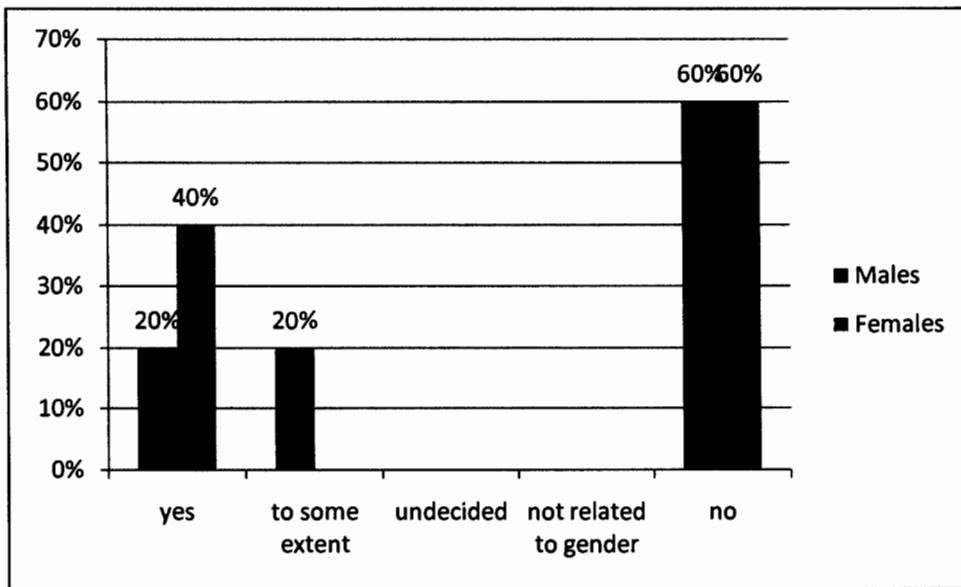


Fig: 4.2.4 Apologetic Attitude

#### 4.2.5 Indirect Requests

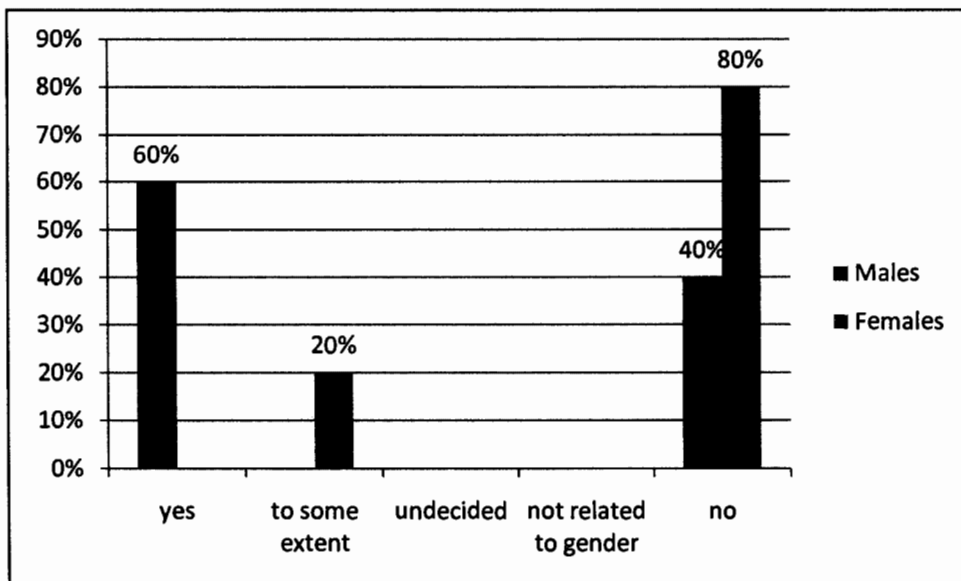
According to the responses given by interviewees, two out of five i.e (20%) male officers agreed to the claim that females are more indirect in their speech at workplace as compared to males, 20% agreed to some extent while 60% disagreed. Among females officers, 40%, officers think females are more indirect, while 60% disagreed with this claim.



**Fig: 4.2.5 Indirect Requests**

### 4.2.6 Confidence in Speech

Regarding the assumption that males are more confident in their speech as compared to females, 60% male officers agreed while 40% of them disagreed to this assumption. In case of female officers, 80% of them disagreed while 20% agreed to some extent to the claim that male officers are more confident in their speech.



**Fig:4.2.6 Confidence in Speech**

### 4.2.7 Problem Solving vs. Sympathetic Attitude

When asked whether it is true that females when approached with a problem tend to sympathize while males show problem-solving attitude, 40% male officers agreed, 40% agreed to some extent, while 20% disagreed with the assumption. Among females, 80% females agreed with this assumption while 20% disagreed.

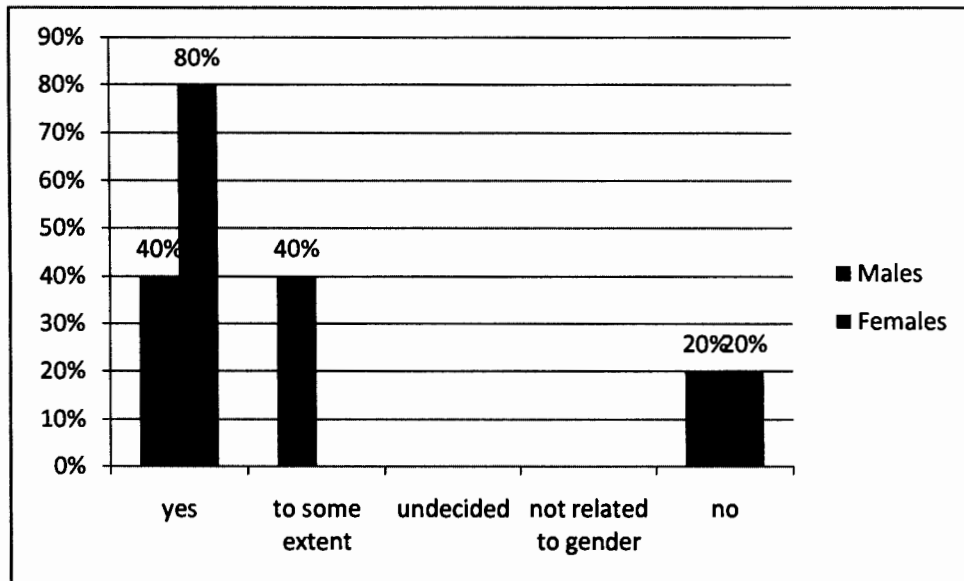
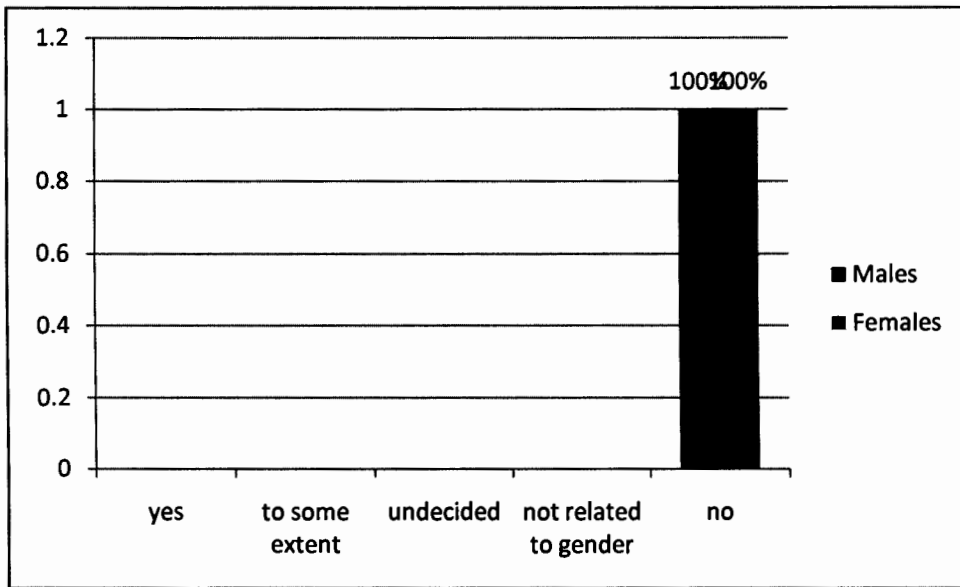


Fig: 4.3.7 Problem Solving vs. Sympathetic Attitude

### 4.2.8 Intention behind asking Questions

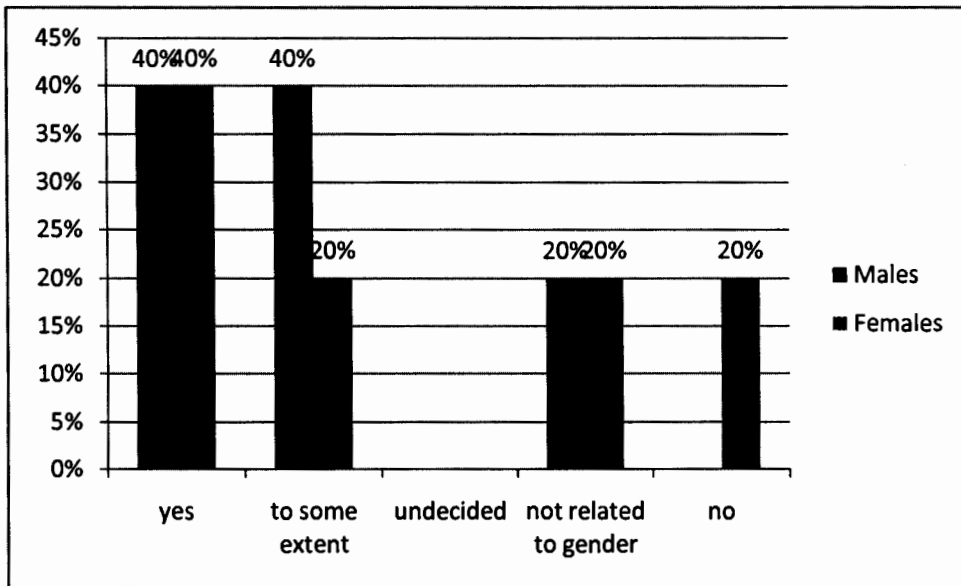
There is an assumption that males ask questions only to request for information while females ask questions to maintain the conversation. All of the five male and five female interviewees disagreed to this assumption.



**Fig:4.2.8 Intention behind asking Questions**

### **4.2.9 Asking for Help**

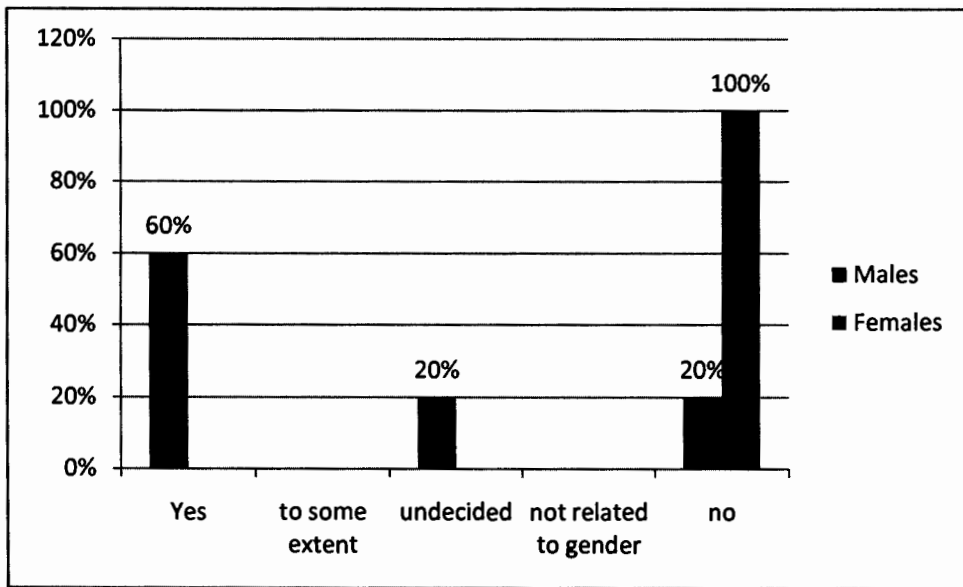
There is an assumption that males avoid to ask for help even when they need it while females frequently ask for help and do not feel hesitation. When this question was asked from male officers, 40% agreed, 40% agreed to some extent while according to the remaining 20%, it was not something related to gender. Among the females officers, 40% agreed, 20% agreed to some extent, for 20% it was not related to gender while 20% disagreed with this assumption.



**Fig: 4.2.9 Asking for Help**

#### **4.2.10 Interest in Details**

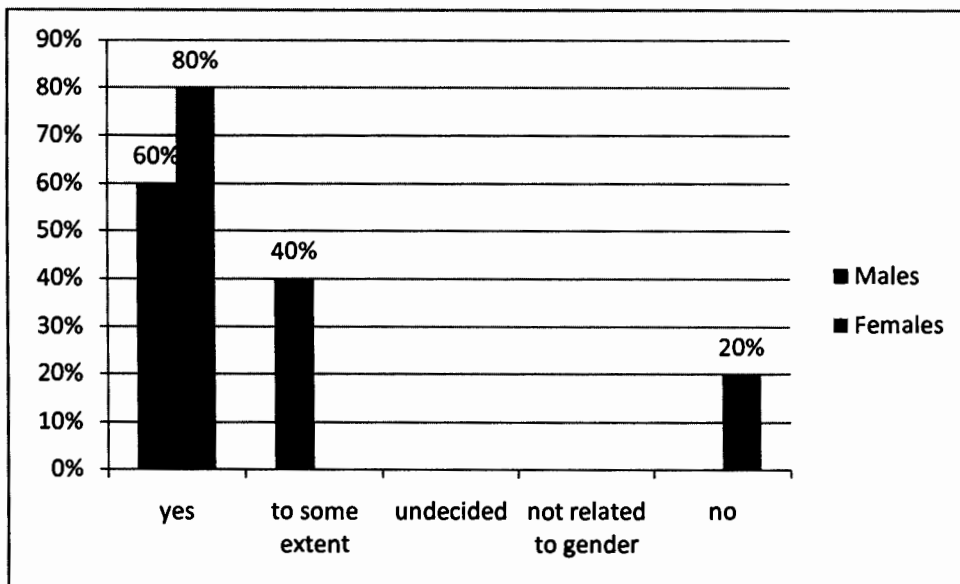
Three out of five i.e (60%) male officers agreed that females are more interested in details while males just want to know the end results while accomplishing any task at workplace, 20% had no idea about it or had not experienced any such situation so they were undecided about it, while 20% disagreed to this claim. Among the females, the disagreement ratio was 100% and they said that both genders show the same attitude in such situations .



**Fig: 4.2.10 Interest in Details**

### 4.2.11 Emotionality

Whether is it true that females are more emotional as compared to males ,60% males agreed while the remaining 40% agreed to some extent. In case of females, 80% agreed while 20% disagreed to the claim that females are more emotional.



**Fig:4.2.11 Emotionality**



#### 4.2.12 Verbal Rejection

Four out of five i.e (80%) male officers agreed that females take insults and verbal rejections more personal while 20% disagreed. Among the females, 60% agreed, for 20% it was not something related to gender while 20% disagreed.

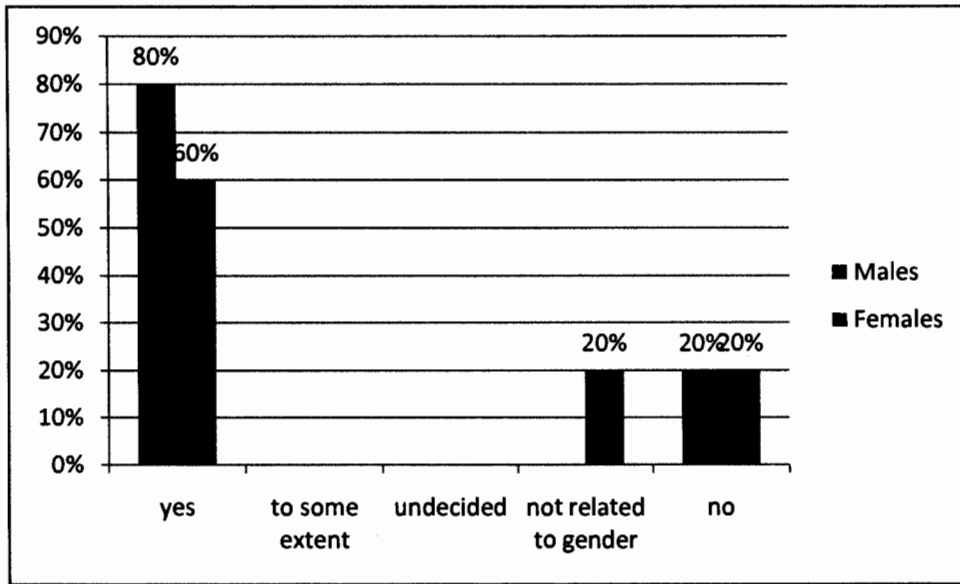
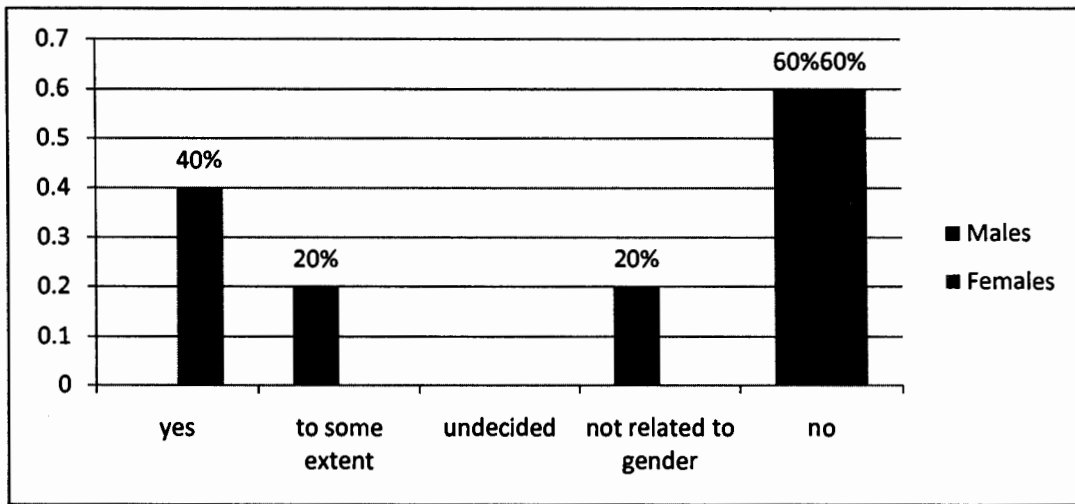


Fig:4.2.12 Verbal Rejection

#### 4.2.13 Authoritativeness

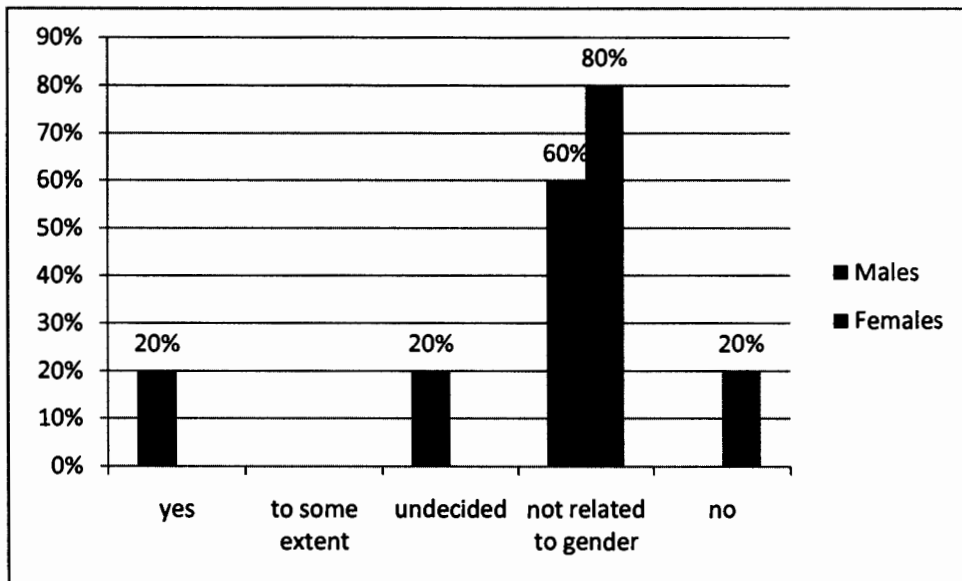
Among male officers, 20% agreed to some extent that females are more bossy, for 20% it was an aspect not related to gender while 60% disagreed. Among the females, 40% agreed and 60% disagreed.



**Fig:4.2.13 Authoritativeness**

#### 4.2.14 Females Downplay their Accomplishments

Out of the total five respondents, 20% male officers agreed to some extent that females downplay their accomplishments, for 20%, it was undecided matter and for 60%, it was not something related to gender. Among the females, 80% termed it something not related to gender while 20% disagreed with this assumption.



**Fig: 4.2.14 Females Downplay their Accomplishments**

### 4.2.15 Cooperativeness

Among males, 20% officers agreed to the claim that females are more cooperative at workplace as compared to males, 40% were undecided about it while 40% termed it something not related to gender. In case of females, 40% agreed, for 20%, it was not something related to gender while 40% disagreed with the assumption.

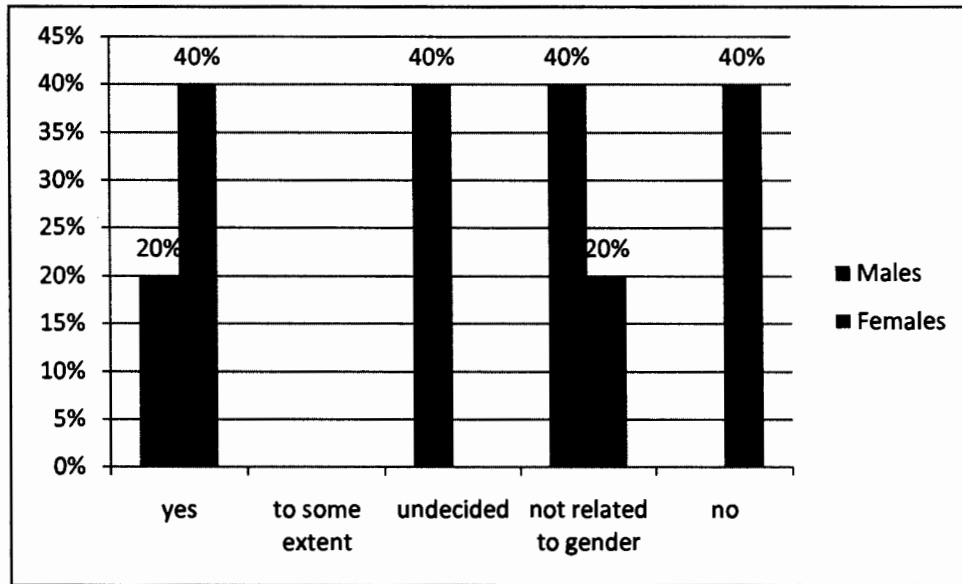
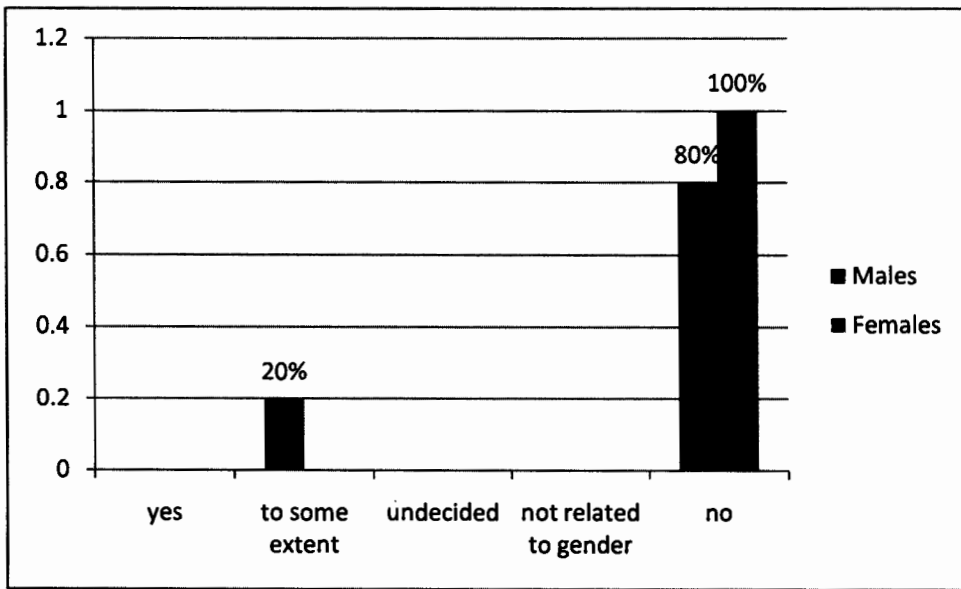


Fig: 4.2.15 Cooperativeness

### 4.2.16 Promotion of Females

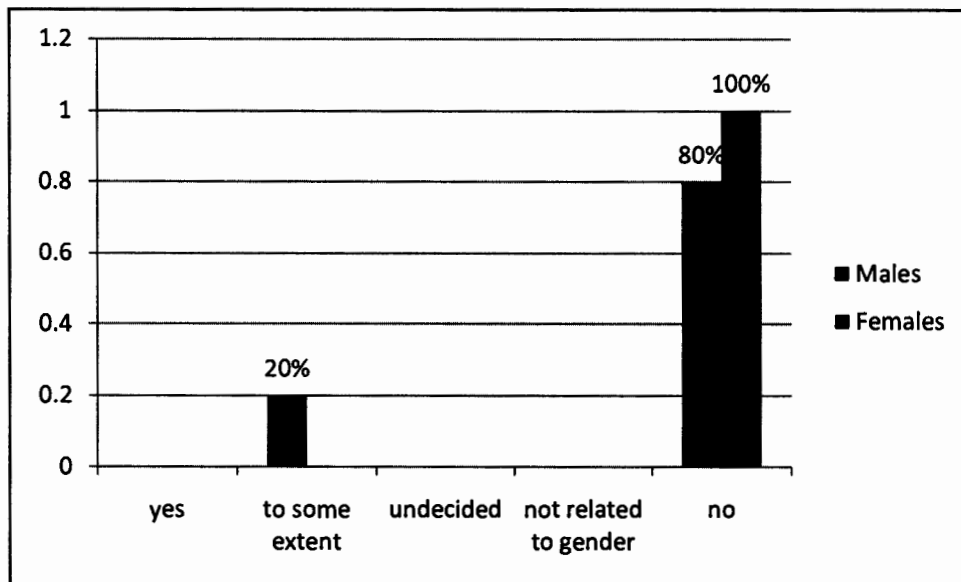
Among male officers, 20% agreed to some extent to the assumption that due to the supposed speech deficiencies of females, they are not considered seriously for promotions while 80% disagreed. In case of females, 100% officers refuted this assumption and simply disagreed.



**Fig:4.2.16 Promotion of Females**

### 4.3.17 Female's Orders

When asked whether it is true that the orders given by female officers are taken as suggestions instead of commands, 20% male officers agreed to some extent while 80% disagreed. In case of females, 100% female officers disagreed to the assumption.



**Fig: 4.2.17 Female's Orders**

#### 4.2.18 Males interrupt more

When asked whether it is true that females are interrupted by males while talking, 20% male officers agreed to some extent while 80% disagreed. All of the female officers (i.e. 100%) disagreed to this claim.

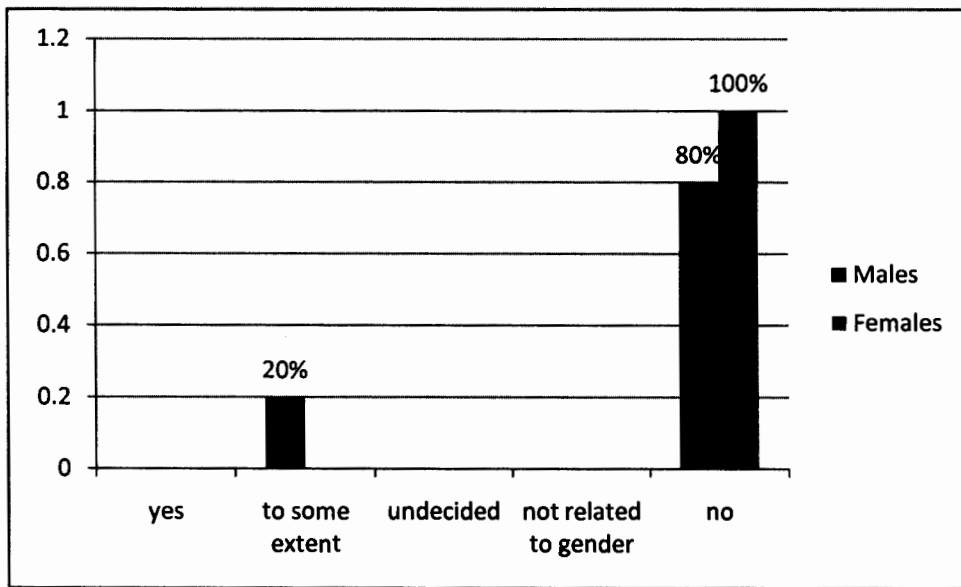
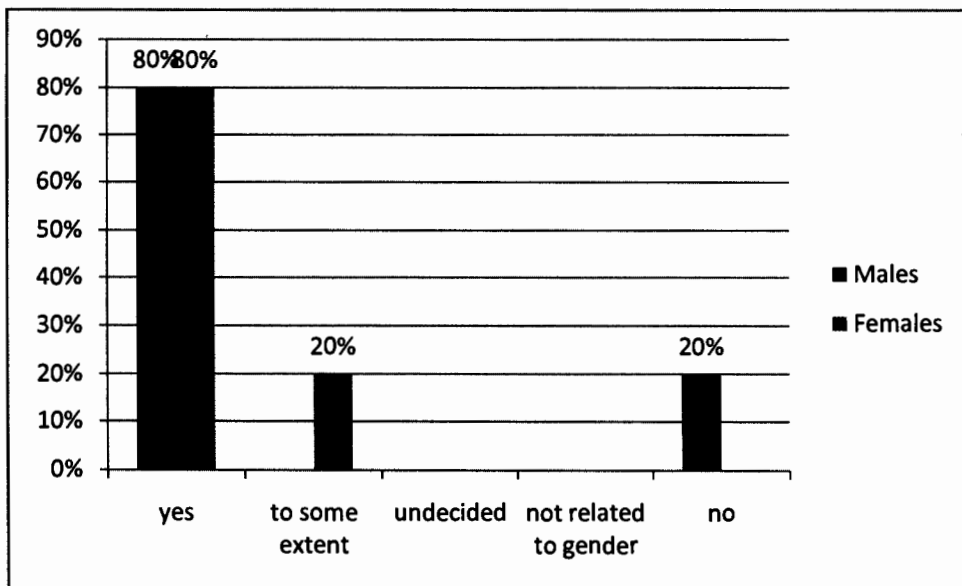


Fig: 4.2.18 Males interrupt more

#### 4.2.19 Taboo Words

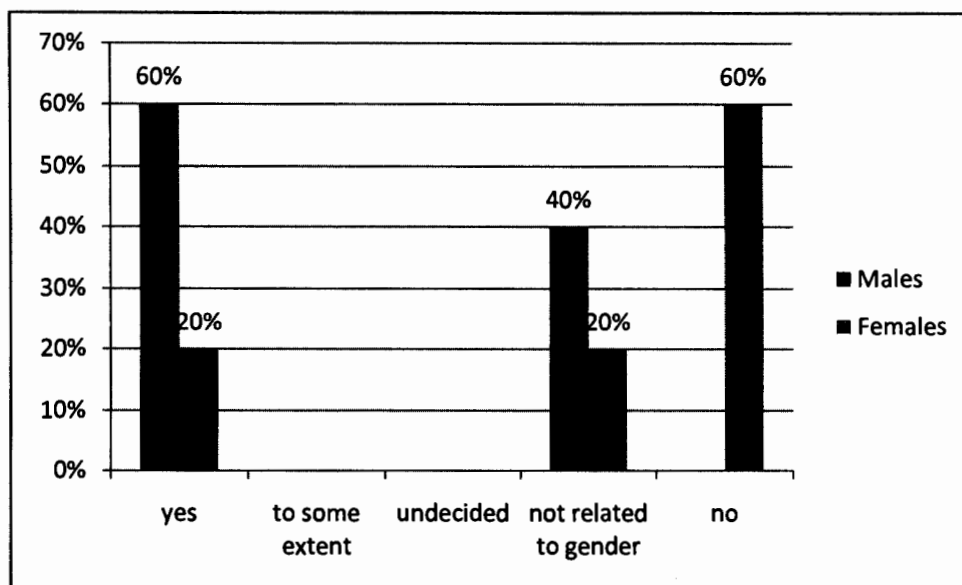
Out of the total five male officers, four (i.e.80%) agreed to the assumption that male officers use more taboo words at workplace as compared to female officers while 20% disagreed. In case of females, 80% agreed while 20% agreed to some extent that male officers use more taboo words.



**Fig: 4.2.19 Taboo Words**

#### 4.2.20 Talkativeness

Three out of five (i.e.60%) male officers agreed that females talk more while 40% termed it as something not related to gender. In case of females, 20% agreed to some extent, for 20%, talkativeness was not related to gender while 60% disagreed with the assumption.



**Fig:4.2.20 Talkativeness**

#### 4.2.21 Females Bosses

Two out of five (i.e. 40%) male officers were undecided about the claim that females prove to be poor bosses at workplace as they had not experienced a female boss in AirForce while 60% disagreed. In case of females, 20% agreed to this claim while for 20%, it was not something related to gender and 60% disagreed with the assumption.

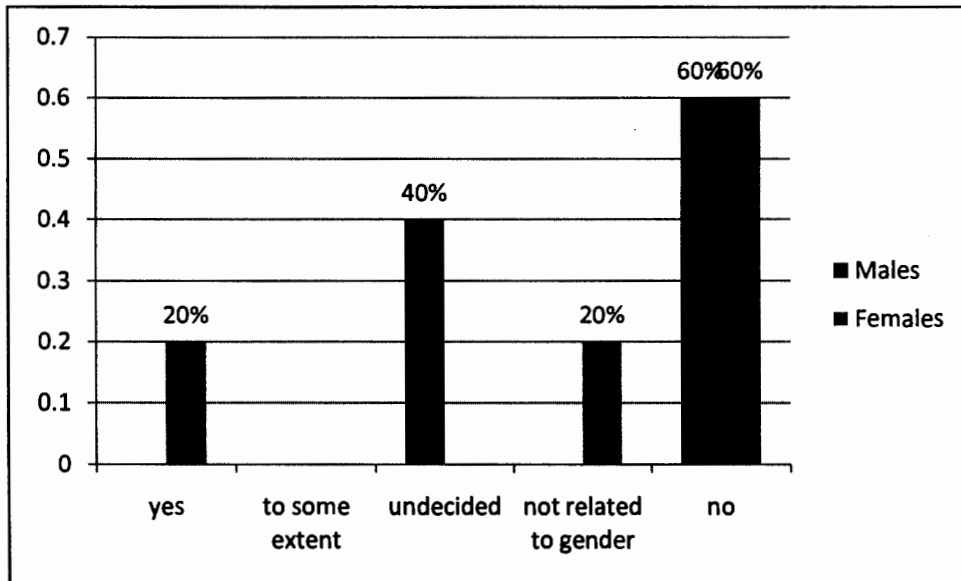
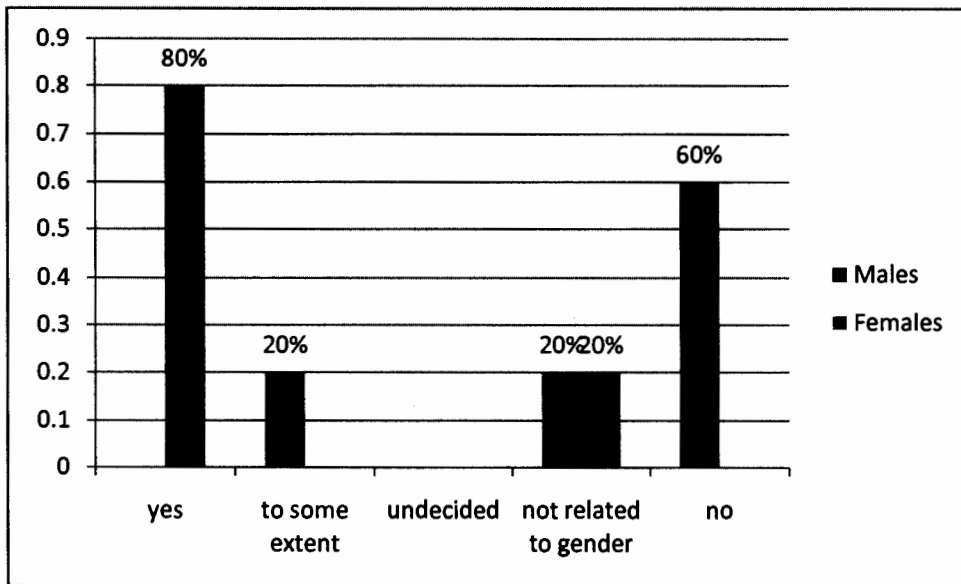


Fig:4.2.21 Female Bosses

#### 4.2.22 Females are Better in Verbal Communication

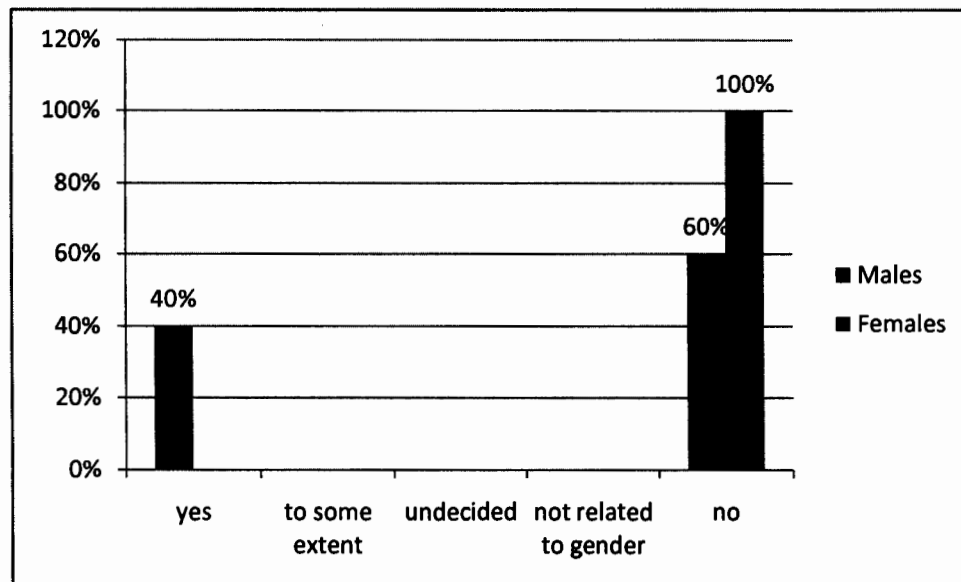
Among male officers, one out of five (i.e. 20%) agreed to some extent that females are better in verbal skills as compared to male officers at workplace, for 20% officers, it was not something related to gender and the remaining 60% disagreed to this claim. In case of females, 80% agreed that females talk more while for 20%, it was not something related to gender.



**Fig: 4.2.22 Females are Better in Verbal Communication**

### 4.2.23 Gender Based Linguistic Differences

In the end, on the basis of the whole discussion, participants were asked if they think males and females have any significant speech differences which are manifested while working together, 40% male officers agreed to the presence of differences on the basis of gender while 60% disagreed, stating that there are no considerable differences. In case of females, 100% of them disagreed stating that there are no major differences.

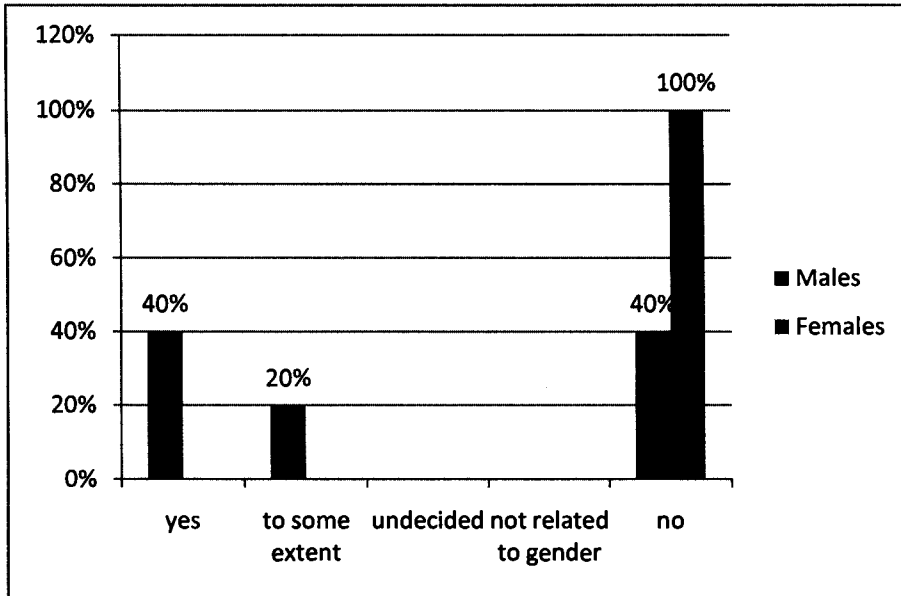


**Fig:4.2.23 Gender Based Linguistic Differences**



#### 4.2.24 Misunderstandings

When asked if speech differences at workplace between both genders lead to any misunderstandings, as is stated by linguists (Tannen, 1990), 40% of the male officers agreed to this claim, 20% agreed to some extent while 40% disagreed. In case of females, 100% female officers disagreed to this assumption.



#### 4.2.24 Misunderstandings

## **5. Discussion Section**

In this chapter, results obtained from questionnaires and interviews will be discussed. The background of questionnaires and interviews has already been discussed in methodology section. The format includes discussion on all questions and their answers. The data collected through questionnaires and interviews is discussed side by side so that the readers may not need to turn pages to see the results of interviews regarding that specific aspect after reading the analysis of questionnaires.

### **5.1 Politeness and Apologizing Attitude**

There is an old folk linguistic belief that females are more polite in their speech and they use speech that is more refined. The findings of the questionnaires confirmed the belief that it is not just a stereotype but has some worth and reality in it. Questionnaire results showed that majority of the female officers agreed to the assumption and only 7.5% disagreed. Same was the case with the response of male officers, as majority of them agreed to the assumption that females are more polite. Therefore, it can be said that in the official setup of the Pakistan Air Force, the belief holds strong position that female officers are more polite in their speech as compared to male officers and homogeneity was found among the views of both genders in this regard.

In the interview results, it can be seen that 100% females agreed with the proposition that females are more polite while among the male officers, 60% agreed and 40% disagreed. All these results confirm that females are more polite. As discussed earlier in chapter three, interviews were employed to cross check the results obtained from questionnaires and to provide in-depth information and background reasons for the replies. So when asked from these officers during the interviews about the reasons behind the high politeness ratio in female officers as compared to male officers, one of the female pilots told the interviewer that it is because of the difference in the way both genders are brought up at home. For girls, the society and culture put certain restrictions about using rough language and they cannot be harsh or rude while boys are allowed such liberties and although they are also taught to be well mannered but it is the female sex who is stressed more. However, one junior pilot made an interesting comment in this regard and

he said that female's only "sound" polite by the tone of their voice but they are actually not. He said that he has a vast experience at the academy, being under female seniors. His experience was that they were quite rude and bossy and would be only polite if they have to ask you for a favour. However, majority of the results from interviews and questionnaires confirmed that female officers are more polite at workplace. Another claim made in language and gender research is that female officers apologize more at workplace (Tannen, 1994; Wardaugh, 1992). Data obtained from questionnaires shows that 45% females agreed while 40% disagreed with the statement. In case of male officers, 37.7% agreed while 45.5% disagreed. Therefore, the analysis brings out the difference of opinion between the two genders. The difference in ratio between the approval and disapproval level is not significant and seems marginal. This claim cannot be strongly established on the basis of quantitative data.

Interview results show that 60% females agree while 40% disagree with the statement. In case of males, 40% agree, 40% disagree while it was an undecided matter for 20%. It shows that among the male's response, the difference is not very sharp like the results obtained from questionnaires, but interview data on the whole shows that women may apologize a little more than males. When asked about the reasons behind their apologetic attitude at workplace, those who agreed among the female officers said that females are more apologetic because of the way they are brought up at homes. They are more caring towards their parents and family members, and accepting a mistake means a female is caring by nature while men are carefree and casual and they do not bother much. According to the views of another female officer, males do not apologize because they have ego problems that females do not have. Males who agreed gave the same reasons.

## **5.2 Consciousness about the Use of Grammar**

There is an assumption widespread in language and gender literature (Lakoff, 1975) that females are very conscious of their grammar and pronunciation. Results from questionnaires show that among the female officers, 77.5% agree while 7.5% disagree to the claim. Among the male officers, 65.6% agreed while 16.7% disagreed. It seems that although there are slight differences in the percentages between views of male and female

officers, it is clear that a large number of both male and female officers agreed with this claim.

As far as data from the interviews is concerned, 80% females agree with the proposition while according to 20%, the use of correct grammar is not something related to gender. Among the male officers, 100% officers agree to the assumption that females are more conscious about their grammatical mistakes. These interviewees believed that this difference is due to the societal pressure and difference in rules for males and females officers for speech. The female sex, in their view, has to be conscious about their image all the time and about what they speak. Females believe that grammatical mistakes in their speech can make them appear less capable at workplace so they do not like to be pointed out for mistakes while men are not bothered about the form of the speech and they just focus on the message which is to be conveyed. Specifically speaking about an Air Force environment, one female officer said that the ratio of female officers is very low as compared to males so females do not want to give an impression that they are less competent. They have to prove their competence and speech is one form or tool for it. Furthermore, the induction of females in Air Force started recently specially in flying wing so they are in continuous struggle to prove that they are fit for the job.

### **5.3 Humour**

Research in the field of language and gender show that males exhibit more sense of humour than females (Crawford, 1995: Tannen, 1990). The quantitative data showed that 77.5% females agree and 7.5% disagree to this assumption. If we see the male percentages, 77.7% agree while 15.4% disagree. Here also we see homogeneity in the opinions of both genders and the claim that males exhibits more humour in Air Force settings is established by quantitative data.

According to the interviewee's responses, 100% males agree that males exhibit more sense of humour while among females, 60% agree with the assumption whereas for the 40%, it was not related to gender. So, the majority confirmed this assumption which shows that it is not just a myth. As far as reasons behind lack of sense of humour in females at workplace are concerned, male respondents said that in Air Force specifically

speaking, men are greater in number so they are more casual while females are in minority so they are more conscious about their image. Secondly, being member of a larger part of community, there are certain constraints for female's speech. Forexample, if a girl tells a joke in an office, people are expecting it and may take it wrongly. As men enjoy many liberties, humour is one form of that liberty which is not allowed to females in the office life. However, one female officer denied that there is any difference on the basis of gender but majority confirmed this assumption.

#### **5.4 Confidence Ratio**

When officers were asked about the assumption that male's speech shows confidence while women's speech does not (This assumption was largely propagated by Lakoff and her school of thought), 45% female officers agree that males are more confident while 52.5% disagree to the assumption. In case of males, 65.5% officers agree while 30% disagree with the proposition. So there is difference of opinion in both genders as more females disagree while male officers agree. (This may be due to the misconceptions about female's speech in the minds of male officers or that female officers do not accept the truth as it is difficult to judge through questionnaires what the respondent really think and a researcher has to rely on what the respondent has said. For that purpose, the study was complemented by qualitative data and an effort was made to uncover the reasons behind these opinions). As far as interviews are concerned, the situation is much clearer. Among the females, 80% disagree while 20% agree to some extent that male officers are more confident in their speech. In case of male's responses, 60% agree while 40% disagree with the assumption. Again there is a sharp difference between male and female responses.

Now to probe into the reasons why females are less confident, majority of the females refute this claim and said that there is no difference in the confidence level of both genders in Air Force. In case of males, they said that in Air Force, females have been inducted recently so they are not used to talk to males due to cultural and social conventions and they may seem less confident in the beginning but with the passage of time, they get used to the environment and as they are given equal opportunities and exposure as compared to males, the situation is quite different from the civil setup, means

females here gain confidence and the difference in the confidence level between both genders is lowered even if it exists in the start.

### **5.5 Response towards a Problem and Indirectness**

It is an assumption that when approached with a problem at workplace, males will offer solution while females will sympathize (Maltz & Borker 1982: Tannen, 1994). 32.5% female officers agree to this claim while 52.5% disagree. So here the disapproval pattern is very clear. In case of males, 58.6% agree to the assumption that males have analytical approach while females have sympathetic while 28.9% disagree with the statement. So again, females tended to challenge any such claims.

In order to cross check these findings with interviews, 80% females agree while 20% disagree to the assumption. In case of males, 60% agree while 40% disagree. With these results, we can say that this trait is found in women's speech at workplace. The reason which the researcher got from the interviews shows that it is due to difference in the capabilities of male and female officers. These officers believed that men are analytical minded while women are more sympathetic by nature. One officer remarked that men have a better decision making skill that is the reason that they act as head of the family at homes.

Regarding the claim that females are indirect in their speech while giving feedback while males are direct and to the point which sometimes lead to confusions at workplace (Coates, 1993: Tannen, 1994), 17.5% females agree with this assumption while 42.5% disagree. Among the male officers, 51.1% agree that females are more indirect in their speech as compared to males, while 30% disagree. This result shows that the two genders do not share the same views. A higher percentage of female officers disagree with this claim and a high percentage of males agree with it.

As far as interview results are concerned, 40% females agree while 60% disagree with the claim. In case of males, 20% agree, 20% agree to some extent while 60% disagree. So the male response also shows higher percentage of disapproval for the claim that females are indirect in their speech contrary to the data collected through the questionnaires. The officers who affirmed this belief gave the reason that as females in our society have to be

very polite, due to our norms and customs, they cannot be straightforward so they become diplomatic and indirect in their speech.

## **5. Talkativeness**

In response to the question whether men ask questions only when they need some information while women ask for conversational maintenance (Preisler, 1986), 20% female officers agree while 62.5% disagree. So the disagreement pattern is clear as this claim is challenged by female officers in the quantitative data. In case of males, 44.5% officers agree to the assumption while 37.8% disagree. Again the pattern in male and female response is not matching, as more females disagreed while majority of the male officers agreed which shows difference of opinion among both genders regarding this aspect of speech.

During the interviews, 100% males and 100% females refute this claim. So we can say that in the official setup of Air Force, there is no such concept as females talking more and asking questions just to keep the conversation going. These participants told the interviewer that they have to deal with sensitive official issues and if they have to ask questions, these questions are about serious matters or about flight operations, and if they are not clear about something, they do not hesitate to ask about it. So there is little difference on the basis of gender in this aspect.

Regarding the assumed talkativeness of females, 35% females agreed that females are more talkative while 59.5% disagreed to the claim. So this claim was not supported by the majority of female officers. In case of male officers, 66.7% agreed that females talk more while 28.9% disagreed. So majority of females did not support it while male officers did.

During the interviews, 60% females disagree, for 20% it is not something related to gender, while only 20% agree. Among the male officers, 60% agree while for the remaining 40%, it is not something related to gender. So the pattern in the male /female responses gathered through the questionnaire and interview is the same. The male officers stated that females talk too much while females refuted the assumption. One male officer said that females talk too much and, it leads to wastage of time. He added

that when a male officer requires one or two sentences to convey a message, the same message, is conveyed by a female in four or five sentences. But the general view was that if females do talk more, it does not affect their performance. Although female interviewees denied this assumption and one of them said that males talk more and it is just a stereotype that females are more talkative.

## **5. Interest in Details**

There is an assumption that males hesitate to ask for help even if they need it while females do not hesitate to ask for help. In the quantitative data, 47.5% female officers agreed to the assumption while 45% disagreed. Although more females agreed but the difference in ratio is so small that we cannot accept this claim on the basis of this difference. In males, 50% agreed while 40% disagree to this claim. Therefore, this claim may be accepted as a whole as almost 50% officers agree.

In the interviews, 40% females agree, 20% agree to some extent, 20% disagree and for 20% it was not something related to gender. Among the males, 40% agree to some extent, for 20%, it is not something related to gender, while 40% disagree. So again the pattern is not very clear. However those who agree give the reason that men are either self sufficient or egoistic and try to sort out their problems themselves till the end. However, one female officer disagrees with what others said. She, being the only aeronautical engineer at Chaklala, is conscious that if she frequently asked for help, she would be considered inefficient. This is why she avoids asking for help and tries to solve her problems by herself.

As far as the assumption that females in workplace are more interested to know the details whereas men are briefer and to the point and that they are more interested to know the end results (Tannen, 1994), 47.5% female officers agreed while 45% disagreed. Again the difference is marginal. In case of males, 53.3% officers agreed while 33.3% disagreed. So the response in case of females is not clear because of the divide between agreement and disagreement. However, in case of males, agreement pattern is quite clear.

In case of interviews, 100% females refuted this claim saying that there is no such belief in Air Force. Any task, while carrying out, if requires the details, both males and females



ask for details irrespective of the gender. In case of males, 60% agree to the claim, 20% disagree while for 20%, it is undecided. Among the males however, one respondent said that there is difference of approaches in the Air Force and girls are more interested to know each and every step of a task accomplished. According to his views, it does lead to wastage of time. But this opinion was not supported by the rest of the respondents.

## **5.8 Emotionality and Reaction to Verbal Abuse**

There is an assumption that women are more emotional and often cry to show grief or anger while men are less emotional and have more control over their nerves and emotions (Lakoff, 1975). 52.5% female officers agree that females are more emotional as compared to males whereas 37.5% of them disagree. So we can say that majority of officers agreed to the claim. Among the males, 84.5% officers agree, one of the highest percentages given to the approval of a speech aspect while 16.7% disagree. As is evident, men's response also shows approval with a high percentage.

In interviews, 80% females agree while 20% did not agree. In case of males, 60% agree while 40% agree to some extent. The reason behind the emotionality of females given by almost all of the respondents was that they are more sensitive and emotional by nature. One male officer said that men are stronger and have more control over their emotions but he said that he did not think this difference can lead to any problem in performance. Another male officer said that emotionality of females is not creating any problems because the number of females right now in Air Force is very low. With time when their ratio increases, then it can make problems such as keeping things in heart and more sensitivity can affect their work negatively.

It is also an assumption that females take verbal rejection and insults more personal. Although this question could be linked to the previous question as they are more emotional so they take things personal, but it was asked separately as verbal insults and snubbing is common in every office. The researcher wanted to know about the truth of this claim and that how it affects the performance of both genders? 82.5% female officers agreed that they take verbal insults more personal while 20% disagreed to this claim. So majority of females accepted the claim. In case of males, 75.5% agreed while 21.1%

disagreed to the claim that females take insults more personal. The results show that this assumption holds truth.

During the interviews, 60% females agree, 20% disagree while 20% consider taking things personal as some individual trait, not related to gender. Among the males, 80% agree while 20% disagree. Again the approval pattern is clear. Male officers said that as boys are brought up in sort of rough and tough environment, they are used to such things like snubbing while girls are brought up in a much protected environment so they take insults and snubbing seriously. According to the views of an officer, this difference has both positive and negative points. The advantage of female's sensitivity is that they try to avoid insult and work harder than males. The disadvantage is that they keep it in their heart and waste time thinking about it while male officers forget it in quickly. Female officers said that they cannot afford to make mistakes and get insulted, as discussed earlier; it is related to their image building. Females have to be more conscious about their image, otherwise they would become laughing stock that they were insulted for so and so mistake. The other reason is that as females are few in numbers, so they have to be conscious. In the words of a female aeronautical engineer, "We are in a situation where we are putting our 200% to prove ourselves where males are putting their 100%. If after putting so much effort, you are insulted for a minor mistake, naturally you will feel it more". One reason given by these female officers is that, the induction of female pilots is a recent phenomenon and still controversial as some people (including some officers) think that they are not capable of becoming good fliers. So they are under the pressure to prove them wrong and try to avoid any chance of making mistake and getting insulted.

### **5.9 Authoritativeness and Boasting**

Whether females are less bossy as compared to males, 32.5% female officers agree while 50% female officers did not agree, so this claim seems to be refuted by female officers. In case of males, 54.5% did not agree to the claim that females are less authoritative at workplace while 36.6% male officers disagree to this claim. It can be said that most of the male officers accepted this claim.

In case of interviews, 60% females disagree while 40% agree. Among the males, 20% consider it not related to gender. In case of male officers, 20% agree to some extent while 60% disagree. So here the disapproval pattern is prominent as we can see the response overall is not very clear. However, those who said that females are bossy when in authority gave the reason that a female may have another boss supervising her who if male, may snub her, so in order to prove that she can keep order, she has to be bossy. One female officer said that her experience is that females are stricter yet the situation in the Air Force is different. Here, officers are trained to become good leaders so there is not much difference on the basis of gender.

Whether it is true that females downplay their accomplishments and men boast (Tannen, 1994), 15% female officers agreed to this assumption while 75% disagreed. Obviously the disagreement is prominent. In case of males, 38.9% agreed to the assumption while 42.2% disagreed. The disagreement is a bit higher than non agreement in males.

During the interviews, 80% females rated it something not related to gender while 20% disagreed to the assumption that females downplay their accomplishments at workplace. In case of males, 60% do not relate to gender while 20% agree and 20% show confusion and rate it as undecided. The reason why women boast was that they want to show to the world that they are equally capable. However, the response is not shared by other respondents and other officers. There is no homogeneity of opinion found.

### **5.10 Cooperativeness**

It is an assumption that at workplace, women are more helpful and cooperative as compared to males (Tannen, 1994; Holmes, 1997). Among females, 67% officers agree to the assumption while 25% disagree. So the majority of the females accept this assumption. Among the males, 41.2% agree while 38.85% disagree to the assumption. The pattern in the females response is different from males where the agreement and disagreement is almost equal.

In case of interviews, 40% agreed, 40% disagreed while for 20%, it was not related to gender. Among the males, 20% disagreed, 40% agreed and for 40%, it was undecided. The contrast between views is not very sharp and there is no homogeneity of opinions.

Those who agreed during the interviews attributed this difference to the nature of females saying that, females are polite, helpful and caring.

### **5.11 Promotions and Appraisals**

Some linguists argue that due to speech deficiencies of females, they are not considered for promotions at workplace and often lag behind (Tannen, 1994). Among females, 42.5% officers agree, while 25% disagree. So we can see the approval of this claim got the higher percentage. In case of males, 24.5% agree while 47.7% disagree. So here the shift is towards disapproval of this claim and the results did not match with females' response.

During the interviews, 100% females refute this assumption and said that there is no such thing or concept in the Air Force. They argued that there is a fixed criterion for promotion and whoever qualifies it, is promoted irrespective of the gender. There is a view that we do not see women in ranks higher than squadron leader in Air Force. When asked from officers about the reason, the respondents said that it is because induction of female officers started late. In wings other than flying, it had started only a couple of years back. In flying the first batch of female officers is now flight lieutenants and they were being interviewed by the researcher.

### **5.12 Orders from Female Bosses**

It is assumed that female's orders are normally taken as suggestions instead of commands (Coates, 1993; Tannen, 1994). Among females, 40% officers agreed to this claim while 50% officers disagree. Hence, majority of females refute this concept. In case of males, 49% officers agree to this assumption while 37.8% did not agree. So majority of the males support this claim.

In case of the interviews, 100% females strongly negate this assumption and said that this is not the case in Air Force. Order is an order and that has to be followed. However one male officer said that in some cases, it may happen as we are not used to get orders from females in our society. So, the orders of female officers may not be taken seriously. But

that was just the point of view of a single person. However, the majority were of the opinion that there is no such concept in the Air Force.

### **5.13 Interruptions**

Researchers claim that men interrupt women more to show their domination (Zimmerman and West, 1975). Among females, 47.5% officers agree to the assumption while 35% disagree. So the majority of the female respondents accepted this. As far as male respondents are concerned, 51.1% agreed with the statement whereas 33.3% disagreed. So, the male officers supported the claim.

During the interviews, 100% females strongly refute this assumption and said that there is no such concept in the Air Force. This may be true in our society in general. In the Air Force, everything is very systematic and everyone gets a chance to be heard irrespective of their gender. Among the males, 80% officers disagree to this statement while 20% agree to some extent. They said that some males interrupt to show that they have the power or just to impose their superiority but such cases are rare in the official environment of the Air Force.

### **5.14 Taboo Language**

It is an assumption supported by linguists that men use more taboo words and that female speech is more refined (Jasperson, 1922; Lakoff, 1975; Coates 1993). High percentage (i.e. 80%) females agree to this claim while 12.5% disagree. In case of males, 64.4% agreed while 17.8% disagreed. So both genders accept that males use more taboo words.

As far as the interview results are concerned, 80% females agree to the claim while the remaining 20% agree to some extent. In case of males, 80% agree while 20% disagree. The reason for this difference given by female interviewees was that the standards of speech and many such aspects like dress code for girls and boys are different. If a girl uses such language at home, she is snubbed but it is not the same for a boy. Male officers said that they use taboo words to make the conversation more attractive and that they are trained that way in the academy. When asked the reason why are they trained to use taboo words, they said that may be because they are supposed to be rough and tough.

When asked why female pilots do not use these words when they are trained in the same academy? The researcher was told that there are some differences in the training of male and female pilots. We have to keep pace with our social setup. One male officer said that society lays certain reservations upon female's speech while using taboo words becomes males' second nature. It is the general trend in society and we are a part of it. Another male officer said that females also use them but not in front of male officers. Similarly, male officers do not use it in front of females. But it is a fact that the ratio of taboo words in male officers is much higher.

### **5.15 Females in the role of a Boss**

Some linguists like Deborah Tannen (1994) have asserted that females prove to be poor bosses at workplace. Only 7.5% female officers accept this claim while a large percentage of 87.5% did not agree. So this assumption is almost ruled out by female officers. In case of male officers, 44.5% agree that females are poor bosses while 39.7% disagree. So again the ratio of male and female officers did not match.

The interview results show that, 20% females agree to the claim, for 20% it is something not related to gender while 60% disagree. In case of males, 60% disagree while for 40%, it is undecided. Interestingly, males in the interviews took female's sides and some of them viewed that females can be very good bosses. However, one of the female officer's said that in homes even, male is the head of the family and females' importance is secondary and so females' skills are not as polished as that of males. So when females come to professional life, they may not be good bosses like males. She told the interviewer that in the Air Force, skills development also depends on the branch a person is working in. Such as only officers from the flying wing, get three years training, so females in flying wing are more polished while officers in other wings start the field work just after six months training. However, this was an individual's opinion and majority of the male and female officers disagreed to the claim that females are poor bosses.

## **5.15 Communication Skills**

Regarding the assumption that females are better communicators as compared to males (Peter Trudgill, 1974), 54.8% female officers agree while 15.4% disagree to this statement. Among the males, 37.8% agree while a large percentage of 50% refute this claim.

During interviews, 80% females agree to the assumption that female have better communication skills as compared to male officers while for the remaining 20%, it is not something related to gender. Among the males, 20% agree to some extent, for 20% it is not related to gender while 60% disagree. There was no specific reason found during the interviews as females considered themselves better than males in speech. One male officer, however, said that as males get more exposure from childhood, so the situation is the other way round and males have better verbal skills. A male officer said that females are better communicators because they are more prepared, they know what they have to speak and they plan before they speak, while men are casual.

## **5.16 Difference in Speech**

So as a whole, the researcher wanted to know whether male and female have any significantly different speech patterns, 32.5% females agree while 67.5% disagree to the claim. So this makes the analysis very clear. In case of males, 52.8% agree and 46.1% disagree. (One male interviewee gave the example of the famous book by John Gray, Men are From Mars: Women are from Venus as a proof for his views about the difference in the speech of males and females and it was a pleasant surprise for the researcher to learn that these officers were quite familiar with the debate). Here we can see different views .i.e. males agree that there are differences.

In the interviews, all of the female officers (i.e. 100%) disagree with this assumption while 60% males disagree and 40% males agree. A female aeronautical engineer gave a very important clue that in the Air Force, they have little margin to deviate from the standard as it is not what they wish to say but what they are supposed to say. If they have to give an order that should be very clear.

### **5.17 Gender Based Linguistic Differences**

When asked whether any supposed speech differences lead to misunderstandings at workplace, 7.5% females agreed while 85% disagreed. So, they simply ruled out this assumption. In case of males, 27.8% agreed to the assumption that gender based language differences are a source to cause confusions and misunderstandings at work place while 58.9% disagreed. So males also disagreed with this assumption. In the interviews, 100% of the females disagreed while 40% males agreed, 20% agreed to some extent and 40% disagreed. Female officers told the researcher that there are no confusions on the basis of speech differences as due to their specific training and environment which is very cooperative, they do not face problems.



## **6. Findings and Conclusions**

The present study is a case study, evaluating the role played by gender in shaping the speech of men and women at workplace. Both qualitative and quantitative tools such as interviews and questionnaires were used to collect the data. The analysis led towards the following findings.

### **6.1 Findings**

Data from the questionnaires and interviews showed a clear division between male and female conversational patterns in some speech acts while no significant difference or little difference was found in other acts. It was also found that the situation was different due to the specific training and environment of the Air Force and certain linguistic assumptions though, may be true in other walks of life but they do not apply to the Air Force.

Literature on the topic indicates that women are more polite as compared to men in conversation (Brown and Levinson, 1987). It was confirmed and reasons were found to be as females are taught to use refined speech and be modest in their behaviour. Some of the interviewees told the researcher that rules and criteria for men and women were different in many cases including speech; some officers held the opinion that females were more polite because of their nature. Then it was found that females were conscious about speaking correct language. The reasons behind this careful speech style were the same that in our society females have to be very conscious about their image. Secondly in the Air Force, they are few in number, therefore, to prove their capability; they have to be careful about using grammatically correct language. It is related to their sensitivity to verbal rejections, as women were found to be more emotional and they take verbal rejections more personal, again because they are more conscious about their image building, so they try their best not to give a chance to anyone to snub or insult them. Humour was an element lacking in the speech of females in official setup and which is supported the literature on the topic (Tannen, 1994).

The reason behind female's lack of sense of humour seems to be as they are afraid to be taken wrongly as the society has put certain conventions. Men enjoy more liberties and

are more carefree while speaking. Females were found to be more apologetic although not in high percentages but the ratio of apologies in females as compared to males was a bit higher and so it supported literature (Lakoff, 1975).

The reasons found through the interview were that females were by nature more caring and helpful. Accepting one's mistake means he or she wants to compensate. However, some female officers told the researcher that they were not apologetic and for them, their ego and self respect comes first and that they would never apologize at the cost of their self respect. But majority of the officers contradict their claim and emphasized that females apologize more and men do not because they have ego problems.

No significant difference was found in the confidence level of male and female officers and the results challenged the views put forward in literature (Lakoff, 1975:54). Although there were some views that females in the start are less confident in eastern setup, they are not used to talk to males openly and frankly due to conventions of the society so when they come to professional life, they are slightly less confident but the researcher was told that this is not something serious as they quickly get used to the environment. Then one female officer told that males too feel shy to talk to their female colleagues but these barriers diminish with the passage of time and due to the training and exposure at Air Force, females soon acquire the same confidence level as males have. There were some differences of opinion regarding these assumptions in the Air Force setup for example: females are more indirect, or males avoid asking for help etc. All these assumptions did not hold true as the nature of the job demands officers to be very clear about an order before accomplishing. And females cannot be indirect and shy as it would make it impossible to carry out their duties. So, both men and women are very clear and as such, there are no differences on the basis of gender. The findings do not support the literature. Some opinions support the assumption that females are curious to know the minute details of a task while males do not care much. It was found that if required, both male and female officers ask about both details and end results and there is no gender based difference in this aspect. Female officers were found to be more emotional, in conformity with assumptions (Lakoff, 1975) but it was found that it is something related to their sensitive nature and it does not affect their performance. However, males are

found to be more carefree while females do take things more seriously and are more emotional. The data that emerged provided no clear pattern as to show that females downplay their accomplishments or that they are not considered for promotions due to their lack of communication skills. It was found that there is a fixed criterion for promotions and whoever qualifies it, gets promoted, irrespective of their gender. Regarding the assumption that females are interrupted more or they talk more, no evidence was found and both the genders blamed the other gender of being more talkative. However, it was noted that at certain places, men are briefer and females explain the things in details and according to one officer, it leads to wastage of time on part of the female officers to some extent. Data obtained verified the assumption in literature that females are more conscious of their grammar and pronunciation (Lakoff, 1975) while they speak whereas men are more concerned to convey the message and are not much worried about the form much. The reason behind this difference is that females have to prove that they are competent to do their job. They have to be careful not to give others any chance to object on their efficiency. These things are interrelated, as they are emotional, more sensitive to insults, so they take care not to be scolded or insulted.

As far as the assumption that females are poor bosses is concerned, (for details, see page 18), no evidence was found. There were some individual views that their leadership skills are not as polished as males. The claim was refuted. One male officer said that researcher that females are going to be very good bosses as they have an urge to prove themselves and their talent, so they work very hard but they would not be liked in the society. Men are not used to take orders from females. No clear pattern was found regarding the claim that women are better in verbal communication as findings show varying results. One female officer said that females are in habit of explaining things in detail so they are good in verbal skills, but male officers said that as men get more exposure right from the childhood so their experience is vast and their verbal skills more polished. On the whole, no gender related difference in the verbal skills. The assumption stating that men avoid asking for help while women do not feel hesitation seemed to support the literature (Tannen, 1994) as it was approved by majority and the reason that emerged is that men hesitate due to ego while women don't have ego problems. Similarly, the claim that men ask questions to request for information while women ask for conversational maintenance

was challenged with a high percentage by both genders. There are some differences in these statistics due to the different environment of the Air Force. Data related to the claim that women's orders are taken as suggestions instead of commands show varying results. While men supported it saying that in our society, men are not used to get orders from females and so females' orders are not taken seriously. However, this belief was challenged by females who argued that an order is an order and that needs to be followed and there is no such concept in their workplace.

No significant difference was found on the basis of gender as a whole. Only in few cases these assumptions were found to be prevailing, such as in the case of politeness or in the use of taboo words as society restricts them (as is asserted by Ronald Wardaugh, 1992 that some varieties or terms are denied to one sex and mostly that sex is the female), but that does not seem to affect their performance or cause any barriers between male female communication and there is no such thing as a communication gap. There is certain difference from civil setup as one officer said that they use technical terms mostly so little margin is left for difference. The idea that any such differences lead to misunderstandings was strongly refuted by both the genders. So on the whole, there are few differences and that too in some areas and as we can see, societal pressure can be seen in those areas, it plays the main role to control male /female speech patterns.

## **6.2 Conclusion**

Through the evidence presented in literature and in this study, it becomes clear that there is a need for more in-depth research into the challenges faced by organizations in achieving a more balanced representation of women in key positions. As it can be seen that mostly organizations comprise of male population in majority, including the Air Force and mostly males are occupying the senior positions. So, it is possible that masculine speech style is considered as the norm in such organizations. Rosener (1997) explains that men's discourse styles are institutionalized as being the better and the only way to talk; to speak with authority (Cited in Sheridan, 2004). This case study presents an organization in which women are not represented traditionally and thus focus on the question whether men and women enjoy equal authorities at such organizations. Obviously the answer is in negative as the study shows that women are still facing

marginalization in many aspects like they cannot exhibit sense of humour as males do, due to societal pressure. Although both genders get equal training and have to play the same roles, even then the difference show that it is due to reasons other than role play and status. Both genders in the Air Force, even of the same rank and status, have differences in speech styles in some areas, not all. At some places, the assumptions posited by literature are challenged. In literature, there is an assertion that (Lakoff, 1990) predominance of one sex in an organization creates and maintains gender related expectations for how someone in that position should speak. This case study, comprising a high male representation at all levels, is reproducing and perpetuating these gender ideologies reviewed earlier in the literature.

Literature on the topic claims that when a woman is placed in a position in which being assertive and forceful is necessary, she is faced with a paradox; she can be good woman but a bad executive or professional or vice versa (Lakoff, 1990:206). The study confirmed this belief and was restated in the words of a male interviewee who said that women gets a position of authority, they will be very good bosses but they will not be liked. So the study suggests that women do face a double bind regarding professionalism and femininity and they have to choose between being assertive and being likeable.

To sum up, the case study suggests that rather than trying to adapt to speech patterns of the pre established norms, women can develop their own style, suited to organizational realities. Their style can be based on cooperation and assertiveness at the same time. It is hoped that the findings of this study will not only contribute to an enhanced awareness about male/female speech patterns but they will also lead to advancements and improvements in pedagogical practices, allowing the parents and teachers to have more knowledge about gender based identities and constructs and minimizing any chances of discrimination with girls and boys on the basis of gender, leading to a more balanced, equality based personality of men and women growing. This will lead to develop a better workplace environment which may be more harmonious and more relaxed.

### **6.3 Possibilities for Further Research**

While the study has suggested certain possible answers, it also raises numerous questions requiring further research. If another research about language differences on the basis of gender is carried out, a number of improvements and adaptations can be made. A wider sample would reveal greater insights into attitudes, using the current study as a starting point. It would be more representative and it would be possible to arrive at stronger generalizations. Future researchers may not face that much problem and can broaden the scope as mentioned earlier, the researcher was not allowed to observe officers at workplace, if future researchers are allowed, it would result into more precise and generalizable results. Some variables like class, educational background, age etc were taken as constant. They can be included in further studies as language and gender in isolation was studied in this thesis. Further studies can compare the situation and performance of different wings within the Air Force as some pilots told the researcher that fliers get three years training in the academy while officers from other wings get into the field after initial training of mere six months, so it brings difference in their performance as officers from flying wing, especially females, are more polished. Some effects of brought up on their personalities in the form of specific feminine styles are minimised. Such studies can be very insightful and productive and can help in enhancing the performance of other wings like accounts, weather forecast, aeronautical engineering, education, logistics, and administration. Similarly, a comparison can be drawn between the Army, the Navy and the Air Force. The study can also be carried out in informal contexts, like observing officers in non-official setup.

Officers from other armed forces like Army and Navy can be included to broaden its focus and breadth still further, foreign officers who come for different courses such as Basic Staff Course, Combat Command Course, and Staff College can also be included to get their opinions and hence a study of global perspective can be carried out.

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## Appendix-A

## Questionnaire

This questionnaire is a part of my research study for the completion of MPhil degree at International Islamic University Islamabad. This study may help in improving interpersonal communication skills at workplace. The findings of the research will be available to the respondents on request. This questionnaire was designed for the officers of PAF.

The names and particulars of the respondents will not be disclosed. To make the research authentic, please be honest in giving your opinions.

Name:

Gender:

Rank:

Workplace:

Professional experience:

Educational level:

Age :( tick one of the below)

(21-25), (26-30), (31-35), 36-40), (41-45)

Mother tongue:

What languages you speak besides your mother tongue? Also mention proficiency level.

Languages		Proficiency Level		
		Fair	Good	Excellent
1				
2				
3				
4				

**Q1 (a)** To which language you were exposed to at primary level in school?

**(b)** Which language you mostly use for communicating at workplace?

**Q: 2** Female officers are more polite in their speech as compared to male officers?

Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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**Q: 3** Female officers are more conscious about their grammar and pronunciation while talking?

Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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**Q: 4** What do you think while communicating at workplace, male officers exhibit sense of humour more as compared to female officers?

Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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**Q: 5** Female officers apologize more as compared to male officers at workplace?

Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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**Q: 6** What do you think indirect requests like *I haven't seen the reports* (indirectly asking for some reports) are made more by female officers?

Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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**Q: 7** Do you agree that male officers are more confident in their conversation as compared to female officers?

Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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**Q: 8** Nods like *hmmm* means different in both genders .For men, it means *I agree* and for females, it means *Yes I am listening* and so it leads to miscommunications and misunderstandings. What do you think about it?

Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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**Q: 9** Male officers show problem solving attitude and offer solution while female officers will sympathize. What is your opinion?

Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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**Q: 10** Do you agree that female officers ask questions for conversational maintenance while male officers ask questions to request for information?

Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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**Q: 11** Male officers avoid asking for help when they need it but female officers frequently ask for help and do not feel hesitation. What is your experience?

Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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**Q: 12** Male officers are less aware of the details, as they are more interested in the end result while female officers want to know the details. What do you think?

Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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**Q: 13** Male officers do not express their inner feelings as they are less emotional while female officers express their inner feelings and cry to express grief/anger as they are emotional. What is your opinion?

Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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**Q: 14** Do you think female officers take verbal rejection and insults more personal as compared to male officers?

Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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**Q: 15** Female officers are less bossy and authoritative as compared to male officers. What do you think?

Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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**Q: 16** Female officers downplay their accomplishments and achievements while male officers do not. What is your opinion?

Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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**Q: 17** Do you think that female officers are more cooperative at workplace than male officers?

Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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**Q: 18** Female officers are not taken seriously for promotions as their mitigation strategies are taken as signs of weakness and incompetence. Do you believe that?

Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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**Q: 19** Female officer's orders are usually taken as suggestions rather than commands. Do you think so?

Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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**Q: 20** Male officers often interrupt while talking to manifest their dominating attitude. Do you think their behaviour is like that?

Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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**Q: 21** Male officers use more taboo words as compared to female officers. What is your opinion?

Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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**Q: 22** Female officers talk more as compared to male officers. What do you think?

Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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**Q: 23** Female officers prove to be poor bosses?

Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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**Q: 24** Do you think in verbal communication, female officers are better than their male counterparts?

Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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**Q: 25** The language of male and female officers differs at workplace. What is your opinion?

Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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**Q: 26** Do you think these differences lead to misunderstandings?

Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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**Approval Letter for Research in P.A.F**

To Whom It May Concern

Ms. Shagufta Gul, student of MPhil English at [unintelligible] [unintelligible] doing research on the topic "The Role of Gender in PAF", visited [unintelligible] PAF Base Badaber and Air Headquarters [unintelligible] Islamabad. She was allowed to take interviews and fill questionnaires filed.

Respectfully,  
[unintelligible]

*Azam Khan*

Azam Khan

Air Commodore

Air Headquarters Islamabad

