

**EXPLORATION OF FEMALE ACADEMIC STAFF
EXPERIENCES IN A CONSERVATIVE AND GENDERED
SOCIETY - A CASE STUDY OF SELECTED UNIVERSITIES
IN PAKISTAN**

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Abstract

The focus of my research is to explore the experiences of female academic staff in a number of higher education institutions in Pakistan. The research looked at female academic staff perceptions in light of their socio-cultural experiences and how societal as well as cultural norms impacted their institutional experiences. It also investigated female academic career progression and work-life conflict which impacts their lives. The research also explored how multiple identities are adopted by these academics in their attempt to adjust to institutional life. A feminist discourse was adopted to understand female academic staff position in Pakistani society. From a methodological perspective, data was generated by conducting face-to-face interviews of 16 female academic staff from the four provinces in Pakistan. Sample was identified by snowballing technique and data was analysed thematically from the transcribed interviews. My findings show that female academics experience significant work-life conflict and career stagnation. Respondents indicated that their treatment was often based on their gender which was historically located and supported by male cultural and societal dominance. There was societal role differentiation with men being the bread-winners whereby women had a domestic role. Domestic responsibilities included women having to look after the home and the extended family. Within the institutions female academics are employed, their treatment was based on institutional 'maleness' whereby women were often denied opportunities to develop their careers in par with their male colleagues. Respondents indicated that institutional understanding of equality issues was often limited to policy rhetoric with little sign of policies being implemented. Overall, the findings show that for female academics there are a myriad of issues at institutional and societal level that need to be addressed to improve their overall experiences.

Key terms: Higher Education; Pakistan; Female academic staff; Work-life conflict; Cultural and societal issues; Feminism; Patriarchy; Personal and institutional experiences

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Glossary

Baluchistan:	Province of Pakistan
<i>Burqa:</i>	Garment worn by women to cover themselves in public
<i>Chador:</i>	Head cover
<i>Chappatti:</i>	Freshly made bread
<i>Deeni Madrassas:</i>	Religious schools
<i>Dowry:</i>	Household items given to girls at the time of marriage
<i>Dupatta:</i>	Head scarf
<i>Hijab:</i>	Whole body cover
<i>Hudood Ordinance:</i>	Islamic law introduced by military ruler General Zia-ul-Haq in 1977 as part of 'Islamisation' process in Pakistan
<i>Izzat:</i>	Honour
<i>Janat:</i>	Paradise
<i>Jirga:</i>	A village council
<i>Jumma Prayers:</i>	Friday prayers for Muslims
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK):	Province of Pakistan
<i>Namaz:</i>	Muslim prayers
Pakhtoon or Pashtun:	People belonging to KPK
<i>Panchayat:</i>	Village Council
Punjab:	Province of Pakistan
<i>Purdah:</i>	Veil
<i>Qawwam:</i>	Husband
<i>Qur'an:</i>	Muslims Holy Book
<i>Sharia Law:</i>	Islamic Law
Sind:	Province of Pakistan
<i>Safarish:</i>	A promise to gain favour
<i>Shalwar Kameez:</i>	National dress of Pakistan
Tablighies:	Missionaries
Talaq:	Divorce
Urdu:	National language of Pakistan
<i>Vani:</i>	Child marriages

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.0 Research problem

Pakistan, like many other developing countries, is a country with an increasing number of females opting for higher education studies instead of an early marriage and motherhood resulting in a very high demand for university places over the past 20 years (Higher Education Commission, 2017). This has led to a growth of private and public higher education providers with an increasing number of women entering the higher education profession as academics in Pakistan. However, despite this somewhat optimistic picture it appears that the higher education sector is also facing turbulence with female staff experiencing significant gender inequalities (Shah and Shah, 2012). In some instances, there is a deliberate attempt, mostly by their male managers, to prevent female academics from moving into senior positions of management as indicated by Shah (2018) in her study of Malaysian universities.

Priola's (2004) study of UK institutions came to a similar conclusion. It appears that female academic staffs in industrially developed countries have also been an area of concern that female staff work experience in universities is often negative with many staff being denied research opportunities and overburdened with work. This negative perception towards female academic staff is supported by Probert (2005) who argued that women 'can't fit in' into the male dominated organisational culture. Similarly, McGregor (2010) concluded that even those who have had some success are constantly hitting the 'glass ceiling' when it comes to career progression. Baumgartner and Schneider (2010) support this viewpoint and go on to state that the discriminatory practices result in denial of basic rights such as promotional and other career opportunities for many female academics in whichever country one examines.

The management in academia often adopts a 'gender-blind' approach towards female equality (McGregor, 2010). However, this is based on traditional masculine stereotype and management is complicit in maintaining this status quo (Handley, 1994). It would seem that most managers in academia are not immune from gender discriminatory practices despite their high level of education, which assumes a

greater awareness of equality issues and academic parity. This view is supported by Cockburn (1991) who argues that academic managers tend not to practice raw forms of discrimination, which may be evident in some other sectors of the labour market; theirs is far more ‘sophisticated’. This led Mavin (2004; 2008) and Thanacoody *et al.* (2006) in their study of academic institutions in industrially developed countries to suggest that academics are not immune from gender biased practices and indeed although there may be many female academic staff in colleges and universities, most have little influence on organisational decision-making since the nuances and culture are heavily skewed in favour of male staff. Furthermore, it has been suggested that female academic staff in institutions are either invisible or under constant ‘surveillance’ by their watchful managers rendering their experiences ‘uncomfortable’ (Kemp *et al.*, 2015). This view certainly strikes resonance with the more politically aware American feminist social thinkers and feminists such as Harding, Haraway and Collins (see Chapter 5) who contend that gender discrimination does not occur by accident but by a very deliberate act of male hegemonic domination and therefore must not only be resisted but challenged.

What is also quite interesting is that the feminist writers such as bell hooks (1995), who is a black feminist and an activist in USA, put forward the argument that the discourse of ‘white’ women and that of women of ‘colour’ is determined by their own histories therefore a uniform approach cannot be taken just because they were ‘women’. This is an important observation since it recognised the importance of *difference* in female academics due to their cultural, racial and religious norms. This point is quite important since it gives a pointer towards understanding the position of women in Pakistani society where culture, religion and regional differences play an important role in subjugation of women.

1.1 Research Gap

It is also interesting to note that research about the experience of working women that has taken place has mostly been driven by Western sociologists and there does not appear to be any significant work that addresses the female work experience in developing countries especially in the context of Pakistan which is a gendered and conservative society (Ahmad *et al.*, 2011). My concern is that the few studies that

have taken place do not address some of the pertinent issues being experienced by female academics in relation to their institutional experiences such as career progression, workplace harassment and treatment by colleagues and seniors. It has been argued that this often results in a lack of the recognition of efforts and contributions made by females by the management and often women academics are marginalised. My research explores these aspects in light of the daily challenges faced by female academics such as social pressures due to work-life balance issues or the multiple identities women have to adopt in their attempt to adjust to the home and institutional life. The research investigated the female socio-cultural experiences and religious norms in the Pakistani higher education context which largely remain unexplored. This study attempts to explore some of the potential institutional barriers in Pakistani higher education system, which could result in female academic staff exclusion from senior positions, and therefore lead to their possible disengagement.

1.2 Research Rationale

The purpose of this study is to ascertain the female academic staff experiences and how this influences their institutional life. It is also about the life journey of the female academics exploring the cultural and social aspects impacting their careers. I am hoping that this research will provide valuable insights into female academic staff experiences in the perspective and settings of the selected Pakistani universities.

I seek to explore female academic staff experiences in the context of their employment in delineating the relationship between institutional policy rhetoric and work experience in the selected Pakistani higher education institutions. Given there are very few studies that focus on the role of female academic staff in higher education in developing countries (Shuck and Wollard, 2010) I have used studies that have been conducted by a few academics in the context of Pakistan (Shah and Shah, 2012; 2018) and other non-Western countries. Studies that highlight employee opportunities and employee engagement in the Western world (Czarnowsky, 2008; Ali, 2013; Tlaiss, 2015) are also likely to assist my understanding of the phenomena being researched. It is by investigating the experiences of female academics that it will be possible to develop an understanding of the complexities of female employee experiences in higher education institutional settings in Pakistan.

1.3 My position in the research process

I taught in a leading Higher Education (hereafter HE) university in Pakistan before coming to study in UK on a prestigious scholarship to study MA in Management at London Metropolitan University. After completing my degree I was appointed by the University as a Lecturer (now a Senior Lecturer), and as part of my continuing professional development, I started this Doctorate.

Being a woman with personal experiences of academia puts me in a unique position to explore the experiences of my former peers in higher education in Pakistan. My experience of teaching in Pakistan also makes me an ‘insider’ therefore is particularly relevant to this research as is being a woman, a professional and a mother of two daughters. My teaching experiences in Pakistan made me feel uncomfortable at times especially the attitude and expectations of the society. There were occasions when I experienced patronizing attitudes from males as well as stigma and insurmountable social pressures. I realized that cultural and societal norms were heavily skewed against women in general but more so with women who were divorced. The teaching experience in Pakistan also led me to ask questions such as, why female staff were subjected to gender discrimination that curtailed their careers, why institutions were doing little to root out gender inequality, what was the purpose of institutional gender policies when there was no implementation and follow-up. I was also concerned at the way working women were treated in the home with little respite from domestic duties which created barriers in their personal and professional journeys.

My personal experience of higher education in UK led me to think critically about gender equality issues in Pakistan higher education where such issues are not taken seriously by the management especially by male managers; a reason may be that they are the beneficiaries of this unequal system which has showered them with privilege and power. My experience also suggests that what happens in higher education in Pakistan most probably happens in many developing countries where the institutional policies are rigorous in terms of rhetoric, however, implementation is often lacking. This viewpoint is supported by my reading of academic literature which suggests that gender stereo-types and the ‘benevolent male syndrome’ of their perceived

dominance may be playing a significant role in the lives of female academic staff within the HE institutional context in Pakistan (Shah and Shah, 2012). Support for this viewpoint has been provided by Liu and Cohen (2010), who point out that performance measurements involve both in-role (whilst employees are doing the job) and discretionary aspects (their treatment by the employers) aspects. What concerns me is the unequal treatment of female academics in higher education in Pakistan hence the need for this research.

1.4 Research aims and objectives

The value of female academics in Pakistan is not only defined by the nature of their work roles but how they are characterised by the societal, cultural and religious norms which are conservative and gendered. Furthermore, I would argue, there has been a failure by higher education management to address gender issues hence the need for this research. The objective of my research is to explore the experiences of female academic staff in the higher education institutions in relation to their treatment in the selected Pakistan universities. The investigation attempts to go beyond staff contractual role, defined job scope and job requirements, and investigate the female holistic experiences which may be impacting their job performance. The research aim is to investigate the female academic staff career journey in Pakistani universities that may be leading to their career progression becoming stagnated.

Research objectives are to:

- Explore how an interdependence of work and family impacts the female career progression in academic settings in Pakistani higher education.
- Explore the gender equality agenda in relation to the socio-cultural and religious norms in the context of a ‘conservative and gendered society’ and its impact on female career advancement in Pakistani universities.
- Understand how women navigate their careers in male-centric Pakistani higher education sector.

- Investigate the institutional constraints that may be impacting female academic career development in relation to appointments, promotions and workload in Pakistani universities.

1.5 Research Focus

My research, by focusing on female academic staff experiences, explores a variety of issues such as role of power, women's exclusion from certain roles, their engagement or lack of it, their denial of promotion and a variety of other aspects which leads to social injustice for women in Pakistan higher education institutions. More importantly, I feel that this may in a small way, contribute to social justice agenda for women whichever area of work they are engaged in. Indeed, this research may have wide-ranging implication in that it could become a reference point for other public as well as private sector organisations once it has been published. It may also shed some light and act as reference point for other female academics, not just in Pakistan or other developing countries, but all women who are trying to understand the root causes of female exclusion at work.

It needs to be stated that whilst it is not my intention to create ripples or, at worst, unrest in the respondents' institutions however what may happen, given the nature of this research, is that the various respondents who participate in the research could potentially become change agents in their institution since sharing of ideas could act as a locus for change. Whilst this may indeed fall within the theoretical framework proposed by the feminist researchers, this ought to be seen as consequential rather than intentional.

As stated earlier, I did not have a pre-conceived agenda; neither was I an activist or a revolutionary however the reading I undertook developed a frame of mind in me that borders on radicalism. A radical is one who challenges the status quo and argues for change. Therefore my research is an attempt to highlight the inequalities that may be militating against the interest of female academics. It also needs to be recognised in the context of my research that I am located (in the UK) therefore am an 'outsider' and sheltered from some of after-fall of this research. The fact that individual women

academics will be able to discuss and read about their and other female experiences will inevitably have ripple effect in females becoming ‘conscientised’ (Freire, 1970).

I see my research becoming a catalyst for debate for the research participants and those reading the findings about female inequality agenda. I would also like to state that it is difficult to know without wisdom of hindsight whether a female progressive revolution is going to take place as an outcome of my research however, it is my intention to highlight the aspects of female academic experiences and to empower these staff which may lead to the start of a debate or some political actions about female rights in Pakistan. Female academics could feel empowered to challenge their oppression at work as well as in broader society. Initial indication is that they have started to share their experiences through various social media channels and the struggle for social justice has started. I would argue that this conscious raising of female staff or the ‘de-colonialisation’ of women (De Vault, 1996) cannot be bad for the Pakistani women academics nor for Pakistani society at large. However, as we all know too well, especially the oppressed groups, that struggle is long and hard and there are seldom instances when immediate results follow because those in power will not relinquish their power so easily. Therefore, there is no denying that women’s emancipation in Pakistan is likely to follow a difficult trajectory however, as the famous saying goes, ‘they may have the watches; we have the time’.

1.6 Structure of thesis

The first chapter provides an outline of the problem being researched as well as outlined research aims and objectives and the researcher background. This chapter has also given a brief overview of the area being researched. Chapter 2 provides a background to the status of women in Islam, discusses social deprivation in Pakistan and how these impact women in Pakistani society. The third chapter provides an overview of the most pertinent issues and literature regarding women’s organisational experience in relation to their engagement with a focus on Pakistan. Chapter 4 discusses female academic staff experiences in Pakistani Higher Education institutions. This is followed by Chapter 5 where there is a detailed discussion on feminism and various research perspectives such as the standpoint and narrative approaches which are the drivers in researching gender issues. Discussion also

focuses on power dynamics between the researcher and research participants. It also highlights the feminist thinking and the power dynamics, which make women second-class citizens. Chapter 6 discusses the approaches adopted in the present study exploring various aspects as well as a justification of the chosen methods and research instruments in the present research. Chapter 7 contains the analysis of data followed by Chapter 8 where a discussion of findings takes place. Finally, Chapter 9 concludes the thesis by including sections on suggested recommendations to Pakistani higher education policy makers, research limitations and areas for further research.

Chapter 2: Status of women in Islam, social deprivation, and women's position in Pakistani society

2.0 Introduction

Pakistan emerged as a nation after the end of colonial rule of India by Britain in 1947. The logic behind the division was that areas with majority Muslim population will become Pakistan whereas the remaining areas will be India. From its independence to now Pakistan remains 97% Muslims. Today religion impacts every aspect of people lives whether it is professional or family life for females. This point was made by Shah and Shah (2012) in a study of women heads of colleges in Pakistan and she concluded that the cultural and religious belief system plays an important role in shaping the discourse, practices and concepts which are often mixed with religious interpretations. This, she argues, puts women in an awkward position as the role socialization and expectations from women are based on factors that pose a stressful environment for the female heads in academic institutions. This results in power dynamics and male dominance along with the cultural and social aspects which depower women.

Issues that will be explored in this chapter include the relation of religion and culture in the context of Pakistan, educational opportunities for women, and male violence against women. Then the discussion moved on to social deprivation and gender inequality since any study on Pakistan, a developing country, has to be conducted in light of the economic position that its people find themselves in. The issue of women's position in society is also explored in some detail. Some of this discussion will also explore the role of the *Jirga* (village council) in delivery of social and individual justice in some rural communities in Pakistan and how some women are resisting certain oppressive practices.

2.1 Status of women in Islam

Islam originated in Arabia and was brought to historical India in the 8th Century by Muslim invaders led by Mohammad bin Qasim however widespread Muslim

invasion of *Hindustan* (India) did not take place until a century later when the *Rajput* power was in decline. Islam spread to the whole of India via Muslim *tablighies* (missionaries) over several centuries and later by the invasion of Muslims from Afghanistan and Iran resulting in the establishment of the Mughal Empire (Mir-Hosseini, 2016). Some Hindus converted to Islam voluntarily whilst others were forced. It is widely documented that spread of Islam led to a substantial increase in women's rights (Mernissi, 1987; 1991). Islam provided a platform for both sexes to have differentiated roles in the home and work (Whyte, 2015). Women were granted the same status as men and they are defined as free moral agents capable of making their own choices. It has been stated that the *Quran* unveiled the history of the human race and indicated the need for men and women to work together (Khan, 2011). This is further evidenced in a number of notable Islamic holy books, namely *Ananas*, *Al-Bashar*, *Al-Insan*, and *Al Momin* (Bhattacharya, 2014). Thus, Islam provides women the opportunity to enjoy political, public and financial rights (Bukhari, 2012). The common misconception in India at the time that women seduce and tempt men was banished by Islam and the religion established that women can be chaste, pure and immaculate (Jafar, 2011).

Furthermore, Islam granted equal legal rights to both sexes. Thus, a woman had the right to own, buy and sell property (Mir-Hosseini, 2016). She could make a living and take care of her property (Al-Sadi and Basit, 2017). Islam stressed that a woman is an independent being and therefore her duty differs from those of her husband, father or brother. A woman could inherit properties; she was also eligible to receive shares from properties after the demise of immediate male relatives. A woman could also receive necessary financial support for the upbringing of her children whether within a marriage or after divorce (Omar, 2011). Islam also stipulated that the *Qawwam* (husband) had a duty to protect and cater for the wife and family (Sulaimani, 1986). It has been noted that giving such rights and protection to women at the time Islam introduced to the world was quite revolutionary (Bukhari and Ramzan, 2013). Despite that, in this day and age, more predominantly in developing nations, religion and culture over centuries has become intertwined and women have been imprisoned by the notion that their role in society demands them to be dependent on men.

According to Adeel (2010), gender does not determine superiority in Islam but piety does. Islam does not prevent women from working outside their homes or being educated but the reality for most women is that they are just bed partners as preached by most religious leaders who may have ulterior motives (Hakim and Aziz, 1998). This false identity carried by women is often caused by ignorance perpetuated by the psychological impressions posed by family members and the cultural norms (Adeel, 2010). This leads Adeel (2010) to describe Pakistan as being a peculiar society where undue submissiveness is reinforced. It would seem that most men show little remorse when women stand up against their repression as Benazir Bhutto, former first female Prime Minister of Pakistan (and the Muslim world) once stated,

‘I found that a whole series of people opposed me simply on the grounds that I was a woman. The clerics took to the mosque saying that Pakistan had thrown itself outside the Muslim world and the Muslim Ummah by voting for a woman, that a woman had usurped a Man’s place in the Islamic Society. I can deal with political differences, but how do you deal with it when someone says I don’t like you because you’re a woman and you’ve taken a man’s place’.

(BBC, 2012)

In many societies, especially in the developing world, religion and culture have become inter-twined over the centuries and the women’s status has been reduced to second-class citizenship (Kirmani, 2016). This practice has been passed on from generation to generation and results in the maintenance of male superiority over females in society. It has been argued that the combination of religion and culture has led to a societal norm whereby male dominance over females has done a lot of harm to women in society (Honeyford, 1998) and this contradiction can be seen in Pakistan too.

2.2 Inter-twining of religion and culture

Islamic laws form the core and foundation of the country’s rules, regulations and laws however it is also widely acknowledged that Pakistan practices some customs that contradict the Islamic laws (Kirmani, 2016). Therefore, even though Islamic laws give legal and religious rights that should be enjoyed by all Pakistanis, culture norms result in denial of these rights to women, especially those at the lower rung of

society (Zaman, 2015). This view is supported by Ibrahim (2005) who argues that Islamic law is often misconstrued by historic customs and cultural practices resulting in a denial of women's rights.

Some examples include denial of women's right to sit on the *Jirga* (Village Council) where decisions are made on local issues; this is widely practiced in the *Pakhtoon* or *Pashtun* belt of Pakistan (and Afghanistan). Similarly, women are not allowed to sit on the *Panchayat* (Village Council) mostly practiced in South Punjab where once again local decisions are made. It is argued that these setups have 'deaf ears' to the pains and agonies of women in the society and both the legal and religious framework fail to remedy the situation (Nasrullah *et al.*, 2009). Another influencing factor is fear. The aforementioned bodies, *Jirga* and the *Panchayat* exert fear among the masses by meting out punishment on anyone who goes against the established societal norms (Bari and Khattak, 2001).

In rural environments, which make up a vast majority of area in the country, laws are rarely practiced and the execution of law lies in the hands of a *Jirga* (Village Council). Individuals are appointed on these governing bodies as a result of their power and authority over others. For centuries these *Jirga's* have been sacrificing women to compensate for the wrong-doings of men (Nasrullah *et al.*, 2009; Bari and Khattak, 2001). It is seen as common practice that when a man commits an offence, be it as grave as murder, theft or even as little as being caught flirting with the opposite sex, the women of his family are used to settle the score. Recently, in the village of DI Khan (North West of Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa Province), a fourteen year old girl was made to walk naked through the street as her brother had an affair with the rival family's daughter (Independent News, 2017).

Thus, the peace and equality preached by Islam are overshadowed by the sectarian culture where women's participation in decision making bodies is largely absent. This led Durrani (1991) in her famous book '*My Feudal Lord*' to describe her experience of an abusive marriage in the feudal society of Pakistan. She described her experiences as one of denial of equal rights based on a distorted version of Islam. She was quite critical of the women who were unwilling to stand up for their rights accusing them of 'long held silence'.

Looking at present time, most women have no spending power; as almost everything women earn goes straight to the male head of family, or is disbursed on the needs of family, leaving nothing left over to be spent on themselves. This urban-rural divide can also be witnessed through the difference in male versus female access to basic health care. Similarly, the political environment for women is also hostile, despite the Constitution of Pakistan (2010) men and women are equal and states that ‘There shall be no discrimination on the basis of sex’ (Article 25, 2) as well as Pakistan having a dual system of civil and *Sharia* law (Islamic Law). It would seem that women are still not given the place in society that they deserve and therefore continue to relentlessly contend to ameliorate their status.

It would seem that over the years, the cultural degradation and moral erosion, as evidenced in the case of Pakistan, has replaced the equality standards stressed by the *Quran* with inequality and discrimination (Fields, 2016). This schism has resulted in discordance and violence as evidenced by attacks on minorities in Pakistan. The Islamic governing laws and values have been overshadowed and standards compromised. Violence has taken preeminence over equality for women with very few women questioning their rights as defined in Islam. Fields (2016) argues that this is a major contradiction since Islam considers both men and women as equals and therefore gives them the same rights.

Despite the remarkable achievements and struggles of many women throughout the last decade, a woman’s status in the Pakistani culture and society vis-à-vis men, is one of systemic subordination, determined by the forces of patriarchy. Women are often viewed as homemakers, responsible for looking after the household and its ménage, often leading a life of physical hardship, which involves long hours of tedious chores which receive neither compensation nor recognition. Most of the working women work longer hours than the rest of the family, carrying the dual burden of work both inside as well as outside the house (Mumtaz and Shaheed, 1987). In fact, this role is emphasized on girls from a very young age, who are taught to cook, clean and manage the household. They are brought up to be good mothers, sisters and wives. Going out unnecessarily, and that too without a male member of family i.e. brother, father or husband, is generally frowned upon.

Therefore, in a society, where one's own family and friends become shackles, breaking free is a tremendously difficult task.

This view about women's status is further supported by Wronka (2016) who argues that it has been one long struggle for women who have been forced to fight for basic human rights especially in developing and developed countries. He goes on to question that in a society, where women are not only seen as the lesser-able, dependent gender but also where all opportunities are tailored to be inherently discriminatory in nature towards them, how can it be expected that women will stand shoulder to shoulder to men? It would seem that while women in the West have won many battles for equality, the war for equality in developing countries, especially Muslim ones, is far from being won. This may seem ridiculous in today's modern world, and yet despite the endless ink, words and sweat frittered over the quarrel; it would seem we still have a long way to go in Pakistan.

These oppressive practices can be described as social constructs which were artificially created and now are a kind of 'male truth' which is used to subjugate and oppress using a 'cultural equation of mind' (Belenky *et al.*, 1986, p. 99). Techniques, rather conveniently, perfected over many centuries have been used to reinforce the gendered power relationships where the women are perceived negatively. Culture has sanctioned female oppression and women have been accommodated into the cultural passivity however as the old adage goes 'where there is oppression there is also resistance' and the female struggle for equality tell us about the many battles where women fought back and came out winning.

Gendered roles are entrenched in human societies but patriarchal societies force women into places of invisibility and limit women within the boundaries of domesticity. This role specification is transferred from domestic sphere to the professional contexts and if the women get into educational leadership role, it become unacceptable and a challenge for the men (Shah, 2009).

2.3 Women and educational opportunities

Pakistan's literacy rate, though having improved marginally over the years, remains considerably short of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) target of 88% by 2015. It is at 58%, and a closer look reveals large gender, rural and urban disparities (United Nations Development Programme, 2015). Women in Pakistan are disadvantaged in numerous sectors. For example, in education the literacy rate for women (ages 15 and over) was 'a disappointing' 43% in 2015 (World Bank, 2015). Similarly, the enrolment rates for girls at a primary education are amongst the ten lowest in the world and girls also face much higher drop-out rates compared to boys in the country. These statistics are largely explained by the fact that parents are usually less interested in their girls' education and investment in their education is not seen as a priority, as women are commonly married off when they come of age, and are therefore seen as the responsibility of their husbands. Furthermore, they are being seen as unproductive in their ability to support the family financially in the future, which means that any resources spent on their education are considered as a 'waste'. This view is further ingrained in society by a common perception that boys will earn and support their parents hence investing in their earning capability makes more sense economically than that of their girls. This decision to spend more to educate boys and not girls perpetuates a cycle of discrimination against girls, restricting their opportunities and choices, both in the present and the future (Ali *et al.*, 2011).

Lack of educational opportunities is further exasperated by the fact that even though the legal age of marriage in Pakistan is 18 years for female, girls as young as 15 are sometimes forced to marry in the rural and under-developed parts of the country. Educational opportunities for the middle classes are somewhat better due to their status and financial stability and this class has more freedom as compared to those in the rural areas and are less or not educated (Kirmani, 2016).

While small fractions of society have begun to change this way of life, such an existence however remains a reality for the majority of women residing within the country's rural areas, which make up nearly 61% of the total population (World Bank, 2016). In fact, Pakistan faces an immense disparity in the educational

opportunities for women, conditions of women, both across classes, as well as between rural and urban areas as a result of disproportionate socioeconomic development and the effect of tribal, feudal, and social formations on the day-to-day lives of women. This can be clearly represented through the country's literacy rate, where women in urban areas claim a rate of 69%, while their rural counterparts claim a mere 39% (Economic Survey of Pakistan, 2016). As a result of lack of education, most rural women have no choice but to be employed in the fields or homes. Such jobs entail lengthy hours of tiresome and at times hazardous work, at meager wages, and with little benefits and no labour rights.

2.4 Violence against women

The implementation of laws to protect women's rights is either vague or non-existent and there is almost a total failure to end violence against women (Kirmani, 2016). For example, while crimes such as honour killings, acid attacks, child marriages (*vani*), and *dowry* related violence against women are illegal throughout the country, they continue to be commonly practiced in rural and feudal areas. In such instances, where laws to prevent such crimes are in place, failure to successfully implement them is due to weak justice systems. It may be argued that such laws will remain unsuccessful unless there is a change in social attitudes. Child marriage is a serious issue in Pakistan, with 21 % of girls being married before the age of 18. Similarly, violence against women and girls, including rape, honour killings, acid attacks, domestic violence, and forced marriage is a big concern. Pakistani human rights NGOs estimate that there are about 1,000 honour killings every year (Human Rights Report, 2017).

The social and political structures are set up in such a way that a vast majority of women in Pakistan have little to almost no knowledge of their rights and even where educated women may be aware of their rights as defined by the constitution, cultural and societal pressures prevent them from seeking them (Shaheed, 2002). Girls and women are considered as family *izzat* (honour) but are dishonoured and bartered to end disputes. Many such cases do not make it out to the public but in 2002, due to the unmovable courage of the victim, the world heard the story of Mukhtaran Mai who was 28 years old when at the order of her local council, she was gang-raped by 14 men as punishment for her brother's alleged affair with a woman from another

tribe (The Guardian, 2016). This was one of the very rare cases where the victim appealed directly to the President (General Pervez Musharraf) and yet the verdict saw only 6 men being given the death penalty, 5 of these were later acquitted of their crimes. It is argued that incidents like these occur in thousands, however, are not taken seriously by the law-makers at local or national levels. They seldom make national headlines in Pakistan as they are suppressed at the local level. Tarar and Pulla (2014) ask how a society can talk about equality for women or look for a brighter future when such practices are all too common. They go on to point out that when a woman is brave enough to reach out to courts for justice she is denied justice due to the existing biases which are deep rooted within the criminal justice system.

It is perhaps not too surprising that in the Thomson Reuters Foundation Poll (2018) Pakistan is ranked as the world's sixth most dangerous country for women whereas India is on the top of the list with Afghanistan at the second number. The position has improved for Pakistan from 2011 results where it was at the third place. This ranking is designated largely on the basis of harmful cultural and tribal practices which are faced commonly by many women. It would seem that the dilemma of Pakistani women's state is far more complex whereby religion, cultural practices and feudalism intertwine to oppress women. The stubborn mentality of male superiority and misogyny are deeply entrenched in a strictly patriarchal society. In this environment, basic rights, recognition or respect, is a daily struggle for women; their fate continues to be defined by the men in their lives.

The situation is different for the educated and middle class economically active women in the cities where females experience much greater freedom however other more oppressive practices are still the norm in the rural areas. For instance, honour killing, where a female can be killed by their family if they have illicit relationship with any male, is not highlighted in the media. There are laws to prevent this but due to the feudal norms and a weak justice system, these are not implemented. Similarly, forced marriages, child marriages and *Vani* where a child is married to resolve issues and fights between different feudal clans and domestic abuse is common in the rural underdeveloped areas (Zahra, 2005).

2.5 Social deprivation and gender inequality

Pakistan, despite being a nuclear power, is a developing country, which according to United Nations Millennium goals (2015) has a less developed industrial base and a low Human Development Indicator as compared to other developed countries. Furthermore the HDI shows the less income and high population ratio, low literacy rate and lower life expectancy. Pakistan has a population of over 200 million. Spending on education since its independence in 1947 has consistently been around 2% of its GDP (World Bank, 2015) and even less on the health service with almost 50% of national budget being spent on either military and servicing the foreign debt. Whilst not being over-critical of the various governments in developing countries, the reality of life in most of these countries is that there is general inequality in all spheres of society and Pakistan is no exception as highlighted in numerous international studies. For instance, according to a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2016) report, Pakistan's Human Development Index (HDI) value was 0.573 in 2010 which rather unsurprisingly ranked it at 125th from 169 nations. The HDI of 0.504 in 2011 was reflected in rank dropping to 145th position from 187 countries (Human Development Report, 2016) which can be seen in the table below showing the HDI figures between 1980 and 2015.

Table-1 Human Development Index (UNDP, 2016) for Pakistan

Year	Value	Rank
1980-2011	0.337 to 0.515	Various
2010	0.525	125/169
2011	0.529	145/187
2012	0.538	146/187
2015	0.550	147 /188

The data between 1980 and 2011 has been aggregated and somewhat less reliable since the underlying methods changed as well as number of countries in the HDI but what it does show is that Pakistan's position in ranking has been in the lower quartile for the past 30 years. The Gender Inequality Index (HDR, 2016) is a measure based

on important aspects and dimensions of human development i.e. of reproductive health measured by maternal mortality ratio, empowerment i.e. number of females in the parliamentary positions and economic activity i.e. female labour force confirms the inequality in relation to gender. The GII value for Pakistan of 0.546, ranked it 130 out of 188 countries in 2015 which clearly shows that there are still serious inequality issues in relation to gender generally which need to be addressed in Pakistani society. If we compare it to other countries like Bangladesh the GII is 0.520 and ranks Bangladesh at 119 out of 188 countries. Also India ranks 125 out of 188 with the GII of 0.530 which shows that gender inequality is an issue for some of Pakistan's neighboring countries as well (HDR, 2016).

Pakistan is a country of varying contrasts with major religious, class, regional and the urban vs. rural differences which are historically located. There are four provinces in Pakistan namely Sind, Punjab, Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) with different culture and traditions. This has resulted in disparity in resource allocation and also resulted in female education receiving low priority in Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (formerly known as North West Frontier Province, NWFP) than Punjab and Sind (Khan, 2007). Women's role is seen as child rearing and carrying out domestic chores hence female child education is not prioritized as for the male child. This clearly shows that women are victims of an oppressive feudal system. Other socio-cultural obstacles or 'hidden fences' include poverty, dowry system, social norms and early marriage which has resulted in female literacy rate falling below 26% for women as compared with an overall literacy in Pakistan being at 46%. The picture in some rural areas is even bleaker with female literacy below 12% (Noreen, 2011). The World Economic Forum's Global Gap Report (2013) highlighted that overall literacy and health life expectancy show no signs of improvement. The recent Global Gender Report (2017) shows Pakistan at 143 out of 144 countries as well with only very little improvement on the educational side and major improvement in political empowerment being at 95 out of 144. This led UNESCO to describe Pakistan's educational system as being 'grim' (Latif, 2013). Despite the somewhat bleak economic circumstances, it would seem that there are now more women students and staff in Pakistan higher education than ever before (HEC, 2017).

A quite fascinating paradox is that Pakistan boasts a very credible ratio of over 21% female Parliamentarians which compares quite favorably with the world average of 21.8% (Gander, 2014). These statistics appear to be very credible when comparing with countries such as India and Malaysia that only have 12% female Parliamentarians respectively. This, rather encouragingly, placed Pakistani women in 95th position out of 144 countries in terms of political gender empowerment with a very credible representation of females in ministerial positions (The Global Gender Gap Report, 2017). Given that parliamentarians need to be educated to a graduate level, this is in sharp contrast to education budget whereby less than 3% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was being spent on education between 2010 and 2011 (World Bank Data, 2013). Furthermore, in under-developed and developing countries level of education is just touching 27% whereas percentage in some African countries is as low as 10% (USAID, 2009). The USAID report went on to recognise that developing countries experiencing economic boom have promoted female participation in education which has resulted in 52% of females entering education at all levels. This prompted the World Bank to highlight the need for investing and focusing on female education as a way forward to micro and macro development which it is envisaged will lead to reduction in poverty in third world countries and therefore increased productivity (Oxaal, 1997; Quraishi and Kalim, 2008) as education is considered to be a key tool of empowerment for women in all aspects of life. This impacts fields of education, general public care, economic prospects, political understanding and legal and social rights given to people. This remains a cause of concern especially since gender equality helps to stimulate economic progress.

The above discussion has clearly highlighted that gender inequality in developing countries and in particular Pakistan, is part of a worldwide phenomenon not only in terms of opportunities of openings and resources provided which exists in all segments of society and social classes including field of education. However, before proceeding we need to explore women's position in Pakistani society.

2.6 Women's position in society

Whether it is due to societal norms or religious values, one thing stands established; Pakistan is a society which harshly discriminates against its women while openly violating their basic human rights and there seems to be little or no hope for revolutionary change in the near future (Malik and Courtney, 2011). Discrimination against women at a broader canvas was confirmed by Kenschaft *et al.* (2015) who states that despite there being academic and political debate around gender equality claims, there is still discrimination and suppression of women around the globe in both domestic and professional fronts. In Muslim countries, it becomes a more dominant phenomenon due to the gendered role expectations, cultural and belief system (Shah, 2018). In an article by Rehman *et al.* (2017), they look at the many facets of the Pakistani woman, and examine the forces shaping her destiny. The article has been compiled from the Herald's 1985 archives from reports and article by various female activists and writers. The article discusses a myriad of issues that Pakistani females face in the different urban and rural areas that relate to poverty, illiteracy, lack of opportunities, feudalism, honour killing and various cultural practices to suppress women.

One of the reasons identified is women's deliberate exclusion from the decision making process (Weiss, 2003). Throughout their life women are classically conditioned and socialized to be the dependent gender, where all major decisions, be they personal or other, are made by their male 'guardians'. With time, fathers pass this right onto their sons as they retire themselves from their responsibility and women are constantly deprived of making decisions, thus becoming docile in nature, raising their voices only in the face of extreme violence and abuse (Kirmani, 2016). It is a predominant belief around the world that religion plays a significant role in the treatment, and sometimes abuse of women, in Muslim societies, but having already discussed the religious stance on the rights of women, where does the law stand in Pakistan?

According to law of the land, each and every citizen stands equal in their constitutional rights to one another regardless of gender (The Constitution of

Pakistan, 2012) however, many believe that widespread gender discrimination exists because women are unaware of their rights as citizens hence, they cannot openly practice their given freedom. A study conducted by the Human Rights Commission observed that 90% of the Pakistani female population believed they had no rights (Government of Pakistan, 2002); although there are some changes in male attitude, many oppressive practices are still evident today. The position of women is secondary and they do not have their say in the economic, social and political issues due to the discriminatory social structure and patriarchy (Naz and Ahmad, 2012). According to USAID Gender Equality programme (2016) the factors that contribute towards the inequality for women in Pakistan are restricted mobility, lack of awareness of rights and ownership of resources, lack of education and gender based violence.

The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan in 2007 stated that the country runs on a traditional system of patriarchy and women's affairs are treated with utmost confidentiality however many families opt to make decisions within the four walls of their homes. Therefore, it is argued that justice is denied since women are unaware of their rights, and when they are aware, they refrain from taking their matters to court as it is seen as an undesirable place for women to be (Malik and Courtney, 2011). In such a situation, the fact that Pakistan is part of various international treaties and programmes to ensure progress in providing women equality becomes irrelevant because the mindset that women are not independent is also reflective in government policies and practices. For instance, by default, a woman's National Identification Card in Pakistan has her father's name engraved next to hers' as her guardian and after marriage the husband's name replaces that of her father. This may be because in Islam, lineage descends from father, which is feudalism; heritage descends from the mother.

2.7 Some women have broken the mould

In Pakistan, despite the male domination in various fields, a very small number of women have developed successful careers in various fields despite the odds. They are to be found in all sectors and industries of the country such as education, banking, finance, medicine, corporate management and politics. The most notable

political figure being Benazir Bhutto, who was elected as the first female Prime Minister of Pakistan being the first in the Muslim world, a milestone that not even United States of America has achieved. It would seem that Pakistan, a country which otherwise finds itself dominated by patriarchy, is famous for being amongst the few countries to trust a woman with the highest political power.

Benazir Bhutto, although a woman with more in common with ruling classes rather than the lower middle classes, has played an invaluable role in female emancipation. Middle class woman felt empowered and the working-women felt they had an important work role in society even though it may not be equal to that of their male counterparts. With these aspirations, in addition to the strain of running a household in a modern economy, many women began to enter the formal work arena. The kind of jobs most women obtained was of course greatly dependent on their level of education and career choice however, teaching was very popular. Having said that due to low standard of education in Pakistan the numbers entering work remain low and laws fail to keep the young enrolled in schools for very long, the resultant illiterate class of the population is forced into low level jobs with nonexistent basic human and labor rights. Hence, poverty remains a major concern, which needs to be considered when studying women rights. For instance, according to Hart (2008, cited in Fawcett and Waugh, 2008), many violent men target their partners and children with physical violence when they experience extreme poverty. Furthermore, Mama (1996) argues that the oppressive social circumstances especially poverty also leads to an increase in intra-communal violence. It has been observed that the government makes very little investments to elevate the position of these women in society, which results in their inherent secondary status that further compounds difficulties women face in the patriarchal system (Human Rights Commission, 1999).

A very small percentage of women belonging to the middle and upper classes make their way into private educational institutes, which pave their path for greater work opportunities. The preferred work industries for these women continue to be doctors or teachers as these are seen to be the two most respectable professions for females in the country that leads to questioning why other professions may perhaps be less respectable or 'disreputable'. Many believe this may be because medical profession as well teaching are both fields of work which require skills very closely associated

to the societal roles women are stereotyped to play in Pakistan which are to raise and nurture children (Malik and Courtney, 2011). Women opting to enter other professions are not given the same level of respect and their lives become more complex in many ways. Young women in the corporate banking and even non-private sectors are seen by society to be rebellious and as a result suffer with the lack of marriage prospects. Wives are seen to be homemakers and not breadwinners, and financial independence is seen as a threat to the control a man has over his household and in the bigger picture, over men in society. This can be a threatening concept in a society where a man's honour is subject to the actions and obedience of the women in his life (Tarar and Pulla, 2014). According to National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW, 2010) policy framework for Pakistan, gender exclusionary policies do not uproot existing biases or solve gender inequalities and injustices. It is important to eliminate the social and economic hurdles that impede equality in order to help women.

The above discussion suggests that in a society where women are classically conditioned and taught to be the lesser of the two genders, how far will they go in the fight for complete equality remains an elusive goal. After all, why would men weaken their personal hold on society by granting them greater freedom? However, this is not defeatism and indeed those who believe in women's struggle for equality, it is a goal that they must fight for especially those who belong to the educated classes. The place that offers sanctuary for women to be more expressive in thinking and perhaps flex their mind's eye, is the academia however it may be that not all is well here too.

2.8 Summary

The reviewed literature suggests that women had very few rights at the advent of Islam over 1500 years ago. They often experienced exploitation and suffering in all areas of their lives whether they were individuals or groups. Islam, through the Holy Prophet Mohammed's teaching, which were outlined in the Qur'an (Muslim holy book), granted them certain rights and privileges in terms of how they were to be treated in the household and outside. The reviewed literature also suggests that the rights granted to women were quite revolutionary in terms of what they could own

and how men who had social power in society at the time should treat them. Religion continues to play a significant role in Pakistan women's lives since it is understood to provide a moral code for their daily activities. In Pakistan, religion and culture have become morphed into one with the core message being that women have become conservative in all aspects of their daily lives. Reviewed literature suggest that Pakistani society is quite complex in relation to women's treatment due to regional variances and cultural norms which leads to their unequal treatment in a patriarchal system that is heavily skewed in favour of men. It would seem that religion plays an important role on how women are treated by men as well as how women see themselves.

The chapter also explored the social deprivation and gender inequality in Pakistan. It would seem that Pakistan is placed very low, 145th from 169 nations, in terms of where it stands in relation to other countries. There were also significant differences between various provinces in terms of economic prosperity. The level of literacy for men and women stood at 46% in 2013 with women performing worse than men. The level of literacy for women was much worst in Southern Punjab, Baluchistan and KPK. On the positive side it has to be pointed out that Pakistan featured a very credible 64th position when it came to having number of female politicians in the national Parliament. Despite this optimistic picture, women in Pakistan suffered gender inequality in all aspects of their lives with women being second-class citizens.

Young girls were socialised into stereotypical gender roles and conform to the wishes of often conservative parents. Decision-making seemed to be a male pejorative whether it from a father or a male sibling. Traditions and customs ensured male dominance. When there was conflict or perceived injustice men and women had to seek justice in certain rural areas from the local *jirga* which were male and female voice was seldom heard. Despite these oppressive practices, there were some shoots of resistance with more and more women entering the world of paid work. What this shows is that the women in Pakistan enjoy a better status now than in the past however the same cannot be said for the rural and poor families where social deprivation and gender inequality remains an issue of concern despite many more women now entering the world of paid work.

Chapter 3: Organisational work experience of women and factors that impact their engagement

3.0 Introduction

The importance of exploring female employee perspectives in employment has been highlighted by Shuck and Wollard (2010). They argue that better female employee experience at work leads to a positive attitude towards their job, which reduces burnout, and staff displays a higher level of performance at the individual and organisational levels. Studies have also recognised that higher level of satisfaction leads to a greater sense of responsibility amongst employees thus contributing to higher level of job performance both for required aspects of work as well as discretionary effort (Sanchez and McCauley, 2006). However an area that has received much less attention is how this debate is influenced by organisational practices which have led to subjugating women employees whereby they either exist at the margins of the organisation (Morley and Crossouard, 2015) or are suffering in silence in the face of discriminatory practices (Noureen, 2011). This chapter delineates the key factors that play a significant role in female discriminative treatment at work either by deliberate design or societal factors. I will also be discussing various factors that have an impact on female careers especially the conflict between motherhood and career progression. A discussion also takes place on female harassment at workplace which can lead to an early career exit for some working females. This followed by a discussion on social identity and how women adopt multiple identities in the context of Pakistani society as a tool for survival. Work-life conflict is also explored in relation to working women. Finally, the last section looks at employee engagement in organisational life. This, I felt is important, since an engaged employee is less likely to leave an organisation.

3.1 Career progression of working women

In Pakistan, and other South Asian and Muslim countries, the opportunities in the job market have improved quite considerably for the educated females with more

working females entering the job market than two decades ago but the acceptance of women still seems negative (Ali, 2013). Her research, using qualitative interview with 30 females working in Pakistani organizations, highlighted areas such as the societal, organizational and even individual level discriminative practices which militate against the working female.

An earlier study by Schneer and Reitman (2002) which looked at the historical development of organisations in the industrial countries concluded that it was quite normal in these societies to find men at work earning money whilst women attended to domestic chores. There was a clear boundary between work and home life. They state that the 1950's were characterised by traditional family work behaviour with the men engaged in fulltime employment and therefore the breadwinner whilst females were responsible for household responsibilities. There are many similarities of their observations when looking at Pakistan. However what is different is that working patterns have been changing over the past 50 years in the West with more females entering the workforce. This led Schneer and Reitman (2002) to come up with a new family structure typology focusing on the three dimensions i.e. marital status, parental status and spouse employment status that impacts female careers. Their six categories of family structure are based on single or single with children, married with no children and unemployed spouse; married with children and unemployed spouse (one income in this case) and married with children and employed spouse and no children with employed spouse (two incomes in this case). The authors concluded that mostly the married spouse with children and having an employed spouse was the most favourable way of managing a career.

In earlier work by Betz (1993) it was argued that despite increased women participation in many organisations in industrial countries, management was mostly male dominated and female careers tended to stagnate. The author also highlighted that there were significant difference between male and female career progression which were governed by social and organizational factors. This was supported by data on women careers in a range of fields which gives rise to a number of interrelated factors i.e. leadership, salary issues, family problems and job satisfaction etc. (Betz, 1993). O'Neil *et al.* (2008) point out that multiple studies have highlighted gender discrimination and work life balance (a better descriptor may be imbalance).

Gallos (1989) also states that women's career may not be fundamentally different from men's however are more complicated and even challenging due to the constraints by a gendered social context. This includes personal, developmental, organisational as well as societal factors (O'Neil *et al.*, 2008). The above authors recognise the importance of contextual factors for women careers as work related success is linked to life and personal issues for contemporary working females.

O'Neil *et al.* (2008) analyses of the career patterns of females from different management and psychology journals from 1990 to 2008 in the industrially developed societies identified four major aspects of career aspects that contribute to their position. The four common themes critical in their careers were: women careers are embedded in their larger life context; women's families and careers are most important for them; women careers reflect a variety of patterns; and social human aspects. They argued that male structured organisational and career policies are impacting female employees which need to change in order to support women career advancement. They noted that all of these factors have a direct impact on women career, though some disconnect has also been found between organisational practices and contemporary studies available on each pattern. They also suggest that some new ideas and changes need to be incorporated in organisational policies to support women careers in the changing work environment. This would apply to the West to a lesser degree and more so to Pakistan. The changes which have been incorporated after seeing women as an important part of workforce in the later part of the 20th century in the West led to more career opportunities being provided to address the lives and experiences faced by women (Mainiero and Sullivan, 2005). The authors went on to state that women careers are relational and interconnected and interdependent on various factors like an 'intricate web' as compared to men. Women choose their careers in the context of their relationships and responsibilities which resembles kaleidoscope career. They further proposed the ABC Model for careers which stands for authenticity, balance and challenge changes with the passage of time and life circumstances for female careers. They argue that authenticity or realism is more appropriate in the late career whereas balance is more important in the mid-career. This results in young females often struggling to balance work and personal life which results in challenging work conditions in early female careers.

It would seem that success plays a vital role in women career and is directly proportional to job satisfaction but women find it difficult when it comes to realities *versus* choices. In a research conducted by White (1995) on a sample of 48 successful females in the United Kingdom showed that women faced big issues in their career progression in terms of family responsibilities and career success. The idea of female career conceptualisation and development in organisations are still based on the traditional model where women are expected to perform and compete at work like males in addition to their personal obligations (Pringle and Dixon, 2003).

In another study by Hewlett (2002), it was suggested that successful females often sacrificed their careers to have children since they cannot meet the demands of their work life. She suggested that the career clock and the maternity clocks are not synchronized and high achieving females often postpone their family life focusing more on their career development. At times females are forced to choose between personal liabilities and organisational expectations. When females try to combine both roles, they think that they are not fulfilling either of them successfully. Also there are generational differences in the view that nowadays younger females think that they can manage both roles whereas the mid-career females who had the same notion are rethinking about how things change and focus more on family and relationships.

A study by Tajlili (2014) concluded that work life integration is a major problem for females and they have to sacrifice their careers and make difficult choices as professional working mothers find it difficult to manage family and work without much support. She suggested a framework to help women to understand the societal, environmental and personal circumstances better in order to have better work life balance. Whilst things have improved quite considerably in the West, in developing countries such as Pakistan the traditional way of one working spouse and the other taking care of the children and home is preferred as it fast tracks male career progression whereas all household responsibilities are performed by females (Latif, 2013). This results in women often sacrificing their careers by looking after the home and family.

Latif (2013) points out that it is still difficult for men to acknowledge that women are an entity that needs to have their own space and independence and choose freely to have a career. This is likely to make it difficult for women to engage themselves in upwardly mobile career paths. This has been identified as another possible reason why women are unable to reach most senior level of organisations. Sometimes it becomes difficult for women to muster up human and social capitals, which play a significant role in career progression while these factors are not a problem for men. It would seem that despite having exceptional work record and better management qualities only a few women reach highest levels of corporate hierarchy (Volpe and Murphy, 2011). Support for this viewpoint is provided by Bukhari and Ramzan (2013) who argue that women tend to work harder and continuously to manage their work along with their careers and some even remain childless or single to be successful in their work life and aspirations in order to progress their careers. This would suggest that women in order to be successful in their careers tend to continuously make personal sacrifices. This is likely to have a detrimental effect on working females who are constantly trying to juggle and balance work and personal life. According to Ali and Knox (2008) women's employment in Pakistan still needs massive improvement in terms of participation rates, opportunities and outcomes. The paper discusses the contradictory implications of national legislation about equal opportunities created to 'protect' Pakistani women and the weak implementation of international instruments directed towards equal opportunity as two key challenges facing women, which will take a long time to improve.

These factors give us an idea about progression of women careers and various career obstacles, which makes it difficult for women to maintain balance between professional life and family life. It would seem that women need to make tough choices between motherhood and career progression in order to strike a balance in their lives.

3.1.1 Motherhood and career progression

Women in all societies face important career questions when they are married especially those who become mothers. For instance, whether to take a career break

when they have children or keep on working due to economic necessity; should they take a career (temporary) break or leave their job permanently; should they quit work for the sake of bringing up their child? These questions are more relevant in a country like Pakistan where the culture is male dominated and women are expected to prioritise family by sacrificing their careers or chose those careers they consider to be more suitable and therefore acceptable for females such as teaching (Fakhr *et al.*, 2016). Many highly educated women in Pakistan often abandon their chosen field and instead opt for the teaching profession, which is considered to be 'safe' (Bukhari and Ramzan, 2013). This does not mean that females do not join other careers but teaching is considered as a female oriented job due to the caring nature of the profession.

Researching parenthood and its impact on career progression in the West, McIntosh *et al.* (2012) concluded that motherhood has a major impact on the career of females as compared to males. They concluded that research focus has been on working females and the impact of restricted careers, working hours, career breaks and number of children however, the magnitude of the problem has not been given sufficient attention. Their research shows that the number of dependent children and their age has detrimental effect on women careers. In developing countries, like Pakistan, it can be seen that working females have less support such as childcare due to the joint family system even though the maid culture is coming into play for the middle classes since females that are working can afford to have hired maids to take care of their children (Umer and Zia-ur-Rehman, 2013).

Very few organisations in Pakistan have childcare facilities, which compares rather abysmally to the West where young mothers are provided such facilities to support them. Furthermore, the maternity leave in Pakistan is 3 months, which is far too short and results in mothers having to leave work to take care of their babies. 'Penalties of motherhood' coined by Waldfogel (2007) describes this phenomenon very well. She argues that male careers suffer no disadvantage because of marriage or child rearing with limited or no career breaks whereas females quite often have to quit their careers till the time their childcare responsibilities have been addressed. This leaves women with fewer options such as having to quit work or moving to part-time jobs for flexibility, which 'derails' their career aspirations.

McQuaid *et al.* (2009) are more positive on the role of part-time employment since part-time jobs and hourly working patterns are more suitable for mothers since these allow women to fulfill their child, family and work responsibilities. Furthermore, they also allow for more entry and exit points for female careers. It would seem that the cost of such scenario is that women cannot have a long term career as men therefore female career prospects are less attractive than male prospects. This leads to females at times starting their fulltime career when the children have completed their schooling but that again can be a disadvantage at times due to factors such as lack of experience.

It is interesting to note that some literature suggests that majority of mothers do not desire to have a fulltime career after having dependent children (Hakim, 2006). She further argues that most women who enter an occupation are adaptive and try to fit in work around their domestic role and not vice versa. They tend to reject employment in order to give more time to their domestic responsibilities and it is considered their personal choice. Research shows that women are more committed and engaged to their work than men and try to balance their work and personal life without impacting either negatively (Fakhr *et al.*, 2016). In the context of Pakistan working women have to do the housework after coming back from work no matter if the husband is working or not as it is considered to be her obligatory duty to serve the family and in-laws if they live in a joint family system. In fact, women are often doubling the duties compared to their male colleagues. Hakim's propositions were rejected by Houle *et al.* (2009) as they said that roles and expectations related to motherhood need to be normalised as the concept related to family means that male is the head of the household whereas female is the nurturer and carer, which leads to gender roles being constructed and legitimised. It is the acceptance of this model along with the stereotypical beliefs and structures that lead to reinforcement of gender roles in employment.

It would seem that in order to succeed within the family framework women try to limit their career goals to accommodate the socio-cultural constraints whether one talks about the industrially developed or developing countries. This leads to a perception that motherhood leads to 'devaluation in employment' both as a woman and as an employee (Longhurst, 2012). It is the assumption of many employers and

some male employees that females with young children are less productive than unmarried women or women without children. This view is supported by Gatrell (2011) when she states that motherhood characterises female and usually new or expectant mothers are perceived to have less commitment towards their work and used by some employers to exclude or control them. Some employers, especially in developing countries i.e. in Pakistan, even become anxious and associate motherhood with reduced employment orientation and minimised commitment as it leads to disruptive routine at the workplace.

One of the main factors leading to demotivating working mothers in developing countries is the cost and availability of childcare before children join primary education starting from the age of five years and onwards (Shaukat *et al.*, 2016). This may sound like a contradiction in joint families however the middle classes often either live independently or there is an expectation from the family that a baby is responsibility of the mother. In either case this is likely to discourage young females to get back to their main profession. It acknowledged that after the children join secondary education women often return to work fulltime employment or longer work hours as the children spend more time independently (Tekin, 2007) in developing countries. Flexible employment in terms of less hours or part-time work allows women to combine motherhood and work more conveniently but there is a damaging impact on their long term careers (McQuaid *et al.*, 2009). The authors argue that this frequently forces females to work on reduced wages or shorter hours in order to accommodate their domestic roles.

According to Agarwala (2015) despite the gender mainstreaming efforts in the universities, the social and institutional change towards implementing a gender equality agenda is still way behind. The general stereotypical view for men being the breadwinner certifies that organizations remain masculine. Over the past few decades the representation of women in universities has increased but only at the lower level and the top management positions are held by males. Furthermore it may be argued that the social and cultural perception of motherhood makes women's careers secondary to their family life and in order to have flexibility for childcare, they prefer to work lesser hours. In the context of Pakistan working females have the flexibility of leaving their child in care of a family member. This fits in with the cultural norms

which do not allow females to have a fulltime job if their children are not taken care of by family members or close relatives. However, there has been a shift more recently in the looking after of small children. It is now quite common for working middle class mothers to leave their children at home with maids since it is quite inexpensive.

Despite their keenness to work, female academics often find themselves at the lower rung of middle class hierarchy and given that both partners are likely to work even when there is a maid employed to look after their children and do household duties (Shaukat *et al.*, 2014). My concern is with females who go to work and their subsequent treatment by their male colleagues especially the management. This is in recognition that male norm behaviour and dominance at home may also translate to male dominant practices at the place of work which can lead to harassment and therefore will be explored in the next section.

3.1.2 Workplace harassment

Harassment at times is mixed up with bullying and it relates to the power play and use of authority by targeting women who are generally vulnerable in work environment (Yousaf and Schmiede, 2016). There is a view that given the educated and enlightened nature of staff in higher education sector, there is much less occurrence of harassment compared to commercial organisations but harassment occurs in HE for the staff and students (Qureshi, 2016). It would seem that the harassment of female staff takes place at work in Pakistan despite the existence of legislations i.e. Harassment Policy, with females being reluctant to report any such incidents. Whilst physical harassment at workplace is unacceptable it is generally acknowledged that emotional harassment can equally leave deep scars as many women in all spheres of work-life know too well. It is not surprising then that the legislation in the UK i.e. The Protection from Harassment Act 2010 makes both, physical and verbal harassment illegal and can lead to disciplinary action at workplace.

According to a study by Willness *et al.* (2007) with a sample of around 70,000 respondents in USA on workplace harassment, it was concluded that sexual harassment leads to decreased job satisfaction, lower commitment towards job, ill mental and physical health and general stress disorder. Workplace harassment in a male dominated society like Pakistan, like many other developing countries, is common due to the hostility and misogyny leading to the social exclusion and sexual objectification of females (Faisal, 2010). This led to the passing of the Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act in March 2010 in Pakistan to give security and protection to working females. It may be argued that passing of the Act is unlikely to lead to its implementation at workplace. Therefore working females may continue to experience hostile work environment even when they manage to penetrate the world of work (Protection against Harassment Act, 2010). Based on my personal experience I would argue that despite the legislations, working females in Pakistan experience a significant amount of harassment at workplace. This is built on a common perception in the conservative and gendered society in Pakistan that women need to stay at home and be subservient to the wishes of their husbands and family (Umer and Zia-ur-Rehman, 2013). What is equally worrying is that workplace harassment is considered a taboo topic which if highlighted can often leave a bad mark on the honour of the female staff although she is the victim. It has been argued that females tend not to report sexual harassment due to the fear of being victimised even further (Faisal, 2010). Consequences of gender harassment include economic and a failed career and in some cases lead to female career exit.

3.1.3 Career Exits

Story (2005) argues that career exit means the complete withdrawal from paid workforce and becoming a household manager and in this way the professional identity becomes dormant. This aspiration might be permanent or temporary and become active at a later stage. It would seem that many educated and professional females quit working and opt out to care for families or stay at home in Pakistani culture (Shaukat *et al.*, 2014). This has become a big debate in Pakistani and often referred to as ‘opt out revolution’ or ‘brain drain’. Research shows that there are a variety of reasons that explain women career behaviours as well as why they leave a

career. For example, push and pull factors like lack of advancement opportunities, unsupportive management, family demands and expectations, stress and multiple identities are common factors that lead women to quit their career (Percheski, 2008).

Volpe and Murphy's (2011) research focuses on conversations and debates around women careers in industrially developed countries and argue that joint family is losing importance in the 21st Century career landscape especially among married professionals. This would certainly be the case in the West where women often choose not to have or delay having children so that they can pursue career goals. In the context of Pakistan, a woman is much more likely to get married at an early age and have children and forced to give up her career aspirations due to family pressures. They state that women's self-identity and social networks are important aspects when they are making career exit decisions and therefore identity is an important aspect for career development as well as maintaining relationships with others as it helps us to understand one's self-betterment. There has been a significant shift in perceptions in urban areas in Pakistan over the past 20 years, especially among the middle classes and educated families who tend to accept that women have to engage in paid work, however the mind-set of male authority and female subordination prevails in the rural areas (Umer and Zia-ur-Rehman, 2013).

The above debate would suggest that the way people perceive females depends on their status and position in society in Pakistan. The cultural norms suggest that if a married woman is working, she is seen differently as she has her family's support however if she is unmarried, she tends to be vulnerable and more likely to face workplace harassment. From a personal experience of having worked in Pakistan, I agree with the viewpoint that if a woman is divorced she is also much more vulnerable and often apportioned blame (Umer and Zia-ur-Rehman, 2013). Furthermore a widow is respected more as compared to a divorcee and has more rights. It would seem that women face many challenges at place of work and are being forced to adopt many identities.

3.2 Women and identity

Male and female behaviours are determined by the socialisation they undergo. When looking at the gender differences especially in culturally conservative societies such as Pakistan, boys from an early age play with ‘male type’ toys such as cars and guns whilst girls are encouraged to play with type-caste female type toys such as ‘dolls’ and play acting mummies. Some have described this social categorisation as being intuitively obvious (Cameron and Lalonde, 2001). It may be concluded that other aspects of identity development will be influenced by aspects such as nationalities, religious or cultural context in addition to social, economic and political forces which play a critical role in maintaining the status quo (Reid, 1988). Similarly, nationalities, religious or cultural context play significant part in people’s socialization in Pakistan. For example, it may be difficult to understand the ‘accepting’ and conservative behaviour of Pakistani women who may feel restricted to certain types of jobs they can do when there is total freedom of work and movement in Western countries. When looking at social, economic and political forces oppressing women it is clear that there is more of a carefully crafted ideology playing its part in maintaining male domination in certain sections of Pakistani society. I would suggest that in both cases it is the women that suffer.

In developing countries such as Pakistan power lies with men due to the patriarchal norms which are further reinforced by the cultural, religious or societal norms and the concept of identity reflects this domination with regards to female identity (Shaukat and Pell, 2016). Furthermore national boundaries also have an influence on female behaviour with significant differences depending on which province a woman comes from i.e. women are more conservative in KPK and Baluchistan compared to Sind or Punjab. But distilling it down further, differences are also found amongst women in rural Pakistan with city dwellers, most academics are likely to belong to the middle class in Pakistan; these women may even have a similar outlook as many of their counterparts in Western Diaspora. What is true, however, is that identity plays a significant part in how women’s thinking is shaped and there are a variety of forces at work attempting to maintain the hegemony of domination which will use a variety of oppressive mechanism to maintain their position (Reid, 1988).

In another piece of research of Sri Lankan working women Fernando and Cohen (2014) discussed the concept of respectable femininity. They described this as an ideological construct around the behavioural norms, moral rules and gendered expectations that the women need to adhere to in order to be respected in organizations and society. This leads women in a paradoxical situation where they have to be domesticated as well as pursue a successful career. The study was taken a step further by Ansari (2016) in the context of Pakistan and the results were similar to the Fernando and Cohen's study despite the difference in religion. The results clearly shows that there are certain expectations for women to dress moderately, not to go out alone at night, restricted networking so that they can have an honourable reputation. I would argue that these restrict female career advancement. Domesticity being a central component of respectability means that 'good women' were dutiful mothers and effective housekeepers (Skeggs, 1997; Whitehead, 2005).

According to Volpe and Murphy (2011) women identity and social networks are important aspects when females are making decisions for career development. Identity is an important aspect for career development as well as maintaining relationships with others as it helps us to understand our own self better. Identity defines who we are and provides clues to our behaviour. The two frameworks of identity in the organisational literature are social identity theory and identity theory (Hatch and Schultz, 2004). In the next sections, I will discuss social identity and multiple identities in relation to Pakistani women.

3.2.1 Social Identity Theory

According to the Social Identity Theory by Tajfel and Turner (1979, 1986) women develop a concept of self and social identity due to a variety of influences and social pressures within a group. The authors go on to state that women are expected to adopt group values which impact their self-esteem as well as determine their status in the group in terms of favourability and distinctiveness as to whether they belong to an 'inner group' or an 'outer group' i.e. they are included in important decisions or excluded. This will influence whether a woman develops a positive or a negative identity in a group. Individual woman will develop a strategy, sometime 'coping

strategy', according to their 'inclusion' or 'exclusion'. Cameron and Lalonde (2001) argue that the choice of sub-strategies will be determined depending on an individual's 'subjective beliefs' and their view of belonging and position within the group. If the social identity comparison results in negative dimension, then the individual might adopt different strategies like (i) social mobility i.e. to move to the higher status group; (ii) social creativity i.e. to do things and become favoured by the in group and (iii) social competition i.e. elevate their status in the group. Cameron and Lalonde (2001) go on to say that there are also differences with women displaying lower status hierarchy and lacking stability might opt for collective challenge in terms of challenging the hegemony of the status quo in a given situation.

Social identification provides females with a sense of belonging, interpreting the world and also provides them with a guideline of how to behave (Thoits, 1991). However these identities can be problematic if they can't be incorporated in the female lives. Thoits (1991) argues that the problems faced in the main identity can have harmful impact on the self as compared to problems in an unimportant identity. This becomes more severe if there are multiple main identities that they have to be satisfied and fulfilled especially if multiple or main identities differ according to the culture associated with these identities.

In a piece of research Shah (2015) discussed and compared her previous findings in regard to power and position based on her interviews of 11 'Women Only' college heads and 8 women Vice-Chancellors (VCs) in Pakistan. She concluded that the male VCs felt more protected due to their position whereas the female principals had less power due to the socio-political influence in that regional context. She also found that all female heads recognized the religious and cultural constraints and the moral codes they were expected to follow. A female VC indicated that men do not value their work and if there is any problem, the husband just tells them to quit their job as it is so insignificant for them and they have to be careful to avoid such situations.

The culture of identity means the norms and expectations that are related to individuals with a certain identity by the society (House, 1981). For example, a female academic is supposed to be as competent as a male colleague at work, as one

would expect, however, there may be little recognition of her work effort in the domestic sphere. It appears that being a mother or spouse, a female is expected to be a caring mother and a 'good' wife and take care of the household duties. Sometimes this switching over and enactment of identities become difficult for females especially when the culture is different, for example, between a mother and an executive as it requires emotional, cognitive, psychological and physical attributes to fulfill and balance each role (Ahmad *et al.*, 2011). Things become more stressful when both identities are central whereby women are expected to perform equally well in both the capacities. In the context of Pakistan it becomes complex for females due to lack of support at the domestic, professional and societal level.

This leads me to conclude that social identification of females is multidimensional whereby many of the components of identity formation are related to ideological development of women. This view concurs with findings of Henderson-King and Stewart (1994, cited in Cameron and Lalonde, 2001, p. 62) in that 'women's levels of group membership were more strongly related to the identification with feminists than to their identification of being a women' (feminism will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5). Social identity theory provides us with a useful framework to analyse the gender related issues and attitudes especially related to women.

3.2.2 Multiple Identities

All adults in Pakistan, men and women, have multiple roles and identities with which they identify themselves in the society and try to find meaning. Women's multiple identities may include being a daughter, a mother, a wife, a professional. At times the interference of different roles becomes stressful for them and on occasions leads to negative psychological and physical outcomes (Ernst Kossek and Ozeki, 1998). The interference between work and family roles for women shows less work satisfaction (Aryee, 1992) and leads to a greater level of stress. Consequences of stress caused by the multiple identities include lower self-esteem and the pressure to discharge several roles equally which is not always possible. In the context of Pakistan working females have to perform a dual role, one at workplace and the other at home. This may not be different to that which women perform in the West, however the major

difference in South Asian context is that family often means extended family that can consist of many members whose collective needs have to be satisfied by woman whether she is working or not. A Pakistani woman, whether she is working or not, is expected to take care of children, cook and serve 'hot *chapatties*' (freshly made bread) to her husband when he returns from work. Aryee (1992) had pointed out that this type of burden leads to a raised level of stress resulting in lack of sleep and tiredness in order to keep everyone happy. This will certainly be the case for a Pakistani working woman. In most patriarchal societies women are supposed to keep their husbands happy by minimising complaints and arguments as females main role is stereotyped to be taking care of the household and children. According to Syed *et al.* (2005) the issue of modesty, inhibition and segregation of gender are the biggest barriers for working women in Muslim societies as they are constantly being judged and evaluated by the society.

According to Martire *et al.* (2000) identity centrality amplifies or controls some identities for females according to the expectations of the culture and roles they are in. The identity centrality lessens or moderates the impacts that different identities pose for females. When a female thinks that less stress is attached to a central identity being a mother or a worker and experiences more stress, it leads to dissatisfaction as they perceive themselves failing to fulfill the expectations related to that identity and it leads to negative psychological wellbeing.

The above discussion would seem to apply to women in industrially developed countries as it does in developing countries such as Pakistan where social inequality exists at all levels of society. What the above discussion shows is that women's identity is influenced by a complex set of circumstances and there are conflicts within their role; an important one being the work-life conflict.

3.3 Work-life Conflict

A number of studies have been conducted to investigate the impact of family responsibilities on women careers and there is a vast literature on work-life balance and work-life conflict (Stroh *et al.*, 1996). They also suggest that married females and parenting impacts working females negatively. Furthermore, unmarried women

and women without children also experience difficulties as the organisations expect more from them even gives them extra responsibilities (Kirchmeyer, 2002; Hamilton *et al.*, 2006). It has been argued that despite females having multiple roles, organisational support for women can lead to a greater level of job satisfaction and commitment however the reality is that multiple roles of females are often not appreciated by organisations (Rothbard, 2001). It would seem that both males and females get satisfaction and fortification from different roles but in opposite directions i.e. men from work to family whereas females from family to work. The need to perform multiple roles and societal expectations to fulfill all responsibilities lead to working women often experiencing exhaustion (Kirchmeyer, 2002).

Furthermore, it has been argued that in all societies young women have to make a choice, sometimes choice is made for them due to cultural norms, between their career and domestic responsibilities which may self-limit their access to opportunities or career progression (Sperandio and Devdas, 2015) therefore despite years of equal opportunity legislations in the developed countries, ‘motherhood still limits women career progress’ (McIntosh *et al.*, 2012). Factors that play a key part in developed countries include working hours, career breaks and support for children of school age which may be rather simplistic since number and age of dependent children could be important aspects and could influence a woman’s career progression. For instance, the younger the child or the more children the greater likelihood there is to suppress a woman’s career since she may have to, whether it is by will or necessity, take a longer career break (Shaukat *et al.*, 2014).

Motherhood factors that have an impact in developing countries are domestic support for household responsibilities, which may be easily obtained since the ‘servant’ culture is prevalent in these countries, and family support, which may be more contentious, from their husbands. This social conditioning results in the role of husband often being seen as that of leader and therefore a provider and female career often is seen as lower status and often sacrificed when there is a conflict between his and her career interests. This unfair competition is heavily skewed in the man’s favour and is likely to limit female access to opportunities especially in patriarchal societies. Tlaiss (2015, p. 527) writing about Lebanese women where gender roles

are traditionally defined and women are expected to accept male authority position argues that,

‘The cultural norms, values, and stereotypes deeply rooted in patriarchal traditions that promote male privilege constitute the most fundamental barrier to women’s career advancement. The uneven distribution of power in turn (re)produces inequality, is seen as natural, and can be characterised as hegemonic’

It may be argued that the position of women in Pakistan and indeed in many developing countries is very similar to that of women in Lebanon which is living under the watchful eye of ‘male hegemonic subordination, polarized gender stereotypes’ and low expectations in terms of career progression. This limits the opportunities at the point of recruitment as well as promotion, training and development opportunities (Tlaiss and Kauser, 2010; 2011). Furthermore, it has also been noticed in the context of Pakistan that females who are divorced or single are given additional job roles since organisations are aware that they are unlikely to leave their job since they are dependent on it and will not go anywhere because of the limitations set on them (Shaukat and Pell, 2016).

According to Carlson *et al.*, (2010) the literature suggests that the important factors for work-life conflict are the individual characteristics of the person i.e. their gender and marital status, childcare responsibilities etc. Research shows that male and female have different intensities of work-life conflict due to imbalanced distribution of family responsibility and dominant gender stereotypes and the conflict is more for females as compared to men due to domestic responsibilities and child rearing (Zhao *et al.*, 2011).

According to Voydanoff (2005) marital status is an important variable in predicting the work life conflict as the responsibilities related with individuals and family structure has a major impact on how to balance professional and domestic responsibilities. Agarwala *et al.* (2014) researched the work-life conflict and organizational commitment in India, Peru and Spain and results show that the economic, social and cultural differences have an impact on work-life conflict. They also showed that management support was helpful in improving work-life balance

and the conflict was higher in traditional gender stereotypical societies where gender roles are defined.

In a study conducted by Amin and Malik (2017) the impact of work-life balance on employee performance is discussed highlighting the four aspects of supportive culture, autonomy, work family enrichment and flexible work arrangements in the context of Pakistan. Similarly, Ahmad *et al.* (2011), in a study of 100 female bank employees, identified a number of work-life conflict that females faced in relation to their work environment. These included trying to balance a trade-off between work domain and family life domain. They went on to highlight other factors included impact of women earning potential, household responsibilities, workplace environment and financial needs. They also highlighted the main aspects of female experiences that led to their work-life conflict and included factors such as demand at the work place and time allocation to domestic responsibilities versus work responsibilities which led to mental stress due to the contradictory demands of the two roles. The solution, as pointed out earlier, was to find a better time organisation for the female staff so that they could fulfill domestic responsibilities alongside work requirements.

Ahmad *et al.* (2011) indicated that household-responsibilities and workplace environment was strongly correlated to women work-life conflict. This led them to conclude that the hours when women staff had to work needed to be organised in such a manner that it encouraged their participation in the workplace. The authors went on to conclude that there was a need to place additional responsibility on managers to 'improve synergy between departments to better accommodate' female staff. It may be argued that this is something which needs serious attention if females are to be included in the workforce since their exclusion means that countries are failing to utilize a valuable resource i.e. educated middle class women in the context of Pakistan. Not only that but failure to include women in the workforce amounts to making a statement that 'women are not welcome' which in turn reinforces the gender stereotypes. It has been pointed out that we are living in a period where most nations in South Asia are experiencing growth in terms of economic development whereas gender equality remains an issue that is largely unaddressed (Umer and Zia-ur-Rehman, 2013).

I am in no way saying that spouse circumstances are ignored, far from it, since contextual circumstances cannot be ignored in dual-earner families neither do circumstances remain constant through one's working life. It is about trying to achieve a balance between competing roles of the two-earner couples which can be challenging especially for the career minded women since men's careers are more likely to be prioritized due to the societal expectations (Tlaiss, 2015). The research by O Grada *et al.* (2015) discussed the effectiveness of various gender equality interventions in the context of academia. Their findings suggested that gender awareness, supporting the female academics and an integrated institutional equality agenda can have transformational effects not only individually but for the institution and the society. Tlaiss and Kauser (2011) study in the context of Lebanon discussed the impact of gender, family and work on the career advancement of Lebanese women managers and found that women have started to challenge the patriarchal and religious norms to improve the scope of women employment.

The above discussion would seem to apply to women in industrially developed countries as it does in developing countries such as Pakistan where social inequality exists at all levels of society. Having explored the female position in the context of their work as well society and the many challenges women face I will now explore employee engagement in the workplace.

3.4 The need for engaged employees

There is a general agreement amongst academics that engaged employees are essential for any organisation. For instance, Shuck and Wollard (2010, p. 103) state that engaged employees lead to 'an individual employee's cognitive, emotional and behavioural state directed toward desired organisational outcomes'. For others, such as Leiter (1997) engaged employees are energetic, involved, and resourceful as opposed to feeling 'bushed, disparaging, and vain'. They advise employers to encourage employee participation in activities that create a sense of engagement amongst the disenfranchised individuals by scrutinising their workloads, empowering employees thus giving them greater control over their jobs. In doing this, a message is being transmitted to employees that their contribution is being recognised, valued or rewarded in accordance with their performance. This creates a sense of equitable

treatment, and gives a feeling that employee personal values match with the organisation's ethics and values. This view of employee worth and engagement strikes resonance with that of Macey *et al.* (2009).

Macey *et al.* (2009) state that engaged employees have focused energy and a sense of purpose evident to others owing to the display of personal enterprise, compliance, struggle, and determination of being focused on achieving organisational goals. They also state that instilling a high level of trust amongst employees and promoting impartiality in the organisational culture by the management is pertinent in creating inclusivity and sustaining a feeling of engagement amongst staff. Such central intervention by the management can create a culture of engagement and help build confidence and resilience amongst employees. This view resonates with Gibbon's (2006) in that a manager's sympathetic decisions and employee-focused practices are likely to inspire employee engagement. Such behaviour, it is argued, can help in staff socialisation as well as instilling a greater self-belief amongst the employees, which can lead to a sense of increasing level of freedom, motivation and inspiration to engage.

Gebauer and Lowman's (2008) focus on employee engagement and stress that fostering a 'profound union' with the organisation is likely to result in the employees going above and beyond what is expected from them in performing their job routines. In their research on global organisation, Mone and London (2018) state that an engaged employee displays a feeling of devotion and empowerment in their personal and work settings. This led them to conclude that the manager behaviour was linked with both performance management as well as engagement of employees. They went on to identify major performance management actions, which have a strong positive correlation with employee engagement. These are setting performance goals, providing feedback, employee development, having mid-year and early appraisals and providing an atmosphere of empowerment and trust.

The above debate clearly illustrates that there is a degree of diverging opinions and there is no one view of employee engagement. Having said that, there are a number of common factors that provide a broad understanding of what engaged employee are, however, Kahn (1990) argues that employee engagement is a 'positive

psychological condition' which leads to an employee playing an active role in the organisational life. This has led to some academics referring to engagement as focusing more on what the *employees feel* when they are considered to be completely engaged and therefore submerged in his/her work. For instance, Robinson *et al.* (2004) refers to engagement as employees having an optimistic outlook towards the organisation and its values and therefore employers suggest that employees ought to be 'gratified' for this. Csikszentmihalyi (2004) describes this state as 'flow', which is experienced by engaged employees. This leads to dedication, vitality or vigor and absorption. According to Schaufeli *et al.* (2002), this approach explicates work engagement as a positive, gratifying and occupational condition of the mind, which is characterised by devotion, vigor and absorption.

Although researchers (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002; Macey and Schneider, 2008; Mone and London, 2018) found a certain amount of agreement on engagement as aforementioned studies suggest, there also appeared to be a mismatch between the employee viewpoint and the senior management's viewpoint of engagement. Managers regard an engaged employee as an advantage for the organisation if the employee is mindful of her company environment, and has supportive attitude towards her colleagues to fulfill the assigned task with enhanced performance. However, Mone and London (2018) note that this viewpoint is better matched with senior managers rather than that of practitioners and researchers since management's primary concern is with the business benefits of employee engagement (Macleod and Brady, 2008). This approach not only emphasizes organisational perspective, that is, performance and benefits of engaged employee to the organisation, but also advocates a 'business outcomes' outlook of employee engagement. I would argue that there is a difference between the academic concept of employee engagement and the management concept of an engaged employee since the two sectors have different interests i.e. business is about maximising financial gains whereas education is about imparting of knowledge.

A unified attitude-engagement model proposed by Harrison *et al.* (2006) also suggests that better performance by the employees is associated with positive attitude towards their work i.e. employees pay their full attention to their job and they are more committed and satisfied with their work experience. They used meta-analysis

techniques in their studies on the basis of previous findings, which maintained and re-affirmed the outcome of their model, in which it was argued that better performance at work is associated with broad optimistic work and job attitudes. It seems that the approach adopted by Harrison *et al.* (2006) is very much similar to the Robinson *et al.* (2004) study as both proposed the positive attitudes by the employee, who the Chief Executives of most of their researched organisations would like to implement in their employees. Harter *et al.* (2002) maintains that the research evidence of these engagements link the positive employee attitudes with improved performance and productivity which in return is inspiring senior managers. However they also go on to state that the findings of employee engagement are a completely new phenomenon and have never been tested and validated in the existing context of organisational psychology and indeed research focus has very much been job commitment and job satisfaction. Therefore, engagement is the passion, willingness and desire to voluntarily work for the organisation beyond call of duty (Saradha and Patrick, 2011).

3.5 Employee engagement and gender in Pakistan

The experiences of working Pakistani women can be described as being similar to Powell and Mainiero's (1992) conceptualisation that women careers are like the cross currents in the river of time where there are constraints, interdependence, myriad of issues along with societal factors. Despite this, women seem to be more engaged than men, which is quite interesting and provides an interesting backdrop to the present study which also looks at Pakistani female academics experiences of engagement (Gallup, 2013). This view was supported Gersick and Kram (2002) who articulate that women careers show a variety of paths and pattern as compared to men which is mostly linear and ladder like as compared to females which is snake-like or zigzag. This leads me to conclude that gender is a 'major social, historical, and political category that affects the life choices of women' (Goldberger *et al.*, 1996, p. 4) regardless of their class.

According to International Labour organization, increasing number of females have entered the labour force in industrial countries over the past 70 years (ILO, 2016). In Pakistan the number of women in formal paid work is much smaller due to it being a

developing country however a quiet revolution is taking place, driven by the middle classes, with more and more women in paid work, especially in education. This is leading to a noticeable social transformation in attitudes and social fabric of the society (Khan, 2007).

Studies conducted on female worker experiences show us that women take greater pride in their work than their male counterpart do. However, female workers face significant obstructions to their career advancement due to factors such as work and family conflict, gender stereotypes, and discrimination in male-dominated organisations (Fakhr *et al.*, 2016). They also point out, perhaps not unsurprisingly, that whilst most of the research on engagement has been done in US and of US workers, there are many similarities of experiences between females in US and other countries.

During my investigation of employee engagement I also discovered that little is known of the potential relationship in other cultures and even less so in terms of its relationship to gender, especially in Pakistan higher education settings in relation to female academic staff experiences. This is such an important issue due to the rapidly changing employment relationship and workplace management practices, not just in Pakistan but also in other developing countries as well as many international business and organisational settings. Given that 31% of academic staff in Pakistani HE institutions are female (AEPAM, 2018) as compared to 69% males, it is pertinent that their experiences are explored so that policy makers can develop a strategy to address some of the imbalances in their work experience.

3.6 Summary

Attempt has been made to study literature as widely as possible however various searches revealed that a great body of literature was generated in the area of female work experience between 1970s and 1990s. The last three decades, regarded as the most influential for generating new ideas and thinking, formed the basis of much of the discussion on the female work discourse in this chapter. It also needs to be pointed out that much of the reviewed literature has tended to be Eurocentric. This in no way belittles the experiences of women that are or have been taking place in other

parts of the world and simply means that a strategy was adopted for the sake of convenience i.e. availability and easy access of materials, both in terms of physical and virtual materials as well as convenience of being available in English language. Furthermore, some of the literature focused on general organisations and not necessarily on educational institutions due to a lack of available materials.

This chapter looked at various aspects of female career progression in organisations. The chapter explored how female career progression was influenced by factors such as being a mother and having to perform domestic responsibilities. Working women who had to look after their children had to balance work with domestic commitments such as looking after household chores. This often stagnated female career development and they fail to reach the highest level of corporate hierarchy. Women often experienced gender harassment in the workplace, which led some to quit their careers. In developing countries such as Pakistan, women often find it difficult to go to work due to social pressures and stay at home to take care of the household duties which is often influenced by their parents, in-laws and/or husbands. A discussion also took place about women and identity with a focus on Pakistan. The reviewed literature suggests that women often had to adopt multiple identities in order to cope with social pressures at home and in society. This was certainly the case of Pakistani women who had to cope with a patriarchal set-up where there was male dominance in the household. This resulted in women having to perform domestic duties including looking after their children and looking after in-laws especially when they had retired in addition to working outside. This led to a certain amount of work-life balance and work-family conflict as well as access to opportunities or career progression. It would seem that the household responsibilities and workplace duties resulted in a considerable amount of stress for these women.

The discussion in this chapter has also highlighted that the area of staff engagement is quite complex with a number of factors playing an important role such as organisational culture and managements' treatment of staff. There appears to be a general agreement among academics that an engaged employee is important for the organisation since their psychological well-being is likely to result in women being more productive and also committed towards the organisation that employs them and therefore such employees are less likely to take sick leave or leave the organisation.

This, it was argued, can only be good for the organisation since engaged employees will be more productive. One way of increasing employee commitment towards the organisation was to create an environment at work where employees are valued and supported. The discussion highlighted that responsibility lay with senior managers, since they had the power, to ensure that they introduce policies that lead to all staff being more engaged in organisations. Female employees, it has been argued were more engaged than men and took pride in their work. Research showed that there was a lack of material of Pakistani employee engagement in all fields in developing countries especially in higher education.

Chapter 4: Female academic staff in Higher Education in Pakistan

4.0 Introduction

There has been a considerable level of interest among researchers in ascertaining academic employee experiences in academia in Western countries (Thanacoody *et al.*, 2006; Baumgartner and Schnieder, 2010). However limited studies indicate that much less attention has been paid in ascertaining academic staff experiences in academic institutions in developing countries such as Pakistan. The few studies that have taken place highlight major discrepancies in higher education (Shah and Shah, 2012; Rab, 2014; Morley and Crossouard, 2015; Shah, 2018).

This chapter starts with a background of Higher Education in Pakistan. This is followed by a discussion on academic staffing levels in Pakistan Higher Education institutions. It then provides a detailed overview of women's position as members of the academic community generally and later more specifically in the context of developing countries with reference to females working in higher education using gender as a construct. This is done by exploring the role of the masculine nature of management with a focus on higher education which creates obstacles to female academic career progression. Finally, there is a discussion on what can be done to ensure greater gender equality in Higher Education.

4.1 Background of Higher Education in Pakistan

The Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan is an independent and constitutionally established institution. It was formed in 2002 and is responsible for overseeing, regulating, and accrediting the higher education efforts in Pakistan. HEC manages the development of the higher education thus playing a vital role in establishing a knowledge based economy in Pakistan (HEC, 2017). In addition to regulating, overseeing the management and development of the higher education sector, the HEC also works towards upgrading the universities to meet national need and international standards.

Pakistan has come a long way from the time the country gained independence (1947) when it inherited just two universities and like other developing countries is now rapidly increasing its HE provision. HEC is responsible for degree awarding of 185 universities out of which 110 are public sector and 75 are private sector universities across all provinces (HEC, 2018). Around seven of the universities are for female students only.

The number of higher education student enrollment in Pakistan has been increasing steadily with 2.9% of the population aged between 17-23 years having access to university education from 32% in 2002 to 45% in 2017 (HEC, 2017). The total male enrolment in the universities is 0.795 million (54%), whereas, the female enrolment is 0.667 million (46%). The total teachers in the universities are 58,733 out of which 40,258 (69%) are in public and 18,475 (31%) are in private sector (AEPAM, 2018). It is hard to find the number of females academics in the recent data in HEC as well as numbers are not given on the basis of gender. Whilst these figures may sound optimistic the HEC Chairman recognised that only a small percent of population goes into higher education. HEC went on to note that there were 18 female Vice Chancellors across 185 universities (HEC, 2017). HEC in its policy statement states that it is committed to providing equal opportunities to female staff and there is a strong stance against women harassment.

4.2 Academic staffing levels in higher education

A growing population and an increasing number of higher education providers has resulted in more middle class female students entering HE which has resulted in over 30% of academic staff in Pakistani universities being female (HEC, 2017). A majority of academic staff members are appointed from within the same province, even though this is not by design but rather due to convenience, with a few exceptions whereby some staff came from different provinces (HEC, 2017) but there are gender disparities in staffing as one would probably expect in a developing country. According to the Academy of Educational Planning and Management Pakistan's (AEPAM) Education Statistics report (2018) for 2016-17, there are 69% male academics in higher education in Pakistan's 185 universities and 31% female academics (AEPAM, 2018). Similarly, if we take out the junior entry level positions

i.e. lecturers, there remain 1,841 women who make 18%, whereas over 30% of male faculty members are on the senior level i.e. assistant professors, associate professors and professors (Rab, 2014). It has also been noted that there is little data on female related issues such as the number of PhDs or the number of female academics at provincial level (Morley and Crossouard, 2015). Even though there are 18 female Vice Chancellors in Pakistan HE, which is quite encouraging but it is less than 10%. This should be a concern to HEC. The low proportion of females in top positions reflects gender inequality, which would suggest that there is a long way to go for female academic staff to being equal or at least acceptable in the institutional corridors (Shah and Shah, 2012). According to the HEC employer perception survey conducted by Thornton (2016) it was concluded that it is important to have gender balance inculcated at all levels in the society. HE can contribute by providing incentives, confidence building courses and tutorials for females to be in leadership roles in organisations that are presently male dominated.

The above somewhat less than optimistic picture is supported by recent research initiated by British Council regarding the concerns about under-representation of female academic staff in Higher Education focusing on six South Asian countries i.e. Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal (Morley and Crossouard, 2015). Their findings show a clear picture of female inequality in academia in these countries which all rank very low in terms of the Global Gender Gap (GGP) and rank between 68 to 141 out of 144 countries with Pakistan being on 143 (World Economic Forum, 2017). However, whilst a lack of numbers highlight an obvious fact there is also the issue of how women are treated once they have leaped over the HE fence.

Looking at the number of female academics that have entered into Pakistan HE it appears that the system is still very much gendered and these academics are restricted to opportunities, career progression and top management positions (Bagilhole and White, 2011; Shah and Shah, 2012). When analysing female representation in senior positions in the Middle Eastern context it would seem that strong masculine culture in academia still prevails as it does in society at large (Tlaiss, 2015). Therefore, despite some optimism in terms of number of women staff entering the teaching profession gender inequality at all levels in academia still remains in Pakistan (Shah

and Shah, 2012). This state of affairs reflects a broader societal problem, which is prevalent in Pakistan due to cultural and religious norms. It has also been noted that the organisational culture of the HE institutions in the West is also ‘unfriendly’ and ‘unaccommodating’ for women especially towards their journey leading to higher positions (McGregor, 2010). This view strikes resonance with the views expressed by Shah (2018) in an earlier study, which looked at women, educational leadership and societal culture in Malaysia. She concluded that women’s participation in the public and their access to senior leadership positions is defined by cultural and belief systems in a society.

According to a study by Shaukat and Pell (2016) discrimination in education is multi-dimensional and incorporates factors such as promotions, salaries, resources, decision making power and so on. The ability of a woman to respond to/cope with this discrimination is dependent on how the society has shaped her personal psychosocial attributes through the wider view of the status of women. This may be the reason why Van den Brink and Benchop (2012) in their study of gender inequality described it as like a ‘seven headed dragon’ that has got different faces in multiple social contexts.

4.3 Masculine nature of organisations with a focus on Higher Education

The concept of hegemonic masculinity and management in organisations has been highlighted by a number of academics. For instance, Tlaiss (2015) argues that higher education, especially in developing countries, is characterised by male traits which tends to militate against the female career development. In an earlier study of 400 women in Lebanon, Tlaiss and Kauser (2010, p. 527) concluded that women managers’ experienced ‘gender-based discrimination in recruitment, promotion, performance appraisal, and training and development opportunities’. In a more recent study of Muslim academics in three Malaysian universities by Shah (2018) it was concluded that Muslim societies were characterized by feudal patriarchal structures and interpretations of religion were used to reinforce male domination and authority over women in education. This led Shah (2018) to conclude that gender equality was a complex phenomenon and despite the institutional policy development implementation was often lacking. She challenged those who claimed that ‘gender

equality is won' (p. 299) and argued that the female suffering in terms of discrimination at professional and domestic levels was all too common in Muslim societies. This leads to discriminatory practices by male manager resulting in lower percentage of women gaining promotion. For instance, Thanacoody *et al.* (2006) in a study of Mauritian and Australian universities observed that there only 3.5% female senior lecturers compared to 26% males in a major Australian university. Similarly, in Lebanon female participation in the labour market is amongst the lowest in the world despite 50% of the university student population being female (Tlaiss, 2014).

The above view was endorsed by an earlier study by Tlaiss (2015). She argued that due to patriarchal and masculinity nature of Lebanese society traditional ideologies of male domination prevailed whereby men pursue careers whilst the women are expected to play a domestic role. Women in Muslim societies are often socialised from a very young age to accept male domination and later their authority. This results in uneven power being bestowed on men which in later years leads to a belief and male discourse which becomes the norm in subjugating women. Translating this to how women are treated in organisations in Lebanon and Mauritius we can quite clearly see that the hegemonic masculinity training of privilege in their earlier years serves the men well. Perhaps it is not too surprising then that men become managers and later exercise their authority to maintain status quo, which they have been trained for from an early age. It has been argued that organisations in developing countries, and to a lesser extent in the West, remain masculine in terms of their culture with a lack of opportunity for adequate female networks, female mentors and role-models, work and family imbalances (Morley and Crossouard, 2015). In order to explore the concept of organisational masculinity I will turn to an historical quote which I argue is as relevant today as it was then, by Quinlan (1999, p. 32), to understand academic experiences of female staff in developing countries,

‘...academic women experience greater isolation, higher levels of stress, a lower sense of self-efficacy, and self-confidence and more difficulty in establishing relationships with colleagues, a feeling of being an outsider in a masculine culture...’

Shaukat and Pell (2016) came to the same conclusion about female career frustration by stating that female staff who have career aspirations often leave the organization rather than having to face these multitude of problems. This failure, they argued, results in female staff under-representation and hence inequality continues to remain. In contrast, it has been argued that when women remain in organisations they tend to excel as leaders (Cleveland *et al.*, 2000 in Thanacoody *et al.*, 2006) due to their leadership style which is about team building and empowering individual self-interest and consensus-based as opposed to men who tend to be authoritarian. It would seem that academia follows the same practices especially in developing countries (Shah, 2018).

Despite the above debate there is also some controversy. For instance, whilst the successful female staff may be aware of the difficulties being experienced by other females in entering, progressing and achieving within the organization, some females may even become obstacles and prevent others from joining them (Mavin, 2008). This allows them to protect their own position. In the latter case it is this mental enslavement which leaves her sisters in distress that has been described as the ‘Queen Bee’ syndrome (Mavin, 2008). This ‘bad behaviour’ displayed by some senior female managers in the organisation was raised as a concern in the 1970’s and flew in the face of female colleagues at the time. Perhaps it was just a convenient label for gaining media popularity rather than there being any concrete evidence for this phenomenon or a convenient label to distract attention from the male hegemonic practices.

The debate in this section shows how the different facets of female careers in organisations have been researched. For example, the role of gender, importance of relationships, challenges for balancing work and family as well as structural barriers are a few to mention. It is thought that women value career development differently than men whereas the male defined traditional career models have become the standard and bench mark in organisational research and practice (O’Neil *et al.*, 2008). Having explored the masculine nature of organisations and the challenges women face at work we are now in a better position to link this with female academic staff experiences in HE sector.

4.4 Female academic staff experiences in higher education

Women's status in Pakistan has always been of subordination to males in all spheres of employment whether it is private organisations or educational institutions (Ali, 2013; Shaukat and Pell, 2016). The degree of dominance might be different depending on the socio-economic factors (see Chapter 2), urban and rural divide, regions and traditions to which they belong (the tribal and feudal system) and education or level of literacy, which is different among all four provinces (Shaukat *et al.*, 2014). There is also disparity of educational experience. For instance, the rich and elite send their children to private and English medium schools, whereas the rest go to the government schools which is usually Urdu medium (national language). The poorer classes, especially in tribal and conservative areas, send their children to religious schools (*Deeni Madrassas*). The curriculum is different for the children in each setup. Furthermore, girls have lesser opportunities as compared to boys especially in more conservative and rural areas of Pakistan. This is confirmed by a UNESCO (2002) study which indicated that men dominate in numbers within the education sector worldwide and it is believed that this female under-representation can be attributed to but not limited to the socio-cultural status of women in the society and the dynamics of the workplace (Shaukat *et al.*, 2014). The story of Malala Yousefzai, the Nobel Prize winner from Pakistan, who fights for girl rights to education in Pakistan, is an exception.

It would seem that women in academia are faced with discriminatory practices at various stages of their career with a majority of senior positions in higher education being held by men which in turn provides them greater initiative compared to women (Shah and Shah, 2012). This view is supported by Shaukat and Pell (2016) who conducted a survey on extent of gender discrimination amongst 180 faculty members in 10 public and private universities in Lahore, Pakistan. Their focus was on five main aspects at workplace which were decision making, professional development, use of resources, academic aspects and job satisfaction. A two-way analysis of variance in responses of the members showed that the level of position of the faculty members is the strongest contributor to the differences in treatment of female academics and gender contributes and affects more in decision making where females are excluded from the process. Other gender differences pertained towards policy making, curriculum monitoring and evaluation. Gender inequality was rated

highest by staff members on lowest positions who are females working in public institutions. Their analysis showed that females were less satisfied with half of the factors in the questionnaire. The differences were mostly related to members on junior positions. The responses of females showed lesser amount of satisfaction in matters of promotion and being able to freely progress their careers. At the very basic level, gender differences relate to policy making matters, curriculum observation and assessment as prominent areas of discrimination in decision making. The authors of this study concluded that gender discrimination leads to low job satisfaction and women not having enough freedom in work setting tend to have low job satisfaction.

In some situations where women succeed and work shoulder to shoulder to men, gaining complete financial independence, workplace gender bias is also prevalent (Tarar and Pulla, 2014). One such example is the country's corporate sector, where many foreign owned multi-nationals are fast becoming exemplars for not only Pakistan but the world with their future focused programmes tailored to support female employees and citizens alike. These programs include longer paid maternity leave, work from home options, special pick and drop transport for female employees as well as skill enhancement programs for women who have been away from work for too long i.e. due to pregnancies and severe illnesses. Even here however, where companies work hard with such programs to compete for talent with competition, they do not always train or promote women to take up senior management roles which highlights the underlying bias in even seemingly progressive environments. The notion is supported within the higher education sector in Pakistan. For instance, Shaukat and Pell (2016) in their comprehensive study of private and public higher education institutes within Pakistan saw that although women do enjoy some equality here, men still dominate in decision-making roles.

An earlier survey conducted by Quraishi and Kalim (2008) of faculty members of Pakistan Higher Education institutes also showed that women faced gender discrimination at their respective workplace resulting in lower job satisfaction. They concluded that women in Pakistani HE institutions are generally not included in decision making processes which resulted in mistrust, underestimation and low self-esteem amongst women academics. The survey highlighted the underrepresentation of female academics in various committees and teams with very few holding a Chair

position or other senior roles. Those personnel at higher position noticed less discrimination while those who are lower in the chain, especially lecturers, see it all around them. Females occupying a greater percentage in employment i.e. lecturers, seem to experience more gender discrimination as compared to their senior colleagues. The survey also showed that promoted females, due to their achievements, displayed a higher level of job satisfaction compared to those who did not get promoted. The authors went on to conclude that gender discrimination is predominant in areas of decision making and inequality is mostly seen in matters of policy making and curriculum evaluation. Promotion was recognised as having a considerable impact on job satisfaction. The research concluded that all staff had opportunity to undertake professional development however there was evidence of gender discrimination and female staff were less likely to benefit.

In a research of three Malaysian universities, it was noted by Shah (2018) that females in senior academic positions faced many challenges. She identified the patriarchal society, along with religious interpretations by males, as major factors that put men in a superior position. This, she argued, is further exacerbated by a negative female perception of self and conceptualisation of equality was more concerned about sexual harassment rather than other aspects of gender equality. It would seem that the desire to be 'a good Muslim woman' as expected by the society forces women to accept male superiority. Shah (2018) went on to conclude being a good mother and wife was more prioritised than equality in the Malaysian context. These findings link to the earlier studies about respectable femininity and domesticity by Fernando and Cohen (2014) in the context of Sri Lanka. In another study of Indian women by Radhakrishnan (2009, p. 211) it was concluded that there are certain expectations from working females and they have to adhere to appropriate behaviour 'through a discourse of balance, restraint and knowing the limit' to conform to the norms at workplace and society.

Gender discrimination within institutions often results in women academics being the last ones to get the information as they have limited access to key information points compared to their male colleagues (Quraishi and Kalim, 2008). These include meetings of senior staff, attending conferences, socialising outside of work, which are all bastion of male normal activity. It can be seen that the impact of the national

conservative culture as well as the traditional and typical male dynamic work structure of the institutions leads to gender inequality (UNESCO, 2002). This results indecision and policy making mainly in the hands of male managers even if the majority of the workforce may be female, the reason being that females are considered less capable managers (Blackmore and Sachs, 2012). But gender disparity in education is much more noticeable in South Asia especially in Pakistan.

According to The World Economic Forum (2016) Pakistan ranked 142 out of 143 countries progressing towards gender equality. This is despite efforts through legislations for provision of equal rights to males and females working conditions, which are enshrined in The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan (2012). According to Khalid (2011) there is a division in the society at provincial level with a clear contrast between the traditionalists, barring women freedom and the liberals who advocate equality in all segments of society. It would seem that in Pakistan, women are victims of gender inequality in all occupations as the male dominated society usually undermines the capabilities of women. Women are expected to be only good housewives but also considered as not good working personnel. Therefore, the decision making remains to be a male prerogative. This aspect becomes more prominent when it comes to the matters of policy formulation since female contribution is not considered to be of any significant value. It has been argued that even though in industrial countries women have greater chances of success in the work field they also remain under-represented in academic affairs and high positions of administration (Singh, 2002; 2008).

This above is true of higher education whereby gender inequality remains a concern in developing countries as women have comparatively less access to resources however where resources are available females have been seen to take full advantage of the opportunities. However, lack of support for female academic staff from family as well as institution remains a major concern.

McGregor (2010) and Tlaiss (2015) suggest that there are social, economic, institutional and gender barriers which may be preventing females from applying for and gaining top academic positions. This is further intensified by women experiencing lack of training, mentorship and networking opportunities as well as

lacking family support in terms of mobility, which in Pakistan means that women will often work near her place of work or in same city.

Furthermore, given that leadership is masculine women staff are left with a feeling of helplessness. This may be resulting in most female academics rejecting assertiveness and instead identifying and socialising with male managers and even being subservient to them out of fear of being isolated. They concluded that female academics are discriminated for being a female in a masculine professional context in the UK HE institutions. Singh (2008) also states that more than half of the women working in higher education institutions are dissatisfied with their work due to suffering from gender discrimination. The main causes of concern were ineffective legislation. Similarly, it has been observed by Johansson and Sliwa (2014) in their research of foreign female academic experiences in the UK Higher Education that all female academics experience a certain level of discrimination. It has also been highlighted that some academic staff fear that promotion may result in more administrative work which may take them away from teaching and research which is their comfort zone as it is manageable with their domestic responsibilities (Morley and Crossouard, 2015).

Despite the above somewhat pessimistic picture of female academic staff experiences in Pakistan HE with many of these staff finding themselves in lower positions, it appears that things are moving in the right direction, certainly in terms of having a critical mass of female academics. Positive developments include the construction of Fatima Jinnah Women University in Islamabad and other cities and the proposed construction of six more all-female universities across the country. It is envisaged that female Vice-Chancellors will lead these institutions. Therefore despite the existence of a number of negative indicators such as male culture, domestic obligations, travelling limitations and social networking which all deny females gender equality, data about Commonwealth Universities shows an 11% increase in the number of female professors and a 10% increase in the number of female assistant and associate professors from 1997 to 2006 (Singh, 2008). This leads me to explore the status of higher education in Pakistan.

4.5 Way forward in addressing gender equality in higher education

Traditionally, organisations in industrial countries maintained status-quo, which meant that power center was in the hand of those who fitted into stereotype and the majority being men it is they who benefitted. However, there has been significant movement in correcting these imbalances in the West through legislation over the past 50 years. Progress in the developing countries has been much slower where jobs, whether they are in the private or public sectors, are often not obtained on merit but through family connections, friendship or political associations. Once a job is obtained the next phase is to hold on to it however women face a number of problems to remain in employment.

A recent study by Professor Morely and Dr. Crossouard (2015) for the British Council on role of women in higher education highlighted that despite the rhetoric there is little or no institutional data on gender equality in five of the South Asian countries (Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka). There is often an absent category in higher education policy and the only data available refers to student's participation rates. This leads Professor Morely and Dr. Crossouard (2015, p. 7) in their research for the British Council to observe that women are:

‘Being rejected or disqualified from senior leadership through discriminatory recruitment, selection and promotion procedures, gendered career pathways or exclusionary networks and practices in women-unfriendly institutions.’

Or women are:

‘Refusing, resisting or dismissing senior leadership and making strategic decisions not to apply for positions which they evaluate as unattractive, onerous and undesirable’

The above views resonate with findings of Shah and Shah (2012) who also came to very similar conclusions. Whilst accepting the complexity of the above arguments both of these scenarios should be of concern to higher education providers since the outcome is negative and militate against the interest of the female academic staff. It

could be argued that the responsibility for addressing gender discrimination lies with the senior management in the individual academic institutions as well as the Higher Education Commission as the overseer of Higher Education in Pakistan.

4.6 Summary

The reviewed literature indicates that middle class female career choices are often limited to being doctors or teachers as these are considered respectable professions in Pakistan. Young women may have their personal choices and ambitions for success but the socio-economic and cultural factors have a major impact on their careers. Given that organisations in Pakistan are masculine, institutional nuances are heavily skewed in men's favour who often prevent female staff from reaching senior positions. The literature also recognised that female staff are facing work-life conflicts which are based in cultural and societal norms that often militate against the interest of female staff in institutional settings and therefore likely to curtail academic female career progression.

Reviewed literature also indicates that more and more young women are entering higher education and the number of female academic staff is increasing in Pakistan mostly driven by the middle classes. Whilst the academic staff levels are increasing, this is positive; it would seem that academic institutions are often characterised by a masculine culture, which results in female academic staff experiencing gender inequality. This discrimination leads to a lot of frustration for the female staff since their careers are often stagnant and there are very few opportunities for promotion or staff development.

It would seem that discrimination in educational setting is multi-dimensional whereby culture and social deprivation have created an unjust society in Pakistan where women find it difficult to enter or progress in the world of paid work. Religion plays an important role in Lebanese society, which has many similar characteristics as Pakistani society that leads to male managers misusing their power to protect male interest. It seems that Muslim societies are characterised by feudal patriarchal structures and interpretations of religion to keep male domination and authority over women. Those women who manage to break these barriers, notably the middle

classes, find it challenging with institutional policies often being restricted to paper and little opportunity to progress to senior levels. Having said that there are also some positive developments in Pakistan such as the number of women entering higher education both as students and staff as well as introduction of female only universities. It is concerning that whilst the picture on representation of students and academic staff in higher education may appear to be rather optimistic; gender equality is not being a prioritised in higher education and little attention is being paid to the experiences of the female academic staff hence this research.

I would conclude by saying that the issue of female academic staff experiences in higher education is quite complex and there are not many studies on academic staff experiences especially in the context of Pakistan and data on the basis of gender is not available.

Chapter 5: Perspectives and drivers influencing my research approach

5.0 Introduction

As I began to read around gender inequality issues I began to ask myself questions about the approach I will be taking when I interact with my subjects. Given my interest and personal positionality, it was therefore quite logical that the issue that I will explore researcher neutrality in research and power dynamics in researching gender issues. I began to read about feminist theories, which mostly emerged from USA in 1970's and the leading proponents include Sandra Harding, Donna Haraway, bell hooks and Patricia Hill Collins. Their central contention was that we live in an unequal society where women suffer from inequality in all spheres of their lives. They focused on gender politics and challenged the male power hegemony, arguing that women should have an equal opportunity in personal as well as professional life. They argued that female experience was critical in an investigation of gender issues; this had a major influence on the researchers especially in qualitative research.

The discussion in this chapter focuses on neutrality and power dynamics in research followed by a discussion about feminism and how it is viewed in Pakistan especially in the socio-political and cultural context. This was important since without an understanding of these perspectives I could not do justice to the topic of my research. Another issue that I felt was also important to explore was that of trust between the research and subjects especially given that I am a former 'insider', since I worked in Pakistani HE and an 'outsider' now working in a UK university. Finally, I conclude this chapter by looking at reflexivity and role of personal positionality in research. Given the nature of my research, I feel that this contextualizes my research.

5.1 Challenging the traditional research paradigms

I deliberately decided to use interpretivist approach using multiple case studies in my research, as it will provide a richer account of the subjects' cultural and institutional experiences. Interpretivism is about engaging with the subjects, which the hard

sciences often ignore and is often relegated to an afterthought at best or suppressed at worst (De Vault, 1996). This is by no means saying there is no place in research for positivistic research; in fact far from it as Harding (1986) contends. She argues that feminist researchers do use quantitative methods but the accounts of social inquiry that focus on women's experiences can reveal an equally rich narrative especially where the researcher is a stakeholder in the outcomes. Therefore, in my research my starting point was understanding and empathy towards the women being researched. My viewpoint and personal experience of having worked in Pakistani HE leads me to suggest that the interaction was based on female solidarity, comradeship and trust. I started by asking searching questions such as whom, why and from whose perspective whilst exploring the female institutional experiences. There were no presumptions in my approach neither power dynamics since I was an 'insider' and an 'outsider' having shared experiences of being a woman and an academic and therefore many shared experiences with my fellow academics. My approach as a female academic was very different from a male line of inquiry of females, which inherits the power of dominance by their role socialization. In the next section, I will outline various perspectives, which informed and influenced my thinking as I approached my research.

5.2 Questioning neutrality in research

It seems that 'what constitutes good research' and which methods generate the best data has been a talking point amongst social scientists and sociologists since researchers first began to understand and explain people's behaviours and society (Verma and Beard, 1981). Indeed, on occasions there has often been open disagreement on this point. However, what social scientists do agree on is that research is primarily concerned with demystifying human behaviour in some context and therefore cannot be divorced from the researcher standpoint and the dynamics of the interaction with the subject since these have an impact on the research outcomes (Harding, 2004). One can also question other aspects within this debate such as the researcher's phenomenological approach, their ontological positioning as well as their worldview, which once again throws the notion of neutrality into disarray. Millen (1997) suggests that research neutrality is 'neither possible nor desirable' (especially given that the researcher is more likely to be in a privileged position)

based on their theoretical knowledge and economic position when compared to the position of the respondent. This led Millen (1997) to conclude that the individuals may not be the best interpreter of their experiences since their knowledge compared to the researcher may be somewhat limited. This would certainly lead us to ask some searching questions such as ‘Whose truth?’, ‘What truth?’ and ‘Whose interest?’ Can a researcher really ever be value free, without prejudice, free of a particular belief system, without a view of the subjects being interrogated? Would the research not always contaminate and therefore influence, to a degree, their subject responses with these values? This leads me to conclude that social science research is inherently political.

Politicisation in research challenges the traditional research approaches and led me to explore issues such as identity and the role of feminist theory within the research process. It helped me to develop an understanding of the ‘perennial epistemological’ paradigms associated with researching gender issues, which lie at the heart of this study. Indeed there has been an intense debate which has been fuelled by various discourses led by a number of politically aware researchers and feminists such as Donna Haraway, Sandra Harding and Patricia Hill Collins over the past 40 years. Their clarity of thought has given valuable insights to the researchers, sociologists, academics and philosophers to view ‘gender as a lens through which to focus on social issues’ (Hesse-Beber, 2014, p. 3).

This chapter provides the base, insights, parameters and ‘pre-requisite knowledge necessary for processing information’ (De Mey, 1982, p. 36) from a gender perspective in the present research endeavour. It also provides an insight into some of the research approaches and paradigms in order to clarify ‘the myriad of complexities’ (Neal-Smith, 2007) that lie behind researching gender issues. I started by attempting to understand feminist methodology and female standpoints, in order to seek clarity with the hope that it will also help me pursuing a line of inquiry which had the potential to generate the most valuable and in-depth account of the female academic experiences i.e. opinions of a number of selected female academic staff.

I started this course of study as neither a radical nor a feminist; however, I soon discovered that both of these two forces were influencing my thinking. However, the

more time I spent on self-reflection and developing an understanding of various forces that were interplaying in my life the more questions began to emerge about my chosen research area and perhaps quite logically my investigation veered towards feminist literature about women's struggle for equality and justice, which I found truly liberating.

5.3 Women's struggle for gender equality

There is a rich and abundance of literature in the area of feminist inquiry (De Vault, 1996; Brisolara, 2003) which is grounded in a broad range of disciplines such as sociology, economics and philosophy as well as biological, physical sciences, humanities and arts with each making a contribution to my understanding of feminism. It appears that the debate is very much an evolving one and the biggest energy seems to have been generated and located firmly in the women's movement in their fight for greater gender equality in the 1960's, 1970's and 1980s. Furthermore, the more I read, I realised that there is also no single agreement about the feminist method. Some have stated it more forcefully, 'there is no monolithic feminist position' (Millen, 1997). To adopt a simplistic position will be false as the subjects of study are likely to be varied in terms of their cultural and regional backgrounds and class and many may indeed be quite hostile to such an inquiry especially in the context of a neo-conservative Pakistan where religion and culture often pigeon-hole women. This is not to say that I am being critical or justifying the social norms of Pakistani society but just recognising what may be regarded as fact and truth. Indeed the feminist struggle for equality in the West has evolved from the grassroots as well as political activism of 1960s and 70s against colonialism for freedom in various parts of the world (including Algeria, Vietnam, South Africa, Angola, Mozambique and Palestine) and later by female academics. What is quite noticeable that many of these international struggles drew on Marxist ideas on women's oppression as part of protracted proletarian struggle for justice and an equal world (Millen, 1997), just like the early feminist movement (Harding, 2004). This leads me to conclude that the feminist movement has been very much influenced by these struggles and the radical thoughts of this period with women playing an important part.

Women began to learn about each other's struggles and organise around an agenda for female equality. They began to see an alternative in this community of women (De Vault, 1996) by making a connection between their oppression and male dominance by collectively learning from each other's experiences and began to challenge authority. They began to separate 'fact' from 'myth', from 'distortion' towards 'reality', from 'omission' towards 'inclusion', from being 'subjugated' towards being 'free'. At times this consciousness raising would have taken the form of individual acts and other times working together in small groups talking together, analyzing and engaging in physical acts in challenging the male hegemony (De Vault, 1996). There was no going back. They began to challenge academics that used mainstream science and therefore were the architects of female experience distortion towards a position whereby women subjugation was seen to be the norm and a tool for control for men (and privileged women). The logic of male dominance appeared in a variety of social science theories such as family, work, sexuality, and deviance (Glazer-Malbin and Waehrer, 1971). These enlightened women used feminism as a powerful conceptual tool for critiquing traditional sociological research (Millen, 1997). This necessitates an understanding of power dynamics in more details at this juncture in research.

5.4 Recognition of power in the research encounter

An important aspect that needs addressing is my relationship with the subjects of research and the dynamic of power in this interaction (Millen, 1997). As stated earlier, I recognise that I had a somewhat middle class upbringing being a daughter of military officer in Pakistan Army. My schooling from primary to higher education has been in some of the best institutions where I was sheltered from the harsh realities of life that many females of my age were going through and I am currently working and doing my doctorate in the UK University. This may have led my research subjects regarding me as being in a somewhat envious position therefore the dynamics of conversation cannot be veiled into insignificance; however, recognition of my perceived position also gave me some distinct advantage. At the same time, I was also aware that the respondents being interviewed were themselves also members of the middle class community since higher education opportunities are much more likely to be experienced by this class than most of the general Pakistani

female populace. The gendered nature of Pakistani society often means that women are oppressed and often exploited or at worst ridiculed and their experiences belittled. This leads me to conclude that the power dynamics between the subjects and me were significant even though they may have been ‘small streams’ rather than ‘oceans’ since I belonged to the same middle class while I was residing in Pakistan and there was common ground.

Generally, the participants saw my research as a positive experience and willingly engaged in a dialogue to share their experiences. I provided a listening ear, especially given my knowledge and understanding of the politics of gender issues which I have acquired due to my personal life challenges and this research, and therefore created an avenue for the subjects to share their experiences or even to vent their anger with me as a ‘sister in grief’ in sharing their sorrows. This awareness or ‘comradeship’ may sound like being ‘illusionary’ since the interaction can never truly be one of equals (Kelly, 1994) and I was acutely aware that absolute neutrality in research is virtually impossible. In my defense, I will ask the question, can any researcher have a relationship of equals due to different experiences based on race, class and gender? The answer quite clearly has to be a resounding ‘No’. The following section provides an indication of the feminist thinking that how it influenced my research approach.

5.5 The feminist influences

Feminism is a belief system based on a number of principles and at its core are a set of values, which recognise that we live in an unequal society where there is an imbalance that leads to subjugating of women (Hesse-Biber, 2013). The three key claims made by the feminists are: knowledge is socially constructed; the location of marginalised groups in society makes it possible for them to question their marginalisation as opposed to the non-marginalised groups; and the starting point of research that looks at the power dynamic should start by looking at the lives of the marginalised (Bowell, 2015). Feminists want to change the world so that there is equality for all by challenging the hegemony of male dominance in research as well as in society. They question the widely held views that tend to subjugate women by challenging, confronting and refusing to accept the notion of the rather simplistic ‘left’ versus ‘right’ argument that is put forward by those who want to maintain the

status quo. The contention is that what society in general holds as 'values' and 'commonsense' interpretations are the values of the dominant group and therefore not neutral (Lawson, 1999) and serve the interest of the dominant group to maintain a certain hegemony and therefore dominance over women.

In terms of relationship with men, feminist perspective starts by acknowledging that the world is dominated by men and their values. It is a world in which there is continued oppression of women and the consequences have become direr as the dominant force imposes its will whereby the general public accepts this hegemony as the norm. It is a world where women are disproportionately poor and their condition typifies the norm especially in developing countries. This is located in the historical and cultural bondage, which is today shaping female identities. We have been socialised to accept this as the status quo (Brisolara, 2003).

At the core of feminist ideology, is the recognition that one cannot separate race, class, sexual orientation and physical disability since all these groups have a common experience of oppression (hooks, 1995). This would suggest that justice for one group does not necessarily mean that there is an equal society and therefore fight for equality necessitates adopting a broader approach in uniting the struggles of various oppressed groups. This requires making alliances with other groups going through similar experiences. Here I will refer to Paulo Freire who in his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* discusses the approach to education and to transform the oppressive structures in order to create more equitable world, which is co-created by the marginalized and oppressed. In this transformation process, the importance of subjectivity cannot be denied, as human beings and world exist in constant interaction (Freire, 1970; 2000).

There is an argument that women as an oppressed group, gives them the advantage and an ability to understand other forms of oppressions, a sort of unity of groups that are engaged in their own struggles. This view is supported by Genovese (1991) when she states that 'by emphasizing the suppression of all women as women, feminists are attempting to understand the advantage and prerogative of some women by race, class and nationality' (Brisolara, 2003, p. 230).

Feminist ideology tries to unravel the power dynamics, the unsaid, the cultural ‘nods and winks’ that see women as objects rather than their achievements. Enlightened individuals (male and female) in organisations will become empowered to challenge the organisational culture and ultimately societal imbalance that militates against the women interests (Hesse-Biber, 2013). Having said this, the struggle for equality is long and hard since power is unlikely to be surrendered by those who have benefitted from it for so long. A feminist, therefore, must be a radical in thought and combine her struggle with other oppressed groups. This view is supported by hooks (in Brisolara, 2003, p. 195) when she states that ‘women and men of all races who are committed to end sexism and sexist exploitation and oppression, recognize that we create and sustain the conditions for solidarity and coalition building by vigilantly challenging the ethic of competition, replacing it with communal ethic of collective benefit’.

5.5.1 Feminist theories

Feminist research emerged out of concern by enlightened researchers that traditional researchers were making assumptions about the subjects based on their own training, thinking and world-view. These were limited since they did not take on board the female experience and neither was it addressing or challenging the male hegemony (Belenky *et al.*, 1986). The key concept that guided feminist researchers and thinkers was that research should empower women and lead to greater equality rather than lead to a construction of gender that neither represented female view nor led to findings that resulted in their empowerment. The argument presented by the feminists was that research conducted by unsympathetic male researchers was likely to lead to a conflict of meaning between researchers and the participants (Millen, 1997). But the debate is more complex than what may appear at first i.e. researching done by powerful (male) researchers into female experiences (victims of male oppression).

As I began to explore the debate in more detail, I soon discovered that there is also no single discourse, which describes the feminist thinking or research. There are various theories, standpoints and even controversies depending on the politics, class and race location of the researcher i.e. person presenting the arguments, which help

us to understand the myriad of complexity that shapes the debate. Gender theories and discourses have been shaped by some of the leading/eminant academics in the field such as Dorothy Smith, Patricia Collins, Nancy Chodorow, Raewyn Connell, Judith Butler, Mary Dietz, Dianne Millen, Barbara Fawcett, bell hooks, Sharon Brisolara and Sandra Harding. Each contestation demonstrates a wide and sometime diverging set of opinions surrounding the political and theoretical discourse whatever class, gender, race, sexuality etc. that enriched my understanding and they all converged on the need to place female experience at the heart of the research process. This led me to conclude that these theories act as a source of richness since they illustrate dynamism of thought and energy. According to Hesse-Biber (2013) social realities for women are different as the life dimensions and different circumstances create varied experiences in particular, race, religion, ethnicity, social and economic status and so forth. Most females believe in equality and social justice but once they were posed a question by Hesse-Biber during her research whether they were 'feminists', they remained silent which was due to the fact that for them the circumstances and realities have been good and they think that feminism has won. This leads to an interesting dimension that whilst some women had won, many are still facing gender discrimination, bias and life struggles and the power dynamics and they have a different social reality so the experiences cannot be the same for every woman.

There appears to be a general recognition amongst academics, whatever their political position, that 'feminism is a historically constituted, local and global, social and political movement with an emancipatory purpose and a normative content' (Dietz, 2003, p. 399). It aims to address or redress an imbalance or even 'overturn' the position of male dominance, challenge sexual discrimination based on gender, secure female liberation, fight of equality for women and their interests, give them self-dignity, respect, justice and freedom. The movement development from armchair debate and theorizing towards coordinated action to transform female lives. It asks fundamental questions such as querying male hegemonic power of dominance and led to eventual challenge to some of the established discourses of male domination.

There has been some criticism of the feminist discourse adopted by the leading academics by some Black sociologists, perhaps rightly so, since the debate was largely conducted and led by North American and European academics (Collins, 2004) and therefore somewhat untouched by female scholars from Africa or South Asia. Patricia Collins, a leading African-American academic and an activist, whilst agreeing with Dorothy Smith on male domination and female subjugation, has been very vocal in this arena. Collins was inspired by other radical black females such as bell hooks, Audre Lorde, and Alice Walker. Her radical postmodern approach intertwines dimensions of race, class, gender, and sexuality' (Collins, 2004, p. 9) arguing that black women's experience of these multiple oppressions makes her skeptical of the Euro-centric approaches since black women suffer on so many different levels. She developed the term 'matrix of domination' to explain black women's position in American society which would suggest that there exist many standpoints rather than just one essentialist standpoint.

Despite the above criticism feminist theory developed according to a range of intellectual and philosophical discourses as described by Dietz, (2003, p. 400) 'what really exists under the rubric of feminist theory is multifaceted, discursively contentious field of inquiry that does not promise to resolve itself into any programmatic consensus or coverage onto any shared conceptual framework'. But before I look at feminist methodologies it is important to understand the construction of 'gender' and controversies surrounding 'women'.

Despite the divergence of opinions amongst academic feminism, biological differences have to be separated from study of gender since the historical view on females was a by-product of 18th and 19th Century thinking which focused on the biological difference in male and female anatomies and emphasized reproduction role of women. Later thinking disentangled the variable of gender from the variable of biological sex, which previously was regarded as being synonymous with being a female. This 'naturalness' model of male and female roles was a product of 'specific social, cultural, historical, and discursive processes' (Dietz, 2003, p. 401) and reflected the social conditioning of society at the time. As the following celebrated quote commenting on female socialization pointed out one is not born a woman, but, rather, becomes one (Beauvoir cited in Dietz, 2003). The contemporary feminist

social scientists in 1980s began to challenge the biological arguments and emphasized that it is only by looking at the social construction of females that we can better understand their location and hence their treatment in society.

This section started with the heading ‘Feminist Theories’ so what the reader of this research most probably expected was a series of theories being outlined. However having read a significant amount of literature around the issues of ‘feminist theory’ I come to a conclusion that there is no one theory or even many theories of feminism. Indeed there are a variety of perspectives and discourses, sometimes even conflicts that explain the female experience in a variety of settings with the intention of changing female subordination and figuring out how to change the status quo.

5.5.2 Feminist methodologies

There has been an intense debate between the two major research approaches, that is, whether the interpretivist qualitative approaches provide a better understanding of the female experiences or the positivist quantitative methods. Historically, the two camps have been entrenched with each refusing to accept the arguments and postulations of the other. The two paradigms i.e. ‘qualitative versus quantitative’, have been described by Oakley (1998), a feminist, as ‘soft vs hard’ and ‘intuitive vs rational’, ‘arts vs science’- the so called ‘dualistic critiques’. The complexity of debate surrounded feminist approach versus non-feminist approach can be further expanded to include dualities such as hard vs soft approach, emotional vs rationale approach and worthy vs worthless. This leads De Vault (1996, p. 32) to describe feminist methodology as a way of providing a framework which has an:

‘Outline for a possible alternative to the distances, distorted, and dispassionately objective procedures of much social research’.

Feminists argue that quantification has been used by their proponents to objectify the research and in the process, it became a ‘smokescreen for male interest, male perspectives and male privilege; and how ‘women’ (both literally in terms of research respondents and in terms of epistemological foci) were missing from much

research' (Oakley, 1981; 2010). Criticism of quantification orientation has also come from Williams and Vikstrom (2010) in their argument that there appears to be an obsession with those ascribing to this view to be more concerned with manipulation of variables rather than exploring the role of power in the gendered relationships. This leads them to conclude that the second-wave feminists still retained much of their potency since they are addressing the issue of female empowerment.

In contrast feminists called for a feminist method with the aim being research that will not be 'on women' but 'for women'- an encounter that was at its root participatory and later 'with women' which amounted to giving women their rightful voice. This argument based on the notion of 'social justice' was never about just a slogan but a deep rooted sense of inequality that the feminists felt was not being recognized or addressed (Oakley, 1998). This slogan gained support and the notion was born that feminists use qualitative methods (Dietz, 1987). It is interesting to note that Oakley (1998) came under a considerable criticism from the feminist ranks when she took a more pragmatic approach later on whilst suggesting that there was a role for quantification within social research. It has been stated that the reason taking this position was because she recognised that much of the policy-orientated research was based on quantification with public funding implications. Given that funding was an important source of revenue in community projects this may provide a clue why she adopted this position.

Having looked at the 'hard v soft', 'intuitive v rational', 'arts v science', 'emotional v rationale' and 'worthy v worthless' approaches which underpin the divide between quantitative and qualitative methods, I would argue that there is no one perfect research method. Each approach has merits and relevance in different research context. Therefore, in this study I will use the qualitative method using multiple case study approach as opposed to quantitative methods using surveys. This is in contrast to what Williams and Vikstrom (2010) and Scott (2010) propose in that 'triangulation' enables the researcher to improve on data validity especially since a large sample has the potential to provide the evidence with its variables and comparisons.

5.5.3 The standpoint perspective

The 'standpoint' conceptualisation emerged in the 1970s and 1980s as a result of various emancipatory struggles that women in industrially developed nations were engaged in (Harding, 2004). This later developed into what now is commonly known as the 'standpoint theory'. However, the debate has also generated a considerable amount of controversy amongst academics as well as activists. Harding acknowledges that this theory has come under considerable amount of criticism from various political forces with some, mostly radical thinkers, seeing it as a development of female emancipation whilst others have criticized it or even refused to acknowledge it as a viable proposition. What is undeniable is that it has generated a lively debate amongst feminist circles over the past three decades. This view is supported by Harding (2004) who goes on to state that standpoint theory has made a major contribution to feminism, as well as to contemporary scientific, philosophical, and political discussions more generally since it brings new and fresh perspectives on what can be described as dilemmas in an innovative way. A number of influential and leading female academics and activists of their generation such as Sandra Harding, Nancy Chodorow and Dorothy Smith, therefore have provided spotlight on this paradigm, it is important that I delineate the various strands which help us to develop a better understanding of this powerful paradigm. So what is standpoint theory?

The key concept that standpoint theory introduces is that female epistemological perspectives in research remains largely a mission unaccomplished (Harding, 2004). The reason for adopting this position is that it challenges the false premises that women's status in society is one of equals. In fact, it has been argued that women's status in society is one of relative subordination and far from what has been generally perceived by many in the West as an equal relationship. In addition, in this unequal world the oppressor (male) uses knowledge as a tool for female subjugation and therefore oppression. Therefore, it is not possible to understand female perspectives without first developing an understanding of the social power, which is an inherent part of the female experience in society in relation to their exploitation. It is by developing a unity of concepts between 'a structure and bearers' (Cain and Finch,

1981) that we can get a better grasp of the complexity of power in relationships and the subsequent treatment of women, not just in Western society but in all societies.

The above view resonates with Fawcett and Hearn (2004) when they argue that it is by understanding the complexity of the connection between power and knowledge in terms of 'otherness' and 'societal otherness' that we can develop our understanding of the social power relations. Harding (1993) came up with the alternative models of knowledge building and feminist epistemology of Feminist standpoint, which is based on the idea that individuals' experiences structure his or her understanding of the social environment. For example, a worker's perspective is more complete as compared to the masters as the worker has to comprehend both his or her own worlds and the masters in order to survive. According to Swigonski (1994, p. 390) the 'less powerful members of the society experience a different reality because of their oppression' as they become sensitive and aware of their own perspective as well as the dominant group and have a more complete view of social reality. She further highlights that the researcher's standpoint emerges from their own social position with respect to gender, culture, class and ethnicity.

Given the complexity of power relationships it is perhaps not too surprising that Fawcett and Hearn (2004) go on to state that feminism has different standpoints. In fact there are also many differences when we go down this route. For instance, this could include black feminist, lesbian standpoints or black disabled feminist which are all subsets of feminism however they do not necessarily embrace class therefore this could then become a further sub-division. At this stage, it very much depends on how many levels one goes on decomposing. We may conclude from this discussion that standpoint feminism has its own 'distinctive standpoints' depending on various variables such as race, class and other sub-divisions which the 'malestream' research has often ignored therefore is far more objective given its emancipatory nature.

Whilst there is generally an agreement about the value of feminist research, as argued by the standpoints proponents, there are also some conflicts which have led to some criticism of standpoint positioning and the emancipatory nature of their research approach. Some of this criticism is ideological whilst others point out the methodological difficulties associated with the standpoint approach. For instance,

Stone and Priestley (1996) view would suggest that methodological issue and pragmatic research activity are often contradictory therefore individual experiences should not be sole criterion for good research. They contend that the researchers' expertise must also be valued despite of their being non-feminist epistemological positioning. They go on to state that there is a real danger that the rigidity of standpoint positioning in terms of perception of knowledge and truth may unintentionally create other forms of 'othernesses' which they are trying to address. This led to some rather interesting concepts being developed such as 'double vision' and 'outsiders within' (Hills, 1989 in Harding, 2004).

'Double vision' refers to the notion that groups that are disadvantaged in society have certain epistemological advantages since they are able to empathise via a shared understanding of the social deprivation with their peers i.e. other disadvantage groups, and their value systems (Bowell, 2015). This can provide a deeper and more meaningful exchange in the context of research. On the other hand, the non-marginalised groups are not able to understand oppression or the plight of the oppressed since they have no direct and personal experience of the marginalised group experiences. This is in contrast to 'outsiders within' since the marginalised researcher effectively can straddle both sides of the divide. This, in the context of my research, can be a major advantage and there is greater likelihood that a more meaningful dialogue can take place. It would seem that this view resonates with that of Harding, Smith and Hartsock. However, this does not fully address the issue of race since racism has its own problematic. For instance, the middle class white researcher going to *his* semi-detached suburban house after studying the black working class household in *his* local environment who may be living through deprivation and in extreme cases perhaps trying to survive (Troyna, 1986). This could equally apply to the researchers who, by the virtue of their position, will remain the 'other', therefore an outsider.

Fawcett and Waugh (2008) and Finch (1994) have taken a more pragmatic approach to otherness by suggesting that 'truth' and 'objectivity' are unachievable myths since the 'truth' of a situation is located within a historic event and therefore influenced by it. There is another argument, which suggests that being 'Black' or a 'women' is not a qualification to signal objectivity because it rather depends on their position in

relation to their race or gender and of course class. The approach I am taking is that there is injustice in societies in terms of gender equality.

The debate is taken to another level by Pease (2000) who challenges the conceptualisation of standpoint. He recognises that the early formulations of standpoint theory had 'essentialising' tendencies which was an essential part of the development of these paradigms but goes on to state that the debate has now moved on. He contends that the batching together the convenient bundle of masculinity with objectivity and science denotes a 'false universalism', which leads him to conclude that 'postmodern influences have worked for the acceptances of a plurality of female standpoints' (Pease, 2000 in Fawcett and Hearn, 2004, p. 211). This position allows 'men's standpoint' and 'pro-feminism men's standpoint' to have a place in feminist standpoint research given that they have adopted an enlightened position and indeed can play a supportive role. The position would suggest a breaking away from the shackles of biological and structuralist constraints since it acknowledges the 'plurality and the intersections of ethnicity, class, age, economic position, impairment and sexuality, in informing a range of standpoints' (Fawcett and Hearn, 2004, p. 211).

The postmodernist framework provides a direction for breaking away of male supremacy given that the so-called 'progressive' males have started the process of challenging their own discourse of realigning their allegiance towards a female hegemony. It is like tackling white racism not just by empowering 'black' community but challenging the 'white' supremacy that real change can come about (Troyna, 1986). Perhaps the most important argument here is that whilst men can play a supportive role they cannot, due to biological reasons, be feminists since they will never be able to experience what it feels to be a woman.

To sum up the above discussion one can adopt the position propagated by the feminists which suggests embracing:

1. A closer relationship between participants and the researcher in order to acquire a *more* significant and meaningful data from the female respondents.

Or,

2. Researcher relationship with the subjects is just an illusion therefore has little or no influence on outcomes.

Given that the proposed research is to be undertaken by a female researcher I decided to adopt Position 1.

The earlier discussion highlighted the importance of the researcher's location, their subjectivity and context at the core of the research process. It shows the complexity of the debate and yet at the same time leads me to the conclusion that an understanding of 'otherness' and 'standpoints' within the feminist framework is an essential starting point to begin this inquiry. I will address the ethical issues and pay attention to how the respondents engage with me rather than being preoccupied by trivial or semantic matters to do with the research process by giving a voice to the participants. It will be 'oppression based agenda' to hear voices of those who, due to being female even though they belong to the middle class, may have been marginalized. This will send a political message to those who are in power to solve or address issues, which besiege women academics in Pakistani HE institutions in the first instance and later other women workers in the country. This is consistent with Brisolara's (2003) contention that feminist inquiry necessitates an understanding of women's narrative in order to understand and take steps to fight the inherent inequality embedded within the role they perform.

5.5.4 The narrative approach

Narrative inquiry is a way of understanding and inquiring into experience through 'collaboration between researcher and participants over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus' (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 20). It is about the study of how human beings experience the world. Throughout the life span, people go through continuous experiences and interactions with their surrounding context and within themselves. In order to give meaning and structure to this complexity their experiences may need to be captured, organised and turned into a meaningful narrative. People not only come up with narrative descriptions about their own experiences but derive narratives to develop the understanding of others

(Zellermayer, 1997). Although narrative inquiry is somehow a new aspect in the qualitative research, a considerable amount has been written about the topic. Narration holds a very important position in the feminist methodology as it focuses on the life experiences of females and gives the researcher in-depth knowledge and insight of those being observed and researched which was suitable for my research.

Narrative is a research method as well as a way for representing the research study by reflecting on the entire research process so a better and more appropriate descriptor would be that it is a phenomenon and method (Moen, 2006). Moen (*op cite*) cites Vygotsky (1978), a Russian psychologist, who has long been renowned as the pioneer in developmental psychology to shed further light into this approach. Vygotsky argues that human beings cannot be understood in segregation from their context, surrounding culture and society, which is an important aspect of socio-cultural theory. He goes on to argue that human mind cannot be taken as a fixed category as the context and conditions change and it develops accordingly so they can change their own inner world as well as the world around them. It is not only the product of development that needs to be seen but also the processes that a person goes through.

Similarly, Bakhtin (2010) came up with the concept of dialogic nature of human action, which states that humans are not only in constant interaction with other people in their surrounding but also with their consciousness. According to him the things we do, think, listen, speak cannot happen in isolation or vacuum and so we need a voice, utterance and an addressee. Both Vygotsky (1978) and Bakhtin (2010) argue that in order for us to understand the human development and actions, one needs to see the social context which has an impact on what people do. This suggested that I needed to develop an understanding of their narration and more importantly voices of the oppressed, which in my case are the female academics. Polkinghorne (1988) describes narration as a sequence of events via story-telling that are important for both, the narrator and the audience and in doing so, they cannot remain isolated and independent from the context which is within the framework of socio-cultural theory. Narrative is regarded as the primary order in which human existence is made meaningful. Consequently narration is how individuals give meaning to their experiences by telling stories as experiences which are deep rooted

in the societal and cultural settings and therefore is constantly forming, changing and being constructed. In addition, according to Heikkinen (2002), human knowledge is relative as it is not a static reality and is dependent on individual process of interactions and dialogues based on their present and past experiences. Therefore, narrative approach is important in the qualitative and interpretive research method as the researcher sees things in their natural setting and interprets phenomena according to the meaning brought to them by those being researched. Therefore, it includes the knowledge, experience, emotions, feelings, and values of the people telling them which is due to the continuous interaction and impact of the context and environment.

Within the narrative approach, there is a process of collaboration between the researcher and the subjects and therefore the research subject is more like a collaborator or a participant as the narration is based on the experiences of the research subject and is given shape by discussion and dialogue. Therefore, it is important to focus on the relationship between the researcher and the participant, the way how the verbal expressions are given written form and how it is interpreted by the researcher (Moen, 2006). Following on these aspects, I recognised that it would be important to create a comfortable and friendly atmosphere where the research subject can be open to share their experiences with me. Being judgmental or lack of equality and confidence can damage the quality of narrative inquiry. Similarly, it was important to see if both of us interpreted specific events in different way or my interpretation was challenged by the subject. In order to deal with this, I sent the written transcript to the respondents and asked for any further comments or reflection on what was being written to make it more authentic and accurate. It is important to state here that interpretation does not end with the finished piece of narration as it is open to all readers and everyone interprets it according to their own understanding, experience and cultural settings and sharing of their stories.

5.6 Feminism in the context of Pakistan

Feminism has a very different interpretation in Pakistan than that perceived in the Western tradition where the radical movement lobby has been much more assertive in establishing and asserting female identity (Shaukat and Pell, 2016). In comparison

the progressive women in Pakistan, due to the conservative and religious influences, who have been advocating women rights have had to operate within the religious, cultural and patriarchal norms since its independence in 1947 (Serez, 2017). The founder of Pakistan Quaid e Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah was a progressive person and Pakistan was founded on secular and democratic principles that promised religious freedom to Muslims *and* non-Muslims and equal rights for women. Jinnah established Pakistan as a republic, which was intended to bring freedom and equality for all where women were to enjoy equal rights in terms of political representation, inheritance and divorce rights. In fact the first women rights movements was establishment in 1949 and called All Women's Pakistan Association ensuring women rights and social standing (Cheema, 2012).

In 1977 when General Zia ul Haq, a military dictator, came into power, one of his first acts was to declare Pakistan as Islamic Republic and added elements of *Sharia Law* (Islamic Law) to the existing legal system which had previously been based on British law. An example of *Sharia Law* was the introduction of the *Hudood Ordinance* (2008) which stated that if a women is raped she need to have four eye witnesses for the rapist to be convicted. During his rule, women became second-class citizen (Ovais, 2014). By mid-80's there was a lot of resistance against these laws led by the women rights movements, which became more widespread when Benazir Bhutto became the first female Prime minister of Pakistan (Gardezi, 1990). Many women-friendly bills were passed in Parliament between 2000 to 2012 due to pressure from Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) and women activist groups. These include the Criminal Law Amendment Act (2004), the Anti-Sexual Harassment Bill, the Criminal Acid Act, Protection of Women Act (2006), Status of Women Bill and sundry regulations condemning honor killings and other vices faced by women in Pakistani society (Ovais, 2014).

According to Badran (2013), a notable historian, scholar and an expert in gender studies and the author of the book on 'Feminism in Islam', the relationship between secular and Islamic feminism has many parallels and interconnections despite being antithetical as these, as she describes, are modes of women centered activism. She goes on to argue that the two dominant aspects of feminist discourse within the context of Pakistan are secular liberal feminism and Modern Islamic feminism.

These feminism threads are not unique to Pakistan but are influenced by contemporary global feminism. The historical, geographical and social context when fused with the theories and practices of these two threads reflect the particularity of feminism in Pakistan. The secular feminist approach promotes equal rights between women and men and sees feminism as an extension of basic human rights and advocates for separation of religion and state. Secular feminism is more democratic and pluralistic and links to feminist movement worldwide (Reilly, 2011). Feminism is still considered as something elite or for the affluent and idle and something that West has tried to impose in order to create havoc in the Pakistani society. On the other hand the Islamic feminism advocates for men to uphold their responsibilities and for females to be educated about their rights. It does not go for the eradication of gender roles or democracy but rather support the proper treatment of women as explained in the *Quran and Islam* (Badran, 2013). Given that this approach rejects the Western ideas of feminism it mostly appeals to people who value the teachings of Quran and hence a majority of lower middle, middle and upper middle strata of society.

According to Jamal (2005) the two feminist discourses attempt to delegitimize and accuse each other which increase the gap between them and so less thought and support is available for the better standing of female in society. The Islamic feminists argue that the secular feminist movements are embedded in the Western notions of autonomy and freedom, which are contradictory to Islam and cultural values of the country and therefore not legitimate in Pakistan. According to secular feminism, there should be social, political and economic equality for women and religion should be kept out of it. This has generated a heated debate and tension in Pakistan, which has led Cheema (2012) to argue that we need to bridge the gap between the two approaches by having a constructive dialogue between the two discourses in order to improve the status of women in the society. Ovais (2014) concurs with this viewpoint and states that feminism is not anti-male or anti-Islam; neither does it say that women are superior or relate to immoral practices. Therefore, the discussion should be about equality of rights rather than subversiveness or Islam in society.

5.7 Issue of trust and researcher image

Establishing trust with participants has to be essential in any collaborative engagement and this research is no exception. One could argue that this is even more pertinent where the research consists of a dialogue between the researcher and the researched when studying social phenomena (Ghauri, 2004). The question is how one builds this trust especially when their worlds are somewhat removed from each other. It would seem that various aspects such as power asymmetry, reputation, histories, socialisation, experiences, and perceptions of the 'other' all play an important part in creating or building a notion of trust but the debate is far from conclusive as the following discussion points out.

Trust has various dimensions such as cognitive trust, identity trust, relational trust, generalised trust and many more (Lane, 1998; Labarca, 2014), which is likely to have an impact on interaction between the researcher and the researched especially in qualitative research due to the closeness of the exchange. It is built on interpersonal relationship, each other's personal location, group belonging as well as situational. It may also be influenced by factors such as jealousy towards the researcher, envy of the researcher position, anger at their own position, fear for their safety, fear of seniors and so on. On the other hand, in some instances there could also be a common identity, trust, comradeship, unity of purpose and sisterhood which lead to trust or distrust. The other issue that could also impact the relationship is the power dynamic in research since the relationship or the interaction cannot be asymmetrical due to the complex dynamics of each other's position of country, institution and location. Therefore, the weighting cannot be one of equals and there is a likelihood of some positioning.

In the first chapter, I explained my position and likely views that the respondents may formulate about me. It is quite likely that I was seen by some as being fortunate in that I had escaped from some of the oppressive cultural practices and had greater academic freedom to work and live in the UK and yet at the same time some had a feeling of sympathy towards me as a single mother. I attempted to engage in a pre-interview dialogue to build trust to ensure that it not going to be a sterile encounter

(Noy, 2008) since I realized the importance of initial dialogue when the interviews were conducted so that there was a greater empathy of participants towards my research objectives. I also recognised that the interaction invoked certain behavioural and emotional traits from the subjects. This would suggest that building of trust and projection of researcher image are far more complex phenomenon than perhaps they first appear.

5.8 Reflexivity in research

Reflexivity is attending and reflecting systematically on the context of knowledge construction where the researcher presents honest and reflective accounts about the whole research process (Kleinsasser, 2000). Reflexivity is about examining oneself and the research relationship with the respondents as meaning is constructed interactively and culturally during the interview encounter. When the researcher is interpreting the data, she is reflecting on the entire research context and the whole research process becomes the focus of inquiry.

In feminist research, reflexivity is considered vital as the researcher identifies with the women they interview and needs to be aware that how their values and perceptions are influencing the research and vice versa. It is often said that the researcher should not be biased but the researchers has certain beliefs, values and preconceptions that are subjective and if they clarify and mention it in the research, it is not considered to be biased (Malterud, 2001). The researcher perspective or position shapes the research and while doing so they approach a study situation from different positions as different ways of looking at the research process provides a richer data. Some think that it poses a reliability issue but others say that it provides richer insight and data while examining a complex phenomenon. The researcher demonstrates their interest and position in the research, also reveal their historical situatedness and acknowledge any biasness they may have as preconceptions and cultural contexts (Gergen and Gergen, 1998).

It is when the researcher is being reflective about her own experiences within a social context shared equally by the respondents' experiences that they are able to generate data based on facts, knowledge, experience, ideas, social constructs etc. This

reflexivity is an important aspect in feminist research as the researcher needs to reflect on her own experiences in order to assess what may or may not be common between her and the respondents. Being both reflective and reflexive is a good sign within a study as Sandelowski and Barroso (2002, p. 222) indicate:

‘Reflexivity is a hallmark of excellent qualitative research and it entails the ability and willingness of researchers to acknowledge and take account of the many ways they themselves influence research findings and thus what comes to be accepted as knowledge. Reflexivity implies the ability to reflect inward toward oneself as an inquirer; outward to the cultural, historical, linguistic, political, and other forces that shape everything about inquiry; and, in between researcher and participant to the social interaction they share.’

Qualitative research is like human research instrument where the researcher and the respondents through the process of engagement rather than detachment (Lincoln *et al.*, 2011) construct positions, beliefs, values and perceptions. It cannot progress in a vacuum as thoughts and data are shared, interpreted and knowledge is constructed. The process of reflexivity runs throughout the process to question why we asked this and what was the response, how we can improve or change the position and whether that will give us a different data or result. It is like continuously challenging ourselves and questioning and looking at the whole research process throughout the research. Having a reflexive journal or diary helps the researcher to make entries about the whole process and the decisions made as it helps to reflect on one’s own values and beliefs and other people’s subjectivity (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

5.9 Positionality in research

Positioning the self within research process by Walshaw (2010) is an interesting argument which suggests that subjectivity, emotions and unconscious interference is an important part of qualitative research and writing about oneself is very common in feminist research. The core researcher self is visible and voiced along with the respondents subjectivity and knowledge and meaning are produced. According to Coffey (2003) personal narrative has become important in qualitative research as it gives unique and privilege data of the social world. He goes on to say that the

researcher cannot remain an invisible participant in the whole process as the subjectivity and experiences of the researcher plus the subjectivity of the respondents and the inter subjectivity i.e. the emotions, values and unconscious interferences constitute the research process and helps in knowledge generation.

I feel that it is important now to indicate my personal location in relation to this research in order to understand where I stand in terms of my conservative upbringing, my religion and political development in Britain. I come from a conservative and gendered society in Pakistan where religion is central to people's lives, where women are expected to remain silent, where men dominate every working sector, where questioning male dominance is considered un-Islamic. Getting divorced at an early age with my two daughters to look after and then arriving in Britain to study, I began to ask myself many questions which only a woman can fully appreciate or understand. Who was I? What was I doing here? Was my gender a factor in my position as a single mother? Would things have been different if I had been a man? Why is it so easy for a man in Pakistani society to divorce a woman (Muslim men have the right to divorce a woman by registering a statement via the court or repeating '*talak, talak, talak* 3 times) and refuse all responsibility for the offspring? Why did women have to carry the burden of bringing up children in my culture especially when she is the mother of daughters with minimum financial support from the father (male children are often taken by the father)? Should I blame my culture for being oppressive? Why is woman's success a threat to man? Are there other women experiencing the same difficulties as I was? How are women's lives different in Pakistan compared to Britain? How British women cope? Was I lucky to be out of Pakistan? Where do I belong? How do I relate to my colleagues in the UK? Am I as human as a man? My days and nights were filled with these questions whilst at the same time I was studying for my Master's degree.

I was lucky in meeting colleagues in the teaching profession who supported me which gave me strength especially when I was/am emotionally drained. Some of these colleagues also found themselves living with their children without a father for a variety of reasons provided me with emotional support. But despite this strength, when I am alone, I once again return to my personal space – a space where questions

remain, often multiplying and sometime mutating in my mind. Sometimes I share my thoughts with selected colleagues and yet at other times they remain in my mind's eye. One thing is for sure I started to question and analyse more critically the complexity of social relationships and their potential impact on my life; the construction of language used to describe me; the place of religion and culture for me and my two daughters; the meaning of womanhood and gender oppression. The more I read the more questions I began to ask myself.

Reading feminist literature gave me strength since it provided the context relating to my personal contradictions. For instance, I soon realised that whilst accidents happen randomly e.g. someone drives into you resulting in a broken leg or worst; everything else in our lives happens due to accepted cultural norms in different societies over many generations and how privileges have been accorded to the males in society and how religion and culture inter-twined to deliver a blow to women's right or at worst lead to their subjugation. It was not fate but something, which was more socially constructed and can be explained by the nature of female exploitation in Pakistan. Men did not suffer the way women did. However, a colleague in the university in a casual conversation once said 'where there is oppression there is also resistance'. This gave me strength. I felt that I could become a symbol of resistance not only for my children but Pakistani community where I live. I have begun to move away from feeling sorry for myself towards feeling a sense of strength. Whereas before embarking on reading feminist literature by Harding, Chowdrow, Collins, Connell, Smith and others, I had felt vulnerable now there is a feeling of strength and a sense of comradeship with writers who have inspired me. I now realise that my experience is not in isolation but firmly located within a historical locus of control- what I call the male hegemony. I have learnt to stand on the side of justice.

I discovered that women's oppression is not by accident nor is it enshrined in some holy scripture and indeed, it is historically and culturally located. Women have to fight on many fronts like for the right to education and many still continue to do so in most developing countries, the right to own property and of course the right to vote. I also discovered that the fight is still far from over. Women in developing countries continue to be denied basic opportunities to health provision, education and

often suffer abuse in male dominated societies. For instance, a woman cannot travel alone in a taxi for the fear of being abducted or raped in many parts of the world including India and Pakistan. There is the famous case of Indian medical student being gang-raped by several men on a bus. Her crime was that she was a women travelling in the evening from her university to her home. Nevertheless, here lies a fundamental question. Given that the problem is with men surely, it is they who need to be re-educated. It is quite clear that this is a societal problem at international level and therefore needs to be addressed accordingly. What is quite undeniable is that women are defined by men and if they attempt to break away from this discourse, they risk being alienated. In terms of resisting the male oppression, what my reading of feminist literature has taught me is that it is radical thinking and radical thinkers that have the potential to bring about change. This does not mean that I have to go on the street and protest, which of course is important in some contexts, but through political organisation and through dialogue with likeminded women. The middle class women such as middle class academics, which I am one, have an important role in this struggle. This broad alliance is essential since women at lower rung of Pakistani society have little or no power therefore they can be crushed by a system that is powerful.

It is for all the above stated reasons that I have been quite vocal from outset by stating that I did have a privileged upbringing and I am living in the UK with certain privileges and freedoms, however, I also experience many hardships being a single mother and a woman. I am also fully aware of the inherent contradictions in my life, my research and the research participants. Therefore, my primary focus in this research was to obtain a narrative from the subjects, some of whom may indeed be very similar to me in more ways than one, and underpin their experiences in light of the academic and theoretical clarity that I have gained.

My research was an exchange with the respondents as it shared their experiences as academics and more specifically as women. It availed them the opportunity to discuss issues, which they might not have felt comfortable in sharing in a different forum i.e. with a person with an assuming agenda or a researcher from the opposite sex. I had empathy with the subjects since I am from the same culture and religion with many shared experiences of being a Pakistani woman and an academic

including being a mother. The starting point in this engagement was identifying female academics who wanted to share their stories and also sharing my experiences and perspectives prior to the interview to develop a comfortable relationship. I gave them the context of why I was undertaking this research and the drivers, which have led me to undertake this study.

All respondents saw the importance of my research and came forward to share their experiences and engage to further the female equality struggle. This 'equality agenda' is about women being treated equally and a part of society, and not determined by the 'noble' and 'respectable' or even the so called 'educated' men because they 'understand *our* needs' (De Vault, 1996).

5.10 Summary

Reviewed literature suggests that researcher neutrality, especially in qualitative research, is questionable. This is due to the researcher understanding of justice and inequality in society and empathy with the oppressed groups. Furthermore, the researcher positioning during the data generation engagement with the subjects will be determined by whether she is with the oppressed or the oppressor, which will influence her research approach. The reviewed literature also points out that the researcher is in a powerful position during the data generation phase as well as when reporting findings that will influence research outcomes.

The feminist viewpoint centers on the core notion that we live in an unequal society where men tend to dominate all spheres of life; subordinating the females into passivity and subjugation. They call for an assertive female agenda, which challenges male hegemony of power dominance. Feminist researchers promote active involvement of participants in the research process and reject the notion of subject that takes human beings as someone to be experimented on. They argued that there needs to be a more equal and open relationship between the researcher and the interviewee.

It would seem that interpretations of feminism in Pakistan are very much seen as something for the elite and the influential class with many similarities with the Western notion of feminism and many more differences of understanding. I would say that the feminist understanding in this study has been instrumental in my thinking and approach as I moved towards generating data. This was built on having empathy with the research subjects and starting from a position of understanding. I have included a section on reflexivity, positionality and self in this chapter since I feel that it was essential to outline my location within the research process. This helped me in determining influences that have shaped my thinking as I approached my research.

Chapter 6: Research Methodology

6.0 Introduction

A research approach is a method of understanding, clarifying and demystifying thoughts whilst researching a particular phenomenon (Bryman and Bell, 2015). It provides connectors that interlink a conceptual frame for executing an inquiry. In addition, an understanding of methodological framework also provides a roadmap, which will have a major influence on analyses since helps to identify links between the existing literature on the subject being investigated and research goals. Accordingly, the starting point in this research process, as in all good research, is to develop an understanding of the key themes, which can act as guiding parameters for the field study that is to be undertaken.

My research was a meaningful dialogue and the adopted approach revealed a rich narrative of participant experiences in higher education. Whilst this approach is not new and indeed various studies have taken place over the past 50 years which recognise the importance of qualitative studies (Reinharz *et al.*, 1983; Cook and Fonow, 1986; Reinhartz and Davidman, 1992). Before proceeding to outline research methods it is essential that I now look at various perspectives that have provided direction in the present research endeavour.

This chapter starts by exploring the research interpretivist approach, taken in this study. This is followed by a discussion on research methods and narrative approach, which in my research consisted of 16 in-depth interviews with Pakistani female academics in higher education institutions. Sampling selection is then discussed and reasons given about sample selection from various regions and universities in Pakistan but the journey towards data generation was not as straightforward as it one would imagine and I had to overcome many challenges. The next section contains details of data analysis i.e. thematic analysis, once the required data was collected. This is followed by a discussion on reliability and validity of findings. Given the sensitive nature of this research, ethical issues have been discussed in considerable detail in the following section.

The next section provides a detailed overview of the interview process as it unfolded in the field. It includes timeline for the primary data generation as well as details of the interaction and interviews.

The last section of this chapter contains a breakdown of the respondent characteristics. This has been broken down to include aspects such as the respondent current position in the institution, qualifications gained by country, whether they had overseas work experience and lastly, years of teaching experience.

6.1 Epistemological considerations

At the start of the research process I faced certain challenges and epistemological considerations which confront researchers prior to embarking on their investigation. Some have even described this as approach crises (Hamersley, 2008). For instance, should I undertake a positivistic or an interpretivist approach? The first dilemma that I had to resolve was how my research was to take place i.e. a large-scale quantitative study followed by a number of interviews so that results could be triangulated or a single method approach. For instance, Letherby (2003) evaluated the methods used along with other aspects of feminist approach and came up with different perspectives about qualitative and quantitative methods in feminist research.

In fact, my initial thoughts were that triangulation, consisting of a quantitative questionnaire, was to be designed and survey conducted of a number of academics from the selected universities. This was to be followed by interviewing a number of agreeing respondents. However, as I began to read around research issues and gain an understanding of the feminist approaches in research, it soon led to abandonment of my initial thoughts and leant towards a qualitative study. I was driven by a belief that women's lives were far too complicated, their accounts far too valuable and since the opportunity availed itself therefore I had to undertake an in-depth study. Inspirational feminist writers such as Harding, Collins and Haraway influenced me to follow this line of inquiry as discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

My approach was influenced by the feminist researchers who considered face-to-face or woman to woman interaction involving personal, emotional and experiential aspects very important for the production of knowledge. This approach focuses on qualitative approach and conversations that might be sensitive to discuss as well as observations and life history of the respondents in order to explicitly understand the experiences and the context in which they are. Such research produces its own energy as Ramazanoglu and Holland (2007) tell us in that there is an important difference between data production and data collection. Data collection requires the researcher to collect physical data or there are some facts lying somewhere and the researcher has to spot them whereas in data production the researcher is gathering information in a social process of giving meaning to the social world. Similarly, theories of social construction also suggest that human agent or some social force is producing the data therefore feminist research tends to fall into the category of data production.

6.2 Research Methods

In my research I was influenced by Oakley (2013) who was one of the first academics to advocate the participative use of qualitative in-depth interview as it is grounded in the experience of women i.e. first-hand account. Her arguments challenge the male model of detachment and objectivity. In fact, her work on the participatory model has been widely recognised and has helped social science researchers to break down the hierarchies of research. Support for Oakley and the other feminists is provided by Ramazanoglu (1992) who contends that qualitative research gives the interviewer more flexibility to be in line with the interviewee rather than being in a high or superior position and it is entirely logical to consider the social positioning, emotions and the subjectivity of the researcher. Jayaratne (1983, p. 145) says that semi-structured interviews are used widely in feminist research as they ‘convey a deeper feeling for or more emotional closeness to the persons studied’. However perhaps unsurprisingly some question this approach.

Criticism about the use of qualitative methods related to feminist approach has raised writers such as Kelly *et al.* (1994) who argue that women are not always comfortable in revealing their personal experiences even to other women. They also highlighted

that the data collected from qualitative methods is not of a wide scale and cannot be generalized and suggested that there can be questionnaires followed by in-depth questions, which the respondents answer anonymously. Similarly, Finch (1994) argued that using the interviews, the researcher highlights the vulnerable people who reveal their personal experiences and they do not benefit from it. According to Cotterill (1992), the power dynamics shift once the researcher has gathered all the information and walks away so the sisterhood approach is of limited value to the respondent.

The above criticisms clearly illustrates the ‘gendered paradigm divide’ in line with Oakley’s (1998) proposition where qualitative work is linked to feminine values and in-depth approaches and quantitative method is allied with masculine or positivistic approach, the researcher needs to evaluate and judge the methods most appropriate to the research. Oakley cites Reinharz (1992, p. 294) who suggests that ‘the quantitative is the Establishment and the qualitative is the social movement protesting the Establishment. The quantitative is the regular army and the qualitative the resistance. The qualitative approach is the outside trying to get in.....’ This leads me to conclude that quantitative approach is scientific, hard, rational and objective whereas qualitative is seen as feminine, subjective, holistic and in-depth. This leads me to conclude that narration is a valuable interpretive lens to understand the meaning and reflect on the respondent experiences.

I decided that in order to fully understand the experiences of the women and to see the commonalities of these experiences it was essential for me to use semi-structured interviews and develop individual case studies of female academic staff using the narrative approach.

6.3 Sampling Framework

The focus of most methodological discussions has been on a variety of methods and tools for collecting data however there appears to be much less written on the sampling methods. Indeed it has been argued that this aspect has largely been either ignored or ‘overlooked by critical winds blowing through the halls of the social sciences’ by most researchers since this technique appears to be a much less ‘sexy

facet of qualitative research' (Noy, 2008, p. 328). This writer goes on to argue that a possible reason for this may be due to the technicality of the subject and this has resulted in sampling being 'left behind'. Despite this there is a recognition that sampling provides a 'crucial link in the research chain' which can result in either a successful research project or a failed attempt which has been described as a 'make or break' of the research endeavour (McLean and Campbell, 2003 in Noy, 2008). In my research, I identified my sample by snowballing sampling.

The role of snowballing or 'chain' sampling is used quite often in social sciences and occurs when a respondent refers to another informant since she may have a knowledge of and contact details of a person who is likely to qualify as a possible research participant (Saunders *et al.*, 2015; Bryman and Bell, 2015). This can help in finding a cluster of people who may be contacts through either formal or informal channels; the key aspect being that they fulfill the research criteria. Snowballing is also described by many other terms such as referral, link-tracing, respondent driven and purposeful sampling which help in identifying 'hidden populations' but focus here is often on drug users, unemployed, Aids carriers etc. Snowballing enables the researcher to 'gain access to individuals who live outside the boundaries of normative heterosexuality', in our case academic boundaries and political struggle (Browne, 2005, p. 49).

In the present research a total of 16 in-depth interviews were conducted from 8 universities in Pakistan, five universities were from Public sector and three from Private sector. Two participants from each university were interviewed. I started by conducting 2 pilot interviews to check my research instrument followed by 16 interviews. I compiled a list of potential participants by personal contacts as well as by contacting my former colleagues from Pakistan with whom I discussed my research aims. Later on, other academics were identified by snowballing which led to a development of a 'sampling tree' or stemmata; this is consistent with Bourne's (2007) outline of the sampling process. Sample was drawn from lecturers, assistant professors, associate professors and professors. It was not important what their position is as long as they were university academics and females but attempt was made to identify vocal and diverse experienced cases. I attempted to identify those who were willing to share their experiences openly and not be coy. It was for this

reason that I asked those being interviewed to suggest others who were likely to have a voice and experiences to share.

However, being a female researcher, as previously explained, travelling to locations was problematic. For instance, Baluchistan and Sind proved more challenging for travel due to the distance and travelling alone was not possible as compared to the other two provinces. Finally, 16 respondents from 8 universities from all four provinces were interviewed. According to Guest *et al.* (2006) data saturation in qualitative interviews is achieved when the themes and patterns start repeating. Data saturation is a guiding principle used by qualitative researchers in data collection where further coding is no longer feasible (Fusch and Ness, 2015). In my research I could see the themes were repeating after 13 interviews however I continued to do 16 interviews. This limit of 16 was decided after consultation with my supervisors. Each interview was 1.5 hours long however, 4 interviews lasted for 2 hours which generated detailed textual data.

6.4 Identification of and access to respondents

As indicated above personal contacts were used to identify some of the respondents however due to limited numbers of these contacts and also as I had been away from Pakistan higher education for last 9 years, snowballing played an important role in identifying some of these respondents. Some of the respondents had radical opinions and some described themselves as ‘feminist’ even though their definition of feminism was different than we in the West would describe it as. Furthermore given that the primary concern was in obtaining the views of vocal and diverse experienced cases it may be that in cases where an interviewee was not forthcoming or the interview ran short due to either the respondent being quieter or the chemistry not being right between the interviewee and myself; attempt was made to identify further respondents. It may be argued that snowballing is ‘biased’ since individuals are selected on the basis of social networks (Browne, 2005). However words like ‘bias’, ‘representativeness’ and ‘generalizability’ are themselves problematic therefore researchers cannot be held to ransom by such categorisations neither will the present research be held back by these methodological straitjackets since this research is about giving voice to the ‘oppressed’ academic females.

It is also acknowledged that some of the women may have been invisible and indeed be 'hidden by choice' due to male domination in the academic power hierarchy. At the planning stage it was not possible to know about the quality of the contacts (Noy, 2008). Furthermore, some of the informants may have felt discontented or disagreed with my research aims and supplied poorer quality of contacts. This may be due to my inability to win over the informant's trust and sympathy. Therefore, some respondents emerging from snowballing may have been persuaded to take part whilst others may have had their own agenda to vocalise their experiences and highlight issues of their concern.

However, as Haraway (1988, p. 576) points out that scientific textbooks 'tell parables about objectivity and scientific method to students in the first years of their initiation, but no practitioner of the high scientific arts would be caught dead acting on the textbook versions'. It has also been argued that women are better informants not because they are naturally more co-operative and verbal, but because the degree to which they can resist the researcher's authority is lesser (Noy, 2008).

6.5 Difficulties in the field study

Given that interviews were conducted in Pakistan, there were some complications that I had to face and hence a need to be discussed. These included difficulty of travel from one location to another given the somewhat volatile political situation. This is particularly true when a female in Pakistan travels by herself to different locations without a male companion. I could have taken a liberal attitude by adopting a hard-line position that women researchers can go anywhere however in the context of Pakistan this is a dangerous thing to do. I had to be a realist and a pragmatic.

There was also a problem with some of the respondents not being available due to the summer vacations when the interviews took place. Some female academics also had to discharge personal responsibilities and therefore were not available at the agreed time despite their initial promise. This included those with children whilst others had household duties since they faced conflicting demands on their time.

6.6 The Interview Process

I conducted face-to-face interviews with the academics in Pakistani universities between July and August 2016 by going to Pakistan. However, summer vacations and respondent commitments made coordinating the interviews quite challenging since it was difficult for selected academics to accommodate my requirements in their busy schedules. In fact, the reason for face-to-face interview was that personal interaction was likely to generate richer data, especially since I would be able to build a sense of trust with the subjects. Only 12 interviews took place between July and August while 3 interviews were conducted by skype and one from a respondent visiting UK on academic business.

Each respondent was contacted by email and told about the research focus in order to establish a rapport and create a frame of reference in an atmosphere of collegial understanding. Once rapport was established with these female colleagues, I shared my own background with them and informed them about the purpose of my research which was to gain their academic experiences and how these were impacted by their personal life style, institutional treatment as well as cultural aspects. Each interview started by re-establishing the common ground from the extensive notes that were taken during previous phone interaction. There was no pre-conceived hypothesis in this research, just obtaining female accounts in an atmosphere of open dialogue where views and perspectives of women academics were obtained. Some of the questions were fairly general to create an ease amongst the respondents before indulging into seeking their deeper insights. Interviews were conducted in Urdu and English languages depending on how comfortable participants felt. There was certainly no feeling that there was any tension or barrier that could have led to misunderstanding since I am conversant in both languages. Each interview lasted 1.5 hours and 4 particular interviews lasted 2 hours which were audio-recorded with the interviewee consent. All recorded responses were translated, transcribed into English and coded according to various categories with broad categories in the first instance. This was followed by sub-categories being developed for further analysis based on an interpretivist paradigm whereby the primary objective was to gain firsthand and authentic account of the female academics' insights. A sample of interviews were

sent to the respondents to check that they had been interpreted and translated correctly.

When the interviews did finally take place the context and aim of the research were outlined to the respondents who were also assured about data anonymity and non-attributability of their responses. That starting point in each interview was an informal discussion on my experience of academia in Pakistan and UK and their experiences in order to gain their trust. The sequence of my semi-structured interview guide was based on the chronological order of significant life stages and milestones of my respondents which started with their childhood experiences being a female child and then the different stages they have gone through i.e. personal, institutional and societal experiences. It was like a story of their life journey and experiences through a collaborative process of knowledge sharing and data production. Generally, interviews took place in the staff offices which were not shared or meeting rooms. The only exception was the interview with the two heads of department; who were interrupted several times by some of their colleagues including administration staff. I am not sure whether it was an open door policy, flexibility or perhaps the female Head of Department (HoD) was not being taken seriously by her colleagues. Even though there were some common trends in thinking amongst those interviewed, I would say that on certain issues they spoke with a single voice. In fact, there was also a divergence of views on many issues; this will become apparent in the next chapter.

6.7 Respondent Characteristics

The female academic respondents in this research were drawn from eight different universities at provincial (Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan and Khyber Phuktoon Khwa) level due to the likelihood of there being a disparity of views. Sample selection was via snowballing. The following table provides a detailed breakdown of participants' backgrounds such as their current position, highest qualification by country, whether they have overseas experience of teaching, number of years in the teaching profession.

The sample consisted of 16 female academics from eight universities with four interviews being conducted from KPK, a conservative part of Pakistan where females often cover their heads and body with *chador* (head cover) or *burqa* (garment covering full body) in public places and employment rate amongst females is confined to the middle classes. Two interviews were conducted with university staff from Quetta in Baluchistan, which is as conservative as KPK with very few females in the general workforce. Four interviews were conducted from Sind province and six in Punjab. Punjab and Sind provinces are much more liberal in the context of Pakistan with a relatively higher female working population. Dress code in these two provinces is also much more liberal which in some way reflects academics' attitudes and experiences.

Table-2 Respondent characteristics

Current Position	Qualification Country		Teaching Experience at University Level
	Masters/MPhil	PhD	
Assistant Professor	UK	UK	5-10 Years
Professor	UK	UK	Over 30 Years
Associate Professor	Pakistan	Pakistan	10-15 Years
Assistant Professor	Pakistan	Australia	5-10 Years
Lecturer	Pakistan	-	10-15 Years
Assistant Professor	Pakistan	Pakistan	15-20 Years
Assistant Professor	Pakistan	Pakistan	5-10 Years
Associate Professor	UK	UK	15-20 Years
Lecturer	Pakistan	-	10-15 Years
Lecturer	Pakistan	-	10-15 Years
Assistant Professor	UK	New Zealand	5-10 Years
Assistant Professor	UK	USA	5-10 Years
Assistant Professor	Pakistan	Norway	Less than 5 Years
Lecturer	Pakistan	-	Less than 5 Years
Lecturer/Educational consultant	Pakistan	-	20-25 Years
Research Associate	Pakistan	-	Less than 5 Years

The respondents consisted of Research Associate, Lecturers, Assistant Professors, Associate Professors and Professors. Two of the respondents were heads of departments. Respondents worked in eight different universities and were identified via snowball sampling, the starting point being staff known to me in the university where I had previously taught. One respondent from Pakistan was based in a university in the Middle East currently, and it was decided to include her since she had extensive experience of teaching in Pakistan before going to the Middle East. One staff, at the time of the interview had been offered a Fellowship in an Ivy League university in US so her interview, in fact, took place in London whilst she was on route to US. Several staff had studied at Masters, MPhil or PhD level in countries such as New Zealand, UK, Australia, Norway and United States.

The respondent's age ranged from 25 years and 58 years. There was no set criterion for respondent sampling such as encompassing all levels of female academics including young, unmarried and newly-weds or senior academics with more institutional experience. I made a conscious effort to identify academics who had diverse experiences and were ready to share their personal and institutional perspectives to provide a richer narrative. The belief was that diverse ages, circumstances and backgrounds will provide a richer viewpoint therefore the research will be able to capture the complexities and in some ways uniqueness as well as commonalities of their personal and institutional experiences. Similarly, there was not a deliberate attempt to identify radical staff since the fact that women were working may be regarded as quite radical anyway in the cultural conservatism of Pakistan where it is often the father, brother and husband who decides whether a daughter, sister or wife receives education and subsequently goes to work. These conflicts and contradictions have been discussed in previous chapters of this research and will be further enriched by my own firsthand experience as well as trials and tribulations of being a daughter, a mother and an academic of Pakistani origin.

In terms of the interview interaction it was not a case of the interviewee firing a battery of questions at the respondents but an invitation for the respondents to share their experiences and stories. This helped as most of the respondents were being able to articulate their feelings with great authority and respondents were able to tell their narratives without interruption. There was a free flow of opinions in most cases.

Respondents felt comfortable in sharing their experiences whilst some shared their colleagues' experiences as well.

6.8 Analysis of data

It has been argued that interviews have become a common method of generating data in social science research producing large amount of respondent narrative (Aronson, 1992). Analysis of data in qualitative inquiry requires skills that are very different from quantitative analysis, which largely relies on quantified responses to arrive at conclusions through a variety of statistical tests. Data or narration in social sciences qualitative research is obtained via the following five prominent traditions: ethnography, grounded theory, phenomenology, narrative research, and the qualitative study (Creswell, 2007). Butler-Kisber (2018) identifies three basic types of inquiry, which are thematic, narrative, and arts-informed. The same author states that qualitative traditions such as grounded theory and phenomenology are driven by traditions that rely on developing categories in their attempt to interpret data whereas the narrative approach seeks intimate connection between social phenomenon articulated by the subject to the researcher and their individual stories. For analysis, thematic analysis (TA, hereafter) was used since it has the potential to provide a richer account of the respondents' data (Clarke and Braun, 2013).

6.8.1 Thematic Analysis

Initial thoughts were that the responses would be analysed by looking at all the transcribed interviews and identifying themes during the analysis and writing up phases. However it soon became clear that this was going to be a very difficult task especially given that there were 16 interviews that lasted for about 1.5 hours each and four interviews were 2 hours long which resulted in 26 hours of data. Each interview when transcribed was between 12,000 to 15,000 words. I started analysing my data using NVIVO but soon realised that it only takes into account the frequency of searched words but not the meanings or synonyms. It is still the researcher who decides on choosing the themes. I also felt that it distanced me from the data and guided me in a specific direction. It encouraged quantitative analysis of qualitative

data which was against the spirit of my research and I did not want to put human responses into the software. So I used the manual way to come up with my themes and subthemes which was very hard but I felt the closeness and the richness of interacting with the data. I felt that the closeness to data was revealing a far richer picture than Nvivo would have.

Thematic analysis emerged as a formal approach of identifying and analysing patterns in qualitative data in the 1970 (Merton, 1975) however, TA is also rooted in the old tradition of content analysis (CA) and many of the underlining principles and procedures of CA date back to the early 20th Century (Joffe, 2011). Braun and Clarke (2013) describe this method as having the theoretical flexibility to be identified as an analytical method as opposed to a methodology, which they argue most other qualitative methods are. It allows the researcher to analyse textual data for emerging patterns and meaning; it is these themes which are then developed that describe the phenomenon being researched. They go on to describe and argue that TA offers the theoretical flexibility since this approach does not require a formal theory of language or any particular framework. Aronson (1994), in his work during therapy sessions, describes thematic analysis as a process by which ideas that emerge can be better understood by placing them in identifiable theme and patterns clusters.

The themes and their meaning that emerge can be highly subjective however this is not a problem especially where there is a small dataset from a limited number of respondents. Similarly, subjectivity is not a problem since thematic analysis does not profess to providing generalisation for a population unless there is a quantitative element, whereby a large dataset has been collected. I attempted to create a bond with my respondents since the social phenomenon being explored was highly emotive and sensitive and raised all kinds of issues from the female academics. This was part of my 'ethics of care' perspective which is addressed in the ethical consideration (section 6.10) in detail. The exchange revealed a number of angry outbursts at times against the ultra-conservative thinking and the cloak of religion and culture often used to mask some rather unpleasant truths. Therefore, given the nature of the research I openly acknowledge that my development of themes may indeed contain a significant element of the 'Others' voices that challenge the

traditional paradigms and the concept of neutrality since the very essence of this research is outlining of their experiences.

The data from the interviews were audio-tapped and later transcribed so that themes could be identified. Once this had taken place the next phase consisted of analyzing the data that combined the information into a number of themes and related sub-themes (Aronson, 1994)

Some of the responded views, if looked in isolation, may be meaningless however as a collection formed stories with commonalities providing a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon being researched. This required a considerable level of skill and understanding of the research area and a comprehensive picture was formed since it allowed weaving of various concepts into meaningful and robust arguments. Despite the subjective element of this approach, Clarke and Braun (2013) argue that TA is good approach since it caters for a broad range of research areas and viewpoints, which address the research question by seeking to understand respondent perspectives and the construction of their meaning. Furthermore, it is a useful tool since it allows for analysis of different types of data from respondents such as transcripts of interviews. The phases of thematic analysis developed by Braun and Clarke (2006) include familiarisation with data, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and finally, writing up which have been used for my data analysis.

Familiarisation with data is important for all types of qualitative analysis and I became familiar with the data by reading and re-reading and then by listening to the audio recordings again so that nothing was missed along with other observations and the diary and notes that I had kept throughout the process. Once I became familiar with the data, then the next step was searching for emerging themes. Themes are meaningful patterns that are relevant and are borne out of research questions which the researcher uses as a guiding light. As Braun and Clarke (2006) eloquently state those if codes are considered the tiles and bricks in a house then themes are like the walls and roof tops as they identify the similarity in data. Knowing the data allowed me to construct themes by coding as these are not always present and visible just by looking at data and waiting to be discovered; it was an active searching process.

Once all the key themes were identified from the coded data they were put under different categories according to research objectives.

The next step in TA was the reviewing of themes whereby I had to see that the identified themes told a 'convincing story' from the extracted data and explain each theme in detail. At this point, I merged the two themes or divided the themes into new or sub-themes. It is the skill of the interpreter (researcher) to recognise the emerging themes and sub-themes. These are obtained from the research question that will provide the scope for deductions and inferences (Clarke and Braun, 2013). The sub-themes further generated emerging patterns, which led towards a powerful storyline. This required a lot of interaction with the full dataset. In naming the themes I needed to be vigilant and see what story a theme is telling and how does these themes relate or fit in with the rest of the data in supporting the storyline. The last phase of TA was the writing up of the analysis and linking this narrative along with the data extracts or what the respondents quotes were in relation to the identified themes and support them with the existing academic literature so that it built up into a well-woven and coherent storyline. The storylines were further enriched by literature which was previously been reviewed as well as personal experiences and observation.

6.9 Reliability and validity of research findings

Yin (2000; 2011) argues that validity in qualitative research means that the data is properly collected and interpreted and the conclusions accurately reflect the real world. This is not limited to the findings only but also refers to the description of the participant views. Guba and Lincoln (1994) develop the debate further by stating that the quality of qualitative research can be assessed by trustworthiness and authenticity as an alternative to reliability and validity. The authors also alert us that there cannot be absolute truth about the social world and the researcher can identify several accounts of an aspect or phenomenon of social reality.

Another area that requires attention is credibility of respondent accounts, which involves establishing that the results of qualitative research are credible or believable

from the viewpoint of the participant in the research and it refers to respondent validation (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). It helps in confirming the validity of the individual accounts of the participants. For this aspect, the responses of the participants in my research were audio recorded, interviews transcribed and sent back to respondents so that they can comment that it has been interpreted correctly. In 2 or 3 incidences the respondents added or changed what was written and that was taken into account. According to this perspective, qualitative research describes or understands the phenomena from the participant's views and opinions and the participants are the only ones who can legitimately judge the credibility of the results. This is consistent with Bryman and Bell's (2015) views in that qualitative research typically should focus on the study of a small group or individuals sharing certain characteristics and the findings are related to the contextual uniqueness.

Transferability means the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be generalized or transferred to other contexts or settings and it is primarily the responsibility of the researcher doing the generalizing. As Guba and Lincoln (1989, p. 316) elaborate the point further that 'whether or not the findings hold in some other context, or even in the same context at some other time, is an empirical issue'. The qualitative researcher can improve transferability by thoroughly describing the research context and Geertz (1973a, cited in Guba and Lincoln, 1989) calls it a 'thick description' of the rich accounts of the details of the culture, which helps the other researchers to make judgments about the transferability of findings to other contexts. In addition, the assumptions that was central to the research, the methodology and the selection of participants needs to be clear. For this research, it has been discussed clearly that the concepts and literature discussed is mostly by the West but the context and culture is different. Furthermore, some issues like harassment or work-life conflict have different connotations or meanings in the context of Pakistan as compared to other countries. In addition, the research is around the experiences of female academic staff in the context of Pakistan and the findings cannot be generalized as it is a case study but the concepts, literature and findings might be transferrable especially to similar context of South Asian or Muslim countries where the culture is somehow similar. It is the responsibility of the researcher to make judgments of how reasonable or sensible the transfer is according to the context it is being conducted in.

In qualitative research we can't actually get the same results as the contextual settings or the participants are different. The idea of dependability therefore stresses the need for the researcher to account for the changing context within which research occurs. The researcher is responsible for describing the changes that occur in the setting and how these changes affected the way the researcher approached the study. The researcher also needs to adopt an auditing approach (Guba and Lincoln, 1994) which means that they need to keep the complete records of all the phases of the research from selection of the participants, field notes, interview transcripts and data analysis decisions in an accessible manner for peers and supervisors to see. In my research, it has been followed thoroughly and the supervisors have seen the interview transcripts and the manual thematic analysis that I did. In addition, the context and culture, status of women, vital statistics and different aspects of the society have been discussed in detail with reference to Pakistan in previous chapters.

Another term that warrants a brief discussion is confirmability which refers to the quality of the research and results produced by the inquiry and how well it is supported by the participants of the research (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Corroboration by others is the hallmark of confirmability. The researcher's interpretations can strengthen the confirmability of the research by providing reference to academic literature. Confirmability can be done to see whether the data collection and interpretations have been linked to the existing literature and are not just researcher's imagination.

Authenticity concerns the wider impact of the research and there are five main criteria. The first is fairness, which means the research represents the viewpoints of the members of the social setting fairly. The other aspects are ontological and educative authenticity, which refers to the members having a better understanding of the social settings, and appreciate the perspectives of the other people. The last two criteria are catalytic and tactical authenticity. In my research, some of the participating female academics may act as a catalyst for debate surrounding equality agenda and engage in action for change in their institutions or broadly, in society therefore it remains to be seen whether it has empowered the members to take political action.

Respondents were selected by using snowballing techniques. This sits quite comfortably with my research aim, which was to gather data from female academics that may have experienced various difficulties in their institutions therefore the generated data is not likely to be representative of views of all women. I did not go for neutrality since the very essence of the 'origins of feminist research's epistemological and methodological focus draws on insights and struggles, feminist empiricism, standpoint theories, post-modernism, and transnational perspectives' (Hesse-Biber, 2012, p. 3). Radicals use multiple feminist lenses to challenge the male structures, layers of sexist, racist, homophobic and colonialist viewpoint that subjugate females and other oppressed groups (Sprague and Zimmerman, 1993, p. 266 in Hesse-Biber, 2012). Therefore, in my research it was a women's voice perspective that challenged the male norm (Bryans and Mavin, 2003). Having said the above it is felt that the dynamics of researcher-respondent engagement in my research was likely generate its own energy since the women academics that were the target for the research were dynamic and assertive and felt empowered.

6.10 Ethical considerations

Given that this research was taking place via close interaction between the researcher and the subjects, ethical issues lay at the heart of this endeavour. There were three major strands that were borne in mind. Firstly, there is the role of the University Ethical Committee which provided guidance to me on the 'do's and don'ts' of my responsibility to the subjects during the research process. Then the issue of confidentiality and anonymity of data needed to be fully understood since the interview were recorded using an audio device, which has the potential to place the respondents in somewhat vulnerable position. Lastly, there was the need to understand the power dynamics between the researcher and her subjects, which would have a major influence on the research outcomes.

Prior to my field study I sought approval from the University Ethical Committee (London Metropolitan University Research Ethics, 2014) as the University is obligated to confirm that the research undertaken follows its ethical values and practices. The University ensures the ethical review and approval so that the quality of research is up to the standards identified and also the rights of the participants are

not compromised in any way and there is minimal risk and discomfort to respondents. It also protects the rights of the researcher in order to protect itself against the risk of negligence against the University and any other collaborating institution so the reputation of the University is not harmed in any way.

Given the nature of this research which was a close encounter between the respondents and the researcher, any information obtained has been treated with 'ethic of care' whereby no emotional harm has come to the respondents in any shape or form due to the sensitive nature of the subject. Ethic of care is a feminine way of thinking about ethics as my research was about discussing some personal and emotional experiences of my respondents. Gilligan (1982) who founded the concept of ethics of care argues about how we respond to the needs of others in real life complicated situations and focus on compassion in relationships based on the feminist approach. Noddings (2013) also promotes the ethics of care and argues that feminine approach to ethics should be a foundation and basic element in any human interaction. As the nature of my research was based on close interaction with sensitive issues being raised at times, my sympathetic position for their predicament eased some of the tensions they experienced during the interviews. I was also acutely aware that the interviewees must not be left distraught at the end of the interview. Therefore I concluded our interaction on a positive note by sharing some of my own experiences and how we 'sisters in arms' needed to organise to resist inequality and empower women in Pakistani society. This, I felt, was an appropriate way to conclude our shared emotional journey.

The respondents were assured complete confidentiality and anonymity in verbal and written form prior to any kind of engagement taking place since both of these terms have massive implications. The researched were clearly informed about the nature and purpose of the research, how their views will be used, told about complete freedom to participate in the research and the right of withdrawal and under no obligation to participate, and finally have the right to vet their views (Creswell and Creswell, 2017; Sarantakos, 2012). This is also in accordance with Bryman and Bell's (2015) viewpoint on ethical behaviour.

All research is complex however the complexity in my research in relation to understanding and addressing power dynamics was like a ‘double-edged sword’ (Preissle and Han, 2012) whereas many issues were raised and acknowledged but not necessarily addressed since neither the respondents nor myself were in a position of power to make these changes. The power dynamics and the role of ethical researcher is explored by Holian and Brooks (2004, p. 20) who go on to state that a ‘common sense’ approach is needed when conducting research so that no harm comes to participants. Following this understanding I kept all the participants well-informed hence protecting them from any harm. I also provided a copy of the University Ethical Policy Guidelines to all those who participated in the research and deleted all the recordings after these were transcribed.

6.11 Summary

This chapter has provided an overview of some of the most pertinent research issues and methodology adopted for the present research. It has discussed in detail the foundation for the fieldwork. The chapter started with an outline of the epistemological stance adopted in the present research, which was interpretivist approach. An explanation was given why this approach was more appropriate. The approach fitted with the feminist influences discussed in the previous chapter, since feminism allows social construction of the subject viewpoint in data production. Once data was obtained, the next task was to analyse data; this was done thematically after all the interview transcriptions had taken place. This method of analyzing interview data has been described as being theoretically flexible as an analytical tool and therefore widely recognised by numerous academics.

The discussion on validity and reliability concluded that the research findings were valid since all the data was properly collected, authentic, from trustworthy sources and ready for analysis. In order to improve validity the interviews were recorded, recordings transcribed and sent back to respondents for verification. Having said this, it was also noted that this research was neither neutral nor un-opinionated since the approach necessitated exploring issues that were of concern to the respondents. The last section of this chapter provided a detailed breakdown of the interview process

and respondent characteristics. The following chapter provides an analysis of the generated data.

Chapter 7: Data Analysis

7.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I shall be analyzing, in detail, the qualitative data that was generated by interviewing sixteen academic staff from Pakistani Higher Education Institutions. This has been the most interesting, as well as difficult chapter to write, given the rich and detailed nature of the data, which made it difficult for me to decide on what to include and what to leave out from the valuable and varied insights, given by my respondents, into their life experiences. The interviews are unique stories, which reflect the rich tapestry of a Pakistani female's academic and personal journey. They highlight the different aspects of these women's life experiences in personal, institutional and social settings.

The analysis has been divided into two major sections i.e. the personal circumstances of female academics and the institutional experiences of female academic staff. Their responses have been discussed from the generated data. These sections have further been divided into sub-sections, themes and sub-themes, thus providing detailed analyses of the data.

7.1 Personal circumstances of female academics

This section of the analysis chapter highlights that, despite the diverse and unique personal experiences of all my respondents, there were certain common themes that emerged and have thus been discussed in detail. While some academics had the support of their parents or husbands, others were struggling without any support. In fact, how these individuals experienced life under such different circumstances is what made my data and analysis exciting and informative. This section provides an analysis of the views held by female academics regarding their personal circumstances in a number of areas, by identifying the main themes and sub-themes. The key themes that emerged from the data are family upbringing and gendered roles, the family's support for female education, the parental influence on female career choice, the reason for the respondent entering academics, and the personal changes that female academics have undergone because of their work experience.

Moreover, there is also further discussion on themes regarding the barriers faced by female academics in relation to cultural, religious and societal norms, as well as the adoption of multiple identities, and finally society's and institutional views of their marital status. The themes that emerged from the personal circumstances of my respondents made some academics emotional and upset, whilst others became angry at how society, culture and at times religious interpretations restricted their movement and opportunities as women. They indicated that societal expectations made them lose their individuality, and at times forced them to conform to certain set of norms of the society, merely because they are females.

7.1.1 Child upbringing and genderised roles

An important theme that was explored from the data, was the role parents played in their child's upbringing in relation to their gender, in order to ascertain whether there were differences in their treatment. Most of the respondents indicated that, as girls, they are treated differently by their parents, and were expected to fulfill certain roles. Girls are expected to follow strict genderised cultural and religious behaviours, with relation to dress code, play and socialization. For instance, boys are allowed to play outdoor sports such as; cricket, football, cycling etc. while girls would be encouraged to play indoors with dolls and help their mothers or grandmothers in the kitchen. Girls are also expected to socialise with other girls from a very early age. Furthermore, the dress code for girls generally consists of wearing *shalwar kameez* and *dupatta* from puberty. Religion is also pushed much more rigorously on girls than on boys. For instance, boys would accompany their fathers to the mosque on Fridays to read *juma namaz*, whereas girls would always stay at home and read *namaz*. The *juma* prayer is special since it allows young boys to socialise with other children from the neighborhood before and after the prayer. This demonstrates that there are more restrictions on the girl compared to the boy. Females are expected to pray at home, stay within the house and observe *purdah*. Further domestication of girls in contrast to boys was evident as boys were prone to action-oriented and outdoor activities, such as playing tennis and horse-riding, while girls were once again relegated to domestic roles.

Most of the respondents articulated that their parents and grandparents, as well as the society in general, expected such behaviours from them so that their honour and reputation would not be questioned. They indicated that cultural and social factors allowed greater freedom, choice and support to their male siblings as compared to them, especially in terms of education. This type of dictation continued even when the females had to choose a work profession. The pressure increased when a life partner had to be selected, thus demonstrating the male dominated nature of the Pakistani society, where females have are expected to conform to their parents' wishes. One of the respondents said:

‘We are brought up in a very traditional way. It is a male dominated society, in which parental approval is essential in whatever you do. The problem is that you are brought up to basically listen and obey all men without questioning whether it's your father, brother or husband. If you do anything other than what they expect, then the weight of the family falls on you and you are considered a rebel.’

The above response shows the patriarchic nature of the society, where ‘female’s wings are clipped from a younger age’ so that they do not have the choice to make decisions of their own. It is put in their minds that whatever their parents, especially fathers, decide for them is best for them, be it regarding their education or marrying. Girls are told the ‘*should*’ and ‘*should not*s’ of behavior from an early age and ‘*some of the freedoms that are granted to boys are denied to girls, such as speaking their minds*’ according to one of the respondents. Similarly, men also learn the ‘should’ and ‘should not

s’ too but these were heavily skewed in their favour. It is not about the *degree* of freedom, but rather the *kind* of freedom that men enjoy, which is very different as compared to females. This socialisation of roles begins from a very early age, as the following respondents stated:

‘I was told to behave in a particular way by my parents and grandparents from a very young age. My brother, on the other hand, was pretty much allowed to run the show. He was always encouraged to sit in male company, especially when guests arrived, whereas girls were shunted to where mums sat.... mums often talked about family matters whereas men talked about societal issues.’

Most of the respondents had similar childhood experiences to the one above, in that they did not enjoy the liberty of doing all the things that their brothers were allowed to do, such as going out with friends or staying out late. There were also marked differences between provinces, as several respondents elaborated.

‘It depends on the province/area from where you belong to as well, but generally it is all very conservative and roles are more gendered for females as compared to male siblings.’

‘We all share the same culture; traditional culture in which gender roles don’t follow equality and equity, they are a bit imbalanced and power driven. I think more or less, it’s like this all over Pakistan but it’s a bit more in KPK’.

Respondents also indicated that male and female careers were more or less already decided from an early age and parents had a major influence over these choices, however in many cases this depended on the results and subject areas being studied. For instances, those studying sciences to become doctors were more likely to be supported, as being a doctor is considered a very good and privileged profession by society. However, regardless of what they studied, the underlining factor was that females were to be prepared to play the role of *the ‘wife’*. This was explained by a respondent, who stated that; *‘I wanted to go to university, even though I knew that when I completed my studies there would be pressure on me to get married’*.

In some instances, there was a delay in females completing their higher education due to their parents finding them a suitable marriage partner at a relatively young age. Sometimes parents allowed their daughters to study and do Masters, if an acceptable proposal for them was not available. Completing their education becomes difficult for young unmarried women, since it is a secondary consideration for most parents. What certainly is true is that, their higher education was always a distant second consideration behind marriage, which would explain why careers and jobs were not regarded as important. This was in sharp contrast with boys, who, as the respondents indicated, had a *‘clear role i.e. they had to develop a career straight after their education’*. Most females tended to experience a much more authoritarian regime, whereby fathers were in complete control of their lives, in terms of

domination of the children and especially their education. The struggle to overcome rigid-control and parental authority, especially that of their fathers', was almost always unsuccessful and most of the respondents considered resistance futile. One of the respondents said that:

'I just remember my father always saying that 'you have to be elegant and decent and if you would be decent, everybody will respect you and that was it'.

It shows that parents expect their daughters to behave in a certain way so that family members, or those in the neighbourhood, could not point an accusatory finger towards them. The above respondent further said,

'While meeting those expectations, you set so many barriers for yourself. Okay, you cannot go out with your male friends because of social barriers. They are your very good friends, but you cannot go and hang out with them. So, it's a barrier. Maybe I could have gone but I never asked my mother because I always felt so much pressured over this affecting my family's respect negatively'.

The respondent explained that her family was over-protective as she was the first child going to a co-education university for her degree. She said that the above things were acceptable for her brother, but not her. Quite interestingly, most of the time brothers played an important role while discussing female education in family settings, and often showed preference for their female siblings to be 'married off' rather than go into higher education. This experience was shared by a number of respondents, who stated that their male siblings challenged their parents and even took away parental authority from them from 'a relatively young age'. They suggested that the male child has already been '*socialised by the time he reaches his teens by watching his father having a dominating role in society*' and the baton of '*generational male dominance*' is passed seemingly from father to son. One of the respondents went on to say that '*from birth, we are taught 'what will people say'. We are taught 'what will people think', 'you should not do this', 'you should not act like that' and somewhere while all this is happening, we lose our individuality and follow blindly what we are told to do*'. It is interesting to note that a male sibling

plays such an important role in that society. For instance, *‘a male even if he is 10 years old has to accompany the females, as it is the cultural expectation. A woman cannot go out without a male escort especially in the evening’*. This is the dilemma that most Pakistani females face from a very young age. They are expected to conform within certain societal and family expectations, which in many cases results in them losing track of their dreams and desires.

7.1.2 Family Views on Female Child Education

It was highlighted by the respondents that, the conditioned gender roles inculcated by the culture and society were unintentionally adopted by their parents. Even among middle-class families, the education of boys was prioritized over that of girls. They would often be sent to private schools and colleges in Pakistan and later even abroad for higher education. The reason for this is that families consider their boys to be breadwinners, who will grow up to take care of not only their own families, but their parents as well. On the other hand, girls are simply to be married off, and therefore will not contribute to the household financially, which would explain why investment into their education is not a prime concern.

When discussing reasons for choosing higher education and family support, a very interesting set of responses were articulated by the respondents, who identified a number of reasons which led them to acquire higher education and later work in academia. There was a general viewpoint among all respondents, that acquiring higher education would lead to them marrying into a ‘good’ family, as well as give them economic independence. While in some ways this most probably applies to all women, however more so to those in South Asian countries, since marriages in the region are often arranged by parents, who consider themselves to be in a better position, given their life experience, to identify suitable partners for their sons and daughters. The choice and wishes of the females themselves are not given much heed when it comes to choosing their husbands.

The table below outlines some of the subthemes of family support.

Table-3 Family Support for Higher Education

Themes	Sub-themes
Family support	i. Parent's support ii. Marriage into a 'good' family iii. Husband's support iv. Economic power

There was general agreement among all the respondents that the education they acquired was a recognition of their intellectual abilities and a reflection of their intelligence, and that acquiring higher education, whether it was undergraduate or postgraduate studies, satisfied their thirst for knowledge and economic stability. Being educated gives females more awareness about their rights, while working provides them greater economic freedom.

Not only does the marriageable age for young women in Pakistan depends on many factors, but it also can affect how much education a girl can have, depending on the area/province in which she lives, or the family's view on the marriageable age. In some conservative areas of Pakistan, girls are married off at the age of 18, after completing their FSc/FA (similar to A levels), whereas in most cases they are married off soon after reaching 20, or completing their Bachelor's degree, if a suitable marriage partner can be found for them. If a girl wants to pursue higher education at a university, then there is often a rigorous family discussion about the merit of this move. Ultimately, the final decision to allow the young woman to pursue higher education depends on the area where the family lives, as well as the family background. City dwelling young women, or those with supportive parents, have a far better chance of attaining higher education than those from rural areas or those with less literate parents. Studying away from home in another city was uncommon and often shunned by most parents, as discussed by some respondents. The reason for this is that moving to another city and staying on their own is considered unsafe by most parents in Pakistan. However, things have changed with the passage of time, as more and more young women are being allowed to study

away from home. Nevertheless, having said that, such a decision itself still very much depends on a number of factors such as; the family's circumstances, their educational background, rural/urban location, conservative/liberal provinces that lead to certain decisions made by the parents for their daughters.

7.1.2.1 Parents Support

There was a general view among the respondents that most parents prioritised marriage over higher education for their daughters, especially at a young age or after completing their Bachelor's degree. Furthermore, there was an agreement that in the provinces of KPK and Baluchistan, girls tended to be 'married off' at a slightly younger age as compared to their counterparts in the other two provinces, due to cultural norms. Those married off had to rely on the 'goodwill' of their husbands and in-laws to be allowed to either complete their higher education or to go to a university to acquire higher education. An Assistant Professor from KPK said that, it is the culture of the province where she lives that girls are married off at an early age, often within the family, for example to cousins. Such decisions are often made by the families themselves, in isolation from the wishes of the females, despite such a practice being against the teachings of Islam. She said that:

'In our society and my mother's opinion, a girl should get married right after FSc. So, all my sisters got married young. One sister got married after Matric (GCSE). She even got her Matric result after her wedding. I got married after FSc'

The above general view shows that most families prefer early marriages. Once married, the continuation of a wife's education relies solely on the goodwill and support of her husband and in-laws, if they allow her to study further or to work. For instance, one of the respondents, who had two years of teaching experience, said that parents themselves tend to decide what girls need to study. She said that *her parents had already decided what she was going to study. If there was any independence, then it was for her brothers only. Goals for the girls were already set by the parents.* She further added:

‘My mother pressured me to study medical, so I did. But I wasn’t interested in it, therefore I didn’t score that well. As I continued my studies, my parents still chose the subjects for me. They also told me give the CSS exam, which is a civil service exam, but I was not interested in that either. Later on, when I got an admission in Islamabad, my father refused to send me, saying how will a girl survive outside (far from home), however, had I been a boy (studying in a different city), then that won’t be an issue’.

The above response gives an insight into the challenges that many young women face. Most of the respondents found themselves in situations where they felt restricted to obey and listen to their parents, simply because they had been conditioned in that way. Being females, they cannot make their own choices and are therefore obliged to surrender.

Another respondent, who had six years of experience, said that she was not interested in professional education and was in fact willing to get married, but did not as her mother pushed her to study further:

‘I wasn’t supposed to be a career woman and the only reason for my degree was my mother, who insisted upon it as contingency, because in our culture we are supposed to get married young, which didn’t happen for me. So, she told me to get a professional degree so I would be independent in case, God forbid, my husband ever fell sick or some mishap occurred’

This shows that some parents are supportive of their daughters or daughter-in-law’s education, as it helps them become financially independent, as well as provides them a helping hand towards their family’s income, which is at times needed to support their husband’s younger and unmarried siblings. Respondents mentioned that the society’s view on wives working has changed over the last decade or so, as it is slowly being considered a positive thing given it increases the household income. This shows that things are improving for females. However, it is important to note that such change is restricted mostly to middle-class families, where the parents are more likely to be educated and therefore liberal.

Similarly, another respondent pointed out that things were changing, when she stated: *‘my younger sister got married after completing her MA’*. This shows that

attitudes are changing and such cases could potentially set a trend, by these females being role models for the younger siblings and other young aspiring females.

This view on the changing outlook, is consistent with those of eight other respondents, who mentioned that their parents had supported them in acquiring higher education. There were several reasons for this. Firstly, many middle-class parents had realized that education, in addition to improving an unmarried girl's chance of getting a better husband, also created an opportunity whereby their daughter could contribute towards her new family's household income. This was deemed very positive, since living in the city was financial straining, and difficult for a single-income household. The following respondent, who is unmarried, articulated this view:

‘My father supported me when I gained a place at university to do a PhD overseas even though my mother was reluctant. I feel that my parents are really broad-minded and treated me and brother equally, which is probably not the case with some other women of my age’.

As discussed before many of my respondents have studied abroad and there were different reasons in each case. Few were awarded scholarships which are considered prestigious by the parents as in the above respondent's case who was unmarried whereas some were supported by their husband as it provides an opportunity for the husband to accompany his wife abroad which is taken positively as most of the things like tuition fee are paid for. It becomes more challenging if they have children or husband has a good job, which he may not want to quit so females have to sacrifice such opportunities at times.

In a society like Pakistan, it is very difficult and in some cases impossible for a female to go to another country for higher studies especially if she has not married. This is in sharp contrast to males who are sent abroad for higher education. Societies attitudes are also somewhat negative for female academics who go abroad to study and attend conferences are considered very liberal and later on can have issues with getting married as for them the supposed marriageable age has passed by then. According to one respondent who has a PhD said; that *‘the society thinks that you are*

too independent and lack the characteristics of a good housewife which is a stereotypical point of view'. She went on to say,

‘What is wrong with going abroad at a conference? It is an opportunity to network with colleagues and share knowledge. But my God, when my friend mentioned going abroad her in-laws went crazy. Her husband did support her though. I think this is really shameful. If we as academics are to grow, we have to attend events here in Pakistan as well as go overseas.’

It shows that even for some married females, it becomes difficult to go abroad or even to a different city because of the expectations linked to them and they cannot make their independent decisions despite being economically independent.

One of my respondents said,

‘Although they are educating their daughters, they do not want them to work but society is in a transition phase. Things are changing. Some families are ready to support their working females, but sadly they do not expect any less of housework from them’.

This response clearly shows a dilemma that parents want to educate their daughters but do not necessarily want them to work and similarly husbands want educated wives but to take care of the household duties. Even when women are working their work is considered less important and they are expected to fulfil their domestic responsibilities first.

7.1.2.2 Husband Support

It was pointed out that pressure on female academics' careers comes from three sources, which are husbands, extended family and lastly the institutional practices. An academic who had been in academia for four years before getting married had to quit her job because her in-laws and husband did not allow her to work. She said that *‘I resisted initially but when it came to making a choice between my job or saving my*

marriage, I had to make a sacrifice in favour of my marriage. I was so angry', however she rejoined academia once her kids reached fulltime school age.

Another respondent indicated that when she got married her husband said none of the females in their family worked and stayed at home so *'you should do the same'*. This is quite normal in Pakistani society whereby a wife is expected to give up work after getting married. Having a baby most often means *'end of work'* in instances where a female has a job since *'there are no or very few nurseries or childcare centers'* in Pakistan. On occasions, it was indicated that if the husband and his family were supportive it becomes easier for the females to work but in most cases, there is little choice and the woman has to give up her job.

One of my respondents who is an Assistant Professor with a PhD said that she belonged to a conservative family in KPK and was married at the age of 18 years, soon after completing her FSc. She wanted to study further and it was with the support of her husband that she finished her further studies.

'I got married after doing my FSc. (A Levels) and did my Bachelors after marriage. At that time, I couldn't convince my in-laws but my husband supported me. The societal barriers were certainly there. It's not easy. They didn't like it that I was studying after getting married. I wasn't even able to take out my books in front of them so I used to secretly study after all the housework was done or after managing all the guests.'

This respondent received her husband's support to complete her BA degree and later MA as well as PhD otherwise *'I wouldn't have been able to do anything had my husband not supported me'*.

Another respondent who has six years of experience also discussed that it was all because of the support of her husband that she was able to study further. When the husband is supportive, the in-laws become supportive as well because they do not want to have a bad relationship with their son since in the Pakistani society sons take care of parents in old age. She said that her husband even supported her in going abroad for her PhD and she was with her daughters abroad while the husband was in Pakistan financially supporting them.

‘I have actually been quite lucky in terms of family support. My family for example my husband is very supportive. Because he is supportive, my in-laws are also supportive so they help me. You know in the beginning they kept on saying and pointing out that it may not be a good idea that I should work. Also, I did most of my studies after I got married. So out of total amount of degrees I have, my Masters in business administration, MPhil and PHD... all are from after I was married, with children’.

This shows that husband’s support is essential for the wife who is career minded in order to complete her education, undertake new study or go to work. However, it may be that working for a commercial organisation may be even more difficult for women since there is a perception that there is more male interaction while the view of those working in the teaching profession was much more positive in comparison.

7.1.3 Reasons for becoming a Higher Education teacher

When female respondents were asked about their reason for joining the teaching profession, they gave a variety of responses (see Table 4), most of which probably apply to anyone entering a career in teaching across the world, be it a woman or a man. These responses indicated that teaching was considered for a variety of reasons such as; an emotional reward, improvements of skills and human-to-human interaction, as well as passion, source of mental and psychological satisfaction, professional growth and for nourishing one’s ego. One area that was consistently highlighted by the female respondents was that they found ‘*teaching a secure workplace*’ and a ‘*safer career*’. It would seem that this view was also supported by most parents who, as indicated by the respondents, felt that teaching was much better for their daughters than working for a commercial enterprise. There is a perception in developing countries that, since women have a ‘*critical mass*’ in teaching within the public sector, rather than in the private sector, therefore they are less likely to experience sexual harassment. However, such a perception is most probably relative. Source of good earning was also an important reason and there was a general belief that teaching paid ‘*quite well*’ compared to some other professions in the private sector. Combined with flexible working conditions, this made it easier for women to

discharge their domestic responsibilities which, in male dominated societies, is perceived to be quite important.

Table-4 Reasons for Going into Teaching Profession

Themes	Sub-themes
Inspiration factors for entering into teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Teaching is emotionally rewarding ii. Learning from students iii. More work-life balance iv. Safer career v. Passion vi. Source of good earning vii. Professional growth

One of my respondents, who had completed her MBA and PhD from the UK, had 16 years of teaching experience and was unmarried, gave excellent insights into her experiences. She noted that:

‘I think that monetary benefits stand out for anyone, men or women. We are all different. In fact, I think they need to have some kind of perseverance going for them, be it passion or something else that leads them to all this work and multitasking and all that. So, monetary benefits are there, primarily, but to get those monetary benefits, you need to have that passion or drive.’

It can be seen that while financial rewards are important for everyone, equally important is the passion and human interaction that this academic highlighted. Teaching, especially in higher education, gave women academic freedom and confidence, as well as rewarded them emotionally. This view was articulated by another respondent, who had a choice to work in the corporate sector. She stated:

‘People often ask me why, despite being a marketer, my passion is to work in higher education, especially when there are so many other jobs for me. For me, the only good thing is when a student tells you, ‘Oh wow that was the best thing I learned today.’ Whether she is just apple polishing or not, still it gives you that kind of great feeling, that you’re doing something satisfying.’

It would seem that a sense of achievement and satisfaction when the students appreciated a teacher's input, was a great source of inspiration for many female higher education academics.

According to one Head of Department who was a Professor with 30 years of experience, whose husband is also a Professor and who despite coming from a conservative family had the support of her parents to go to university said that;

‘It was not accidental. It was planned and teaching is a very good profession for women. Work life balance is much better in teaching for women as compared to other professions where there is public dealing. Teaching is more than a profession because you are constantly working with young faces and have the power of influence over them. A long time has been passed and it has created immense change in me.’

Another respondent with 8 years of teaching experience said that working as an academic in higher education is a source of satisfaction and there is also economic independence for women. She said,

‘I believe working should be the first priority and ever since I’ve started work, it has given me mental and psychological satisfaction. I believe I can achieve a lot more. It would have been very frustrating if I had stayed at home instead of working. I think I made the right choice. Also, I earn a lot and I believe it gives me freedom and I don’t have to seek anybody’s approval. And having your own source of income, especially in Pakistan frees you from doing house hold work and instead you can hire others to do household work for you. So, it has its plus point but otherwise it is very stressful and tiring.’

One of the respondents, who is in her late twenties with a PhD from abroad, was very vocal and had a blog where she highlighted human right and gender issues. She indicated that the academic environment had helped her to develop professionally as well as give her space to share her experience with a wider audience via her blogs. Higher Education also gave her the mental freedom and voice to interact with a variety of people in sharing ‘*experiences and thoughts*’ especially students. She described her experience of blogging as ‘*truly exhilarating*’ since she was able to share her thoughts and words to ‘*influence beyond the realm of my campus*’. But it also taught her ‘*how to be mature in a given situation. My blogs are mostly read by my students and this is what I try to tell them. I tell them to complain, it is their right*

to complain, but you should know how to complain. So, I use it as a tool to teach my students as well.'

It would seem that female academics went into teaching for a variety of reasons. The most important reasons included support and approval from parents and husbands, economic independence, allowing them an opportunity to develop economically, greater flexibility at work in terms of time and having the opportunity to influence young people and to develop them intellectually. This was considered to be far better than a 9-4 job working for a commercial organisation where they would not have had much support which could adversely impact their family life. This was particularly important for academics with young children.

7.1.4 Education as transformational experience

It appears that becoming a university student and joining academia as a profession had a profound impact on women in a variety of ways, as can be seen from Table 5. Respondents indicated that prior to going into higher education they had been less confident, insecure and dependent whereas after acquiring higher education they were much more confident, secure and felt independent in comparison. This is perhaps not too surprising since these women had acquired education and now were in a position to express themselves with other female colleagues in a 'relatively safe environment'. Education had improved their interpersonal skills due to exposure to colleagues with varying experiences from within Pakistan as well as mixing with those who had been educated overseas. This enrichment cannot be overemphasized since those with higher degrees from overseas had lived independently and made their own decisions in relation to their lives.

Table-5 Impact of higher education on self

Changes as a person after entering academia	Before	After
	i. Not tolerant	i. More patient
	ii. Blunt	ii. Tolerable
	iii. Impatient	iii. Improved interpersonal skills
	iv. Less confident	iv. Confident
	v. Less knowledge	v. Improved knowledge
	vi. Insecure	vi. Feeling more secure
	vii. Dependent	vii. Independent

One of the participants said that going to another country and being exposed to a different culture helped her to understand who she was and explore her true self. When she returned to Pakistan she was a changed person in terms of how she viewed life and relationships especially with colleagues. She stated,

‘I would say that academics did create change. Teaching brings about another kind of change; how to convey your message, and how to be a role model. But while you study, you discover your own self. This is it, this is the place for me.’

Another respondent also felt that academics changed her life for better:

‘I think life teaches a lesson as time passes. I was not tolerant; in fact, I was blunt and impatient, but with the passage of time when I came in professional life many things were at stake like financial security etc. When such things are at stake and you have a child for whom you are supporting then a person becomes patient and tolerable. As the environment changes, the thinking also changes. Interpersonal skills get developed with the passage of time.’

So, it would seem that having an academic career had a positive influence on the female’s personal development in relation to how they related to family members. Those with exposure of studying overseas had learnt new interpersonal skills, which

previously were based on being a Pakistani, therefore a monoculture, and as a result they were able to challenge stereotypes more openly. For instance, a respondent who went abroad to do her PhD and is unmarried with 3 years of teaching experience stated:

‘This is what I found, when I was living and studying abroad. At that time, I was alone and I was experiencing my own self. I was exploring my own self. I was 25 when I was enrolled in the PhD. For 25 years, while I was in Pakistan, I never got to know the real me, because I was living with my family, mother, father, brothers, sisters, in a shared room with all of them. You can’t do what you want all the time and need to take care of other people’s needs and wants and expectations. But abroad, I could do what I wanted to do’.

It can be seen clearly that Education transforms thinking and definitely improves self-awareness as well as has a positive impact on the surroundings. It broadens horizons and makes one a critical thinker. Also having the international experience of studying abroad by seven respondents showed that they were more independent in their decision making as well as more confident and vocal regarding their rights as discussed by a respondent who went to study abroad,

‘All my friends were of other races and from other countries, and I learned a lot from them. The acceptance level, the tolerance level and the openness level in me has widened. It already existed, but it has matured for the better. And I can now convey these things in a way that is not defensive or offensive to anyone.’

Previously women were more tolerant and accepting. Now they have gained a voice and a level of assertiveness whereby they were able to challenge injustice at work more readily when they experienced it. For instance,

‘My experience of studying in UK was amazing. I saw a level of openness and strength in women. They would challenge injustice openly whereas here in Pakistan, we are living in cultural and religious shackles and men pretty much run the show. Previously I accepted men’s viewpoint and dominance but now I question and talk about female rights and my stance definitely is not liked by many, be it males or females’.

Higher Education and the experience of studying abroad definitely gave more exposure, confidence and security to a female, which at times is perceived negatively in a patriarchal society. Females having a voice and point of view are thought be liberal and not following the societal norms.

7.1.5 Multiple identities of female academics

All the respondents found it tough to adapt to the role of being a ‘superhuman’ i.e. having a career, being a wife and a mother, since family life, especially when it came to managing their children, was considered to be ‘very challenging’. There was a feeling of being overwhelmed with responsibilities, because despite being a working mother they were ‘*expected to be a wife, a mother and look after the in-laws, as well as cook for the husband*’. It seems that the domestic chores have come to symbolize the ‘impossibility’ of roles experienced by the female academics.

Table-6 Multiple identities of female academics

Multiple Identities of female academics	
Difficulties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Multiple roles (mother, housewife, teacher, manager) ii. Work-life conflict iii. Family expectations iv. Unsupportive family structure v. Male dominant society vi. Discouraging attitudes
Support Required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Family support ii. Societal support iii. Work support

Women are expected to adopt multiple identities (Table 6) and a variety of roles in life such as; being a teacher, wife and mother, all of which have to be performed within societal and cultural limitations. Many would argue that female academics in the West also face similar hardships. And while this may hold true to a certain extent, however a lack of support mechanisms, societal and cultural values, as well as

barriers and expectations, make it harder for a Pakistani female academic, who is taught from the day she born to please others and '*bury her own freedom*'.

Most importantly, besides male domination, a woman has to fully meet family, as well as work expectations. As elaborated by the following respondent, who has twelve years of experience:

‘Being a mother, a wife and a professional, we have to play our roles. Even when I come home from university, my husband expects me to serve him dinner. His clothes for the next day should be ironed. Everything should be managed at home as well. Expectations from a working female are similar to that of a non-working female. A woman has to be a juggler here in Pakistan.’

This confirms that simultaneously managing different identities, such as that of a mother, wife and teacher, is quite difficult for women, especially in patriarchal societies. Additionally, things become worse if the female is living in a joint family setup, as she is further required to take care of the entire extended family as well. On top of certain expectations, a working woman is usually not supported by her in laws, who believe she might end up neglecting both her children and husband, as a result of the career.

‘I live in a joint family system with my in-laws, as well as my husband’s two brothers and their wives and kids. Both of my sisters-in-law are housewives, whereas I work. They don’t like women who are progressive and who work, which often leads me to be a victim of their attitude and taunting behaviour, despite my making sure to do my part in household cooking and chores. Many a times, I leave my kids at my mother’s place, as my mother-in-law is not in a good mood.’

The above respondent said that despite her husband being supportive, because of financial reasons, she still has to face many issues, as it is the cultural norm within the Baluchistan province, to rely and live with one’s in-laws and extended family, as well as to take care of young children. She further added that:

‘If you are living with your in-laws, then it is difficult for the husband to support his wife. But when you are living independently, then it is quite

easier for the husband to support his wife, since they can share household responsibilities.'

This raises another contradiction within the male dominated Pakistani culture, whereby roles are set in stone; with the husband primarily being responsible for bringing home the money and the wife staying at home to perform domestic responsibilities. It is generally considered inappropriate for the husband to help the wife with her work, such as; washing dishes, cleaning or cooking. Furthermore, asking one's husband to perform these duties is considered disrespectful. However, if husband and wife live away from the extended family, then the husband *does* help with many more domestic duties, as the following respondent articulated:

'My husband is great now, but this only happened when we moved away from his parents. Now he helps with the children, cleaning the house and even washing the dishes. But this only happened when we moved to our new house'

In joint family systems, men often avoid helping their wives with the children or other household duties, since it has negative cultural connotations for the family. It shows that the woman has power over her husband, which is a taboo in Pakistani culture, where sons/husbands must be seen having authority over their wife. Such behavior may at times leads to conflict and financial loss, since a maid may be employed to clean the house and look after the children, instead of the husband lending a hand. This point was expressed by a few of my married respondents, who found household chores overwhelming,

'It's not easy; life for a working woman is not easy. Whenever I have spare time, I must use it to cook or do some other work. I can't sit down and relax freely. Unlike for a man, who after his job is free on the holidays or the weekends. Or when he comes home, he demands his wife for a meal, and doesn't lend any help. Women can't do that as we have to manage our professional and household duties simultaneously, without any help from our husbands'.

This is an interesting phenomenon in Pakistani and other Asian societies, where even if both the husband and wife are working, the husband still expects everything to be

done for him, and that too on time. In addition to serving her husband food, the wife must also manage the children, their homework and other household chores. Several respondents observed that all complaints made by them merely *'fell on deaf ears'* and their husband would often retaliate by saying *'who told you to work?'*

Another respondent, who had 2 years of teaching experience and had recently gotten married, was allowed to work, so long as it was not in a university, as her new family considered the co-education environment to not be safe for her. She was told by her husband to find a job in a college solely for women. During the interview, she became very emotional about her experience and got teary-eyed as she recounted being told by her husband and in-laws to leave her teaching job at the university. She said:

‘Men here have ego problems and an urge to dominant. I am not the problem and yet they blame me. This is because their ego gets hurt. They should be able to understand that we work to pay for the many expenses that the household has, and if we don’t support them, it’ll only hurt the household. My husband, who is jobless right now, should especially understand this’.

This shows that even if men are jobless, they do not acknowledge at times that the wife is merely working in order to help them out. The respondent further added that: *'he thinks that now that I am educated and have a good job and I am trying to show superiority. This is something men cannot tolerate, and is therefore a reason for many arguments'*.

7.1.5.1 Support Network

There are many difficulties faced by female academics in Pakistan, such as the multiple roles she has to play and the expectations that are linked to her. Due to the cultural values and societal beliefs, she not only has to fulfil the demands of her immediate family, but also her extended family. This is in part due to the combined family systems that are in place all across Pakistan, though the problem may be more acute in some parts of the country, specifically in KPK and Baluchistan. This point was highlighted by a respondent, who is a mother of 3 children and has been in

academia for 15 years. She suggested that better understanding and sharing of responsibilities helped in managing different roles:

‘Family support is essential and if you are married and your husband is supportive, it’s a very good thing. If he recognizes and shares responsibilities and expects less from you, then life becomes more manageable. However, if he does not support you, then it can become a disaster.’

For a working female, it is important that the husband supports her. However, while a few respondents said that the extended family did help them look after their children, yet often a times the same support can become a source of conflict. The respondents indicated that many of their academic friends relied on maids and servants to get things done, including taking care of the children. While this is quite common in Pakistan among middle class families, however this is more likely to be the situation if both the husband and wife are working, thereby making them more financial able to hire outside help.

One of the respondents, who is unmarried and has 5 years of teaching experience, and has the support of her parents, said that while everyone deals with multiple identities differently, but cultural aspects make it especially hard for working females:

‘It is very different in a traditional society such as Pakistan, where people have a narrow approach to life and to the roles of a daughter. As professionals, teachers and Eastern women, we are doing everything for the phenomenon of social confirmation, whether we like doing it or not. When you don’t even know yourself, then you are a victim of conflict and frustration. This is the core of the discrimination that is taking place. We don’t even know what we want out of our lives, simply because of the expectations that society has from us.’

In the above response, the phenomenon of social confirmation has been highlighted by the respondent as there are specific roles and societal expectations that females have to fulfill. It can be seen that all working women have so many roles to perform, that it causes frustration and stress for them as they try to satisfy everyone, whether it’s their husband, children, in laws, parents or the extended family. This led to a respondent saying that *‘a female needs to attend the marriages and the funerals of all*

the extended family, which is a social norm and often forgets what she wants for herself which is very sad.'

7.1.6 Cultural and societal barriers faced by female academics

Whilst exploring the cultural and societal barriers to a woman's organizational progress, a number of interesting themes and subthemes emerged, such as; men's authority in the Pakistani society and the sole responsibility of men to work. It appears that religion, cultural norms and societal barriers play a significant part in how women are treated, as well as how they are perceived by men. It was repeatedly pointed out that culture and religion are interlinked and inseparable when it comes to imposing the conservative values of acceptance on women. For instance, whilst all the respondents participating in this research were working in higher education, they were also aware that they did not represent the norm of most women being restricted to domestic roles, whilst their husbands took full responsibility for the family income. This economic power gave men in the Pakistani society more control over women and many respondents indicated that this immediately placed women in a weaker position. These views were reinforced by the family set-up and male chauvinism, which for the majority of women meant that men earned and women did the household work. This trend also repeats itself in rural communities, where the concept of work is somewhat different. In rural communities, there is gender segregation of roles, such as the men are responsible for farming harvests whilst the women will look after the livestock, cook and do the house chores. It must also be added, that women in rural communities are the least literate among their counterparts. It is reasonable to state that life on the farm is very different from that in the city, where all the respondents were based.

The above clearly shows that there is a tendency in all spheres of the Pakistani society, for women to be subservient and accept of male authority, which shows the patriarchal nature of the society (Table 7).

Table-7 Cultural and societal barriers faced by female academics

Themes	Patterns/ Stimuli
Cultural/Religious Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Thinking that earning for home is sole the responsibility of a man ii. Women are expected to accept male authority iii. Patriarchal nature of Pakistani society
Societal Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Women's code of conduct was heavily genderised ii. Combined family structure militated against the interest of women in certain situations iii. Work-life balance a challenge for women iv. Male dominance had created a conservative mindset among women

The respondents also indicated that their going out to work is borne out of economic necessity. For instance, a respondent with 15 years of experience said,

‘My husband knew that my working will bring extra income but he was very reluctant at first since I would be mixing with male colleagues. He was afraid that they would harass me. He thought I should not work. I was only allowed to go to work when it became absolutely necessary.’

There were other similar views. For instance, ‘*He did not really care about my intellectual development. To him I had to fulfil both domestic and professional responsibilities*’.

Another lecturer had a similar viewpoint:

‘There is no justice in this society. Why can't women go to work? If men are the problem they should be tackled by society and religion and their attitudes challenged. Why can't a woman go to work? She has a brain just like men....such injustice. This is the problem with Pakistan. Half the population of this country is women and yet only a tiny percentage is allowed to go to work. Sometimes even doctors sit at home even when they have studied all their lives, and look after their children and home....it's such a waste as they are not allowed to work by their husbands’.

The above response shows that although females from middle class educated families are allowed to work but it is something that is not considered very positive where as females who stay at home are deemed more respectful. As another respondent said, *‘it is thought that the working females are very ambitious and over confident or very liberal that they mix up with men and go out to work’*.

Another academic who had exposure of working overseas and has 10 years of experience stated,

‘Look at countries like Malaysia and Turkey. They spend money on education. Women are found at every level of organisations. They are also Muslims. And yet in Pakistan we are in such a backward situation. I feel that women’s emancipation is connected to their education. This is when they will be able to break from the shackles.’

Although the other Muslim countries are very strict in following the religious teachings and ways which stop women from progressing. There is a common view among respondents that Pakistan is a conservative and religious society in true sense of the word where religion and culture intertwine and are often ‘used by those in position of power to subjugate women’ as a Senior Lecturer of ten years’ experience articulated. This theme was further elaborated by her,

‘What we have in Pakistan is a paradox. Women have been oppressed for centuries and this is used by those in power to maintain their dominance. It is only now that the middle class women have begun to challenge these men. But even here it is a tough battle since, perhaps not surprisingly, men will use whatever means to maintain their dominance. Religion provides a convenient vehicle for them.’

It is interesting to note here that religion has provided certain rights to females but those who interpret religious virtues are male and religion is always interpreted in a way, which benefits men, and thus male dominance is maintained. The educated middle class females are trying to challenge the male dominance but it is often seen that the power dynamics and the whole system is controlled by men which make things more difficult for females.

A view was expressed that historically men held higher statuses in the society as their income provided them security and those working in the academia were even more respected by the society. One of the respondents indicated that, '*now women also hold this rank and an economic independence which puts them in par with men*' however she went on to point out that,

‘The reality is that whilst both of these aspects are true for both genders, we remain at the lower ranks of the society since our workload does not decrease certainly when we have young children to take care of.’

The cultural values place tremendous pressure on females and they carry these values to their workplace as the following respondent with 5 years of experience acknowledged,

‘We in Pakistan come from a very conservative culture where challenging male authority is not an option. In fact far from it. We are told to be obedient and conform to cultural norms and mixing with men is a big No, No from a very young age - certainly after puberty.’

There is an expectation that males and females should not mix much in work settings hence labels such as ‘Sir’ and ‘Madam’ are often used as respect when referring to each other. This attitude of segregation is also evident at social occasions between colleagues even in academia. Any kind of male and female colleague interaction is considered unacceptable and the female is thought to be liberal and open and hence judgments are made on her character. This creates a layer of formality and keeps the male-female interaction very formal. This makes it quite clear that female academic staff at work is operating under considerable pressure.

One respondent who is a single parent with 8 years of experience felt the full burden of parenthood in an ‘*uncaring society*’:

‘Burden is all on the female. No one supports you. Majority of females are not supported, whether it is housework or job....So, you have to shoulder the entire burden. Even if you are single, your parents or other people don’t support the females.’

She went on to state that *'maturity of a society is determined by how a culture treats it's vulnerable. And in this society we have a bad deal'*. It shows that things are difficult for a single parent as the social support is not there and working women become more vulnerable if they are without the support of a male. The above respondent was divorced within 2 years of marriage and was able to share many negative work experiences after her divorce. She was totally shunned by the husband's family and left with a daughter to fend for herself when she was only 25. This is a common practice even amongst the middle classes that after divorce a daughter is left with the mother whereas the son is usually taken by the father's family as sons are considered important carriers of the father's lineage. It would seem that although laws are there to protect the rights of the females in the case of divorce but females are still not supported by the society, she is still very much dependent on her parents and if educated, can support herself and her children.

According to one respondent who had 8 years of experience and had undertaken her PhD from abroad said:

'Women mainly join academics because this is the most respectable job. Like, there were opportunities to work in an NGO (Non-governmental organization), but my husband said, no, you will not work in an NGO. He said, if you want to work in a university, alright, but I will not be able to give you any support if you want to work in an NGO. The credible jobs are of a doctor or a teacher, or even a college teacher is a respectable job'.

The above response suggests that the Pakistani culture is highly genderised and there are specific roles that females are allowed to work in and due to the patriarchal society and male dominance, the mindset of the females is conditioned in a way that they follow the norms without questioning them. Teaching is considered a respectful profession for females besides being a doctor due to segregation of males and females after the primary schooling until university. Most of the times the working women have to sacrifice their choices and career advancement because of societal expectations and lack of support.

One of my respondents who had sixteen years of experience said that, things are improving for the females compared to how they were for their mothers and grandmothers. Technology and advancement, education and economic freedom as well as the awareness of rights is helping in a way to improve female experiences. She said that,

‘Other societal barriers, like any patriarchal society faces them, and most of the eastern belt in the world has a patriarchal society working for them, where man is paramount, and the rules are around that. But, I think, and I am not comparing it with any western civilization, I’m comparing with the time horizon for the Pakistani women, how my grandma and mother used to fear, although she was a very happy woman, compared to what I am today and the younger generation, we are much more liberated. And the men have accepted it over a period of time’.

She along with few other respondents had a positive approach as they said that things are changing with time. There is more awareness due to education as well as economic freedom for working women. Although it is a patriarchal society women being educated are increasingly becoming aware of their rights and things have improved for many females and the society is trying to accept the fact that women are out there in the field.

7.1.7 Marital status and social standing of women academics

My respondents consisted of academics that were married, single or divorced women and exploring their personal experiences of how they are perceived by society and in the workplace is important. What I know from personal experience, which was reinforced by my respondents, is that marital status of women plays an important role as to how they are seen in the society and at place of work hence, the need to explore this complex phenomena. Social stigma attached to divorced women warrants a discussion and therefore all the respondents had a view on this. For instance, one of the respondents who is unmarried with an experience of 4 years discussed the thoughts of male colleagues regarding divorced and unmarried female academics and said,

‘Even at workplaces, this is a hot topic. I share office with two male colleagues, and one of them always asks me, “See when women study too much, they lose their chances of getting married. Just look at our university, majority of the women are either divorced, or haven’t even been married yet.” And I told him, “Sir, I know so many women who are not professionals and they are not married. Don’t you think women deserve better respect whatever their marital status is?” He did not respond. You see Zainab, I am sure you agree with me that this culture is heavily skewed against working women, even in academia. Each time we talk to a male colleague, accusatory fingers are being pointed at us from our colleagues. Being academics they should behave better.’

It is sad to see that at times men in higher educational sector have similar thoughts as the less educated or uneducated men would have. This is somewhat disturbing especially since *‘these so-called educated men should respect women whatever their marital status is’*. Sometimes male perception is that if a female is highly qualified and has studied abroad, she has become very liberal and has low moral values and therefore not suitable for marriage.

Another factor that was discussed by some respondents was that it becomes difficult for a woman to get married if she has passed the age of 30 years and that she won’t be able to find a suitable match because the society’s perception of marriageable age has passed. The preferred marriageable age of females is between 20-26 for many educated middle class families and the society’s thinking is that a girl will not get a good match if she is not married within that imaginary age limit. It is also a strong belief that if the girl is highly educated then it becomes difficult to find a suitable match as she might not get a highly educated person. The general conception is that a highly educated female with experience of studying abroad and exposure to other culture will be very liberal and will not be subservient to the husband.

One of the reasons discussed by the respondent was that *‘due to getting higher education, girls cannot find a suitable match as they have become independent and can make their own decisions and challenge male authority – something that they don’t like.’*

A respondent who is an Assistant Professor and has 10 years of experience and was divorced got very emotional at the attitude and perception of the society for a divorced woman. She said that *'there is no social protection and support for a divorced female in Pakistan. No matter if you have spent 15 years with your husband, on one fine morning divorces you, you have no legal right or share in the property or money you have made through these years and you are given nothing.'* She went on,

'If a woman is divorced, in our society that is not taken well. They think that there is something wrong with her and that's why her husband left her. If she is married and if she does anything different, they would say, that look at her, she is married and or she is a mother and look at what she is doing. If she is unmarried, then she would be treated differently. In our society, a woman is treated differently, whatever her marital status is.'

The above respondent went on to state that there has always been discrimination against women in the Pakistani society. She went on to point out that men's dominance was historically located over many centuries whereby they used religion and culture to reinforce their dominant position by misinterpretations and misuse of religion. Therefore, the default position when a divorce occurs is that the women are at fault. The thought that it may be the husband's fault *'simply does not exist'*. It is much harder for a woman to manage the job but people never realize this.

The situation is not different for single women either as one of the participants highlighted that single and unmarried women are considered an *'open game'*. This creates a vulnerability for those who are unmarried, as the following respondent with a PhD from abroad shared her experiences by saying,

'In university, the identity of people is a little different because they are educated and they have to behave educated, somehow. No matter how they are inside. However, people still ask, "Why aren't you getting married? You're 31 and your biological clock is ticking, will you even be able to have children? You are good looking and your family is good", They are constantly reminding you that your target population has decreased because of your PhD. So, you know, they do talk about this. And you're not really welcomed if you are unmarried.'

It is interesting to note that both male and female are inquisitive about an unmarried woman and keep harassing their unmarried colleagues with questions like '*when are you getting married*' and then making judgments about the female's character which is very frustrating. It shows that everyone, including women, is conditioned in a way that they think a girl should be married by a certain age. It puts pressure on female academics as a respondent indicated that she wants to get married and have a family but it is not in her hands to find a suitable partner especially when she is highly qualified and '*the undue concern of people irritates me*'.

Another respondent who is married and has two daughters indicated that people knew that her husband has a good post and they were very respectful in how they dealt with her. She said that,

'When I was working as marketing manager people thought twice before they talked to me, because I was married and had children. So this kind of thing actually happens all the time. You need some kind of social legitimacy e.g. if you are not a married women you are more vulnerable or if you are divorced then automatically people think that you are out there for them to be frank with'.

This would suggest that when a woman is married, she operates under a safe cultural umbrella and under the protection of her husband so colleagues are more careful. This was elaborated by an unmarried respondent with seven years of teaching experience. She indicated that male support is considered very important for a female in our society. She said that being single she does not attend any informal or formal socializing events, as she does not want any negative stories attached to her character. She further added,

'If there's a single woman, they assume that she's a liberal. They don't understand that we're not liberal like that. We're working because we're trying to pass time productively. We have a brain, we studied. Such behavior from males is discouraging and become a source of dissatisfaction for females'.

The above response shows that females want the mindset of the society to change and regard them as equals and allow them to live their life as they choose. Single highly educated and professional females pose a threat to the males in the society as they cannot accept the fact that women can be independent.

This is potentially problematic since many women do not have such high profile husbands who can give them protection against male attitudes. This leads many women to dress in a particular way i.e. wearing *hijab* or *dupata* (scarf) to appear conservative in order to send out a message that says stay away from me. It would also seem that dress is just one facet of female oppression, even though those expressing opinions were somewhat cautious, as an Assistant Professor articulated,

‘I normally don’t care about what other people think but that being said I personally believe that even when I say that we don’t care about what other people think, we have been socialised in a way that we automatically try to meet other people’s expectations. For example, in a normal day I usually don’t care about wearing *dupata* but if I had to visit any of the elderly members of my family I would make sure that I carry one (*dupata*) with me.’

She went on to say that this was part of her ‘*conditioning*’ however this also varied according to the practices between different provinces. For instance, women in Quetta (Baluchistan) and Peshawar (KPK) are more conservative in appearance compared with those in Islamabad (Punjab) and Karachi (Sind).

The above discussion indicates that female’s experienced different attitudes and judgments from people based on their social standing and marital status in the society.

7.2 Institutional experiences of female academic staff

The data generated shows that there was a tendency in all spheres of Pakistani universities for men to dominate organizational politics and female academics were expected to be subservient; and accept male authority, even from juniors at times. Two female senior managers were a bit apprehensive in sharing their negative

institutional experiences- perhaps they felt that their position might be vulnerable despite having been given assurance that their views would be kept confidential. Female academic responses have been put in a number of categories in Table 8 and will be explored in detail in the sections below.

Table-8 Organizational barriers faced by female academics

Themes	Patterns/ Stimuli
Organizational barriers faced by female academics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. A culture of ‘maleness’ in institutions ii. Harassment at workplace iii. Female academic engagement at work iv. Career progression and management support v. Support by female managers and colleagues vi. Institutional equality policy

7.2.1 A culture of ‘maleness’ in institutions

There was general agreement amongst all respondents that men were in control in most higher education institutions, i.e. they were the ‘*experts*’ or had the ‘*credentials*’ and therefore had the power which they thought gave them the righted down at women. They used ‘*reason*’, ‘*words*’ and their *senior authority* to justify what they were saying. Their primary purpose in departmental meetings was to ‘*manipulate*’ rather than ‘*engage in any meaningful dialogue*’ as one respondent put it. Another respondent stated that the institutional policies had served ‘*them (men) well and protected their interests*’. It would seem that men’s dominant position was enforced and reinforced as the ‘*so-called experts*’ through media and sports. It is also seen that very few women are in the top management positions in Higher Education.

Given that my criteria for sample selection were female academic staff, I was pleased to interview four Heads of Departments to ascertain their experiences. Their experiences were particularly interesting because they made clear their views about working in a male dominated environment from a female’s perspective. The rest of the respondents were Lecturers, Assistant Professors and Associate Professors.

One of the respondents, who was the Head of Department for two years in her university, said that it was hard for a female at times to be managing a Department and said:

‘But again, the society is a big issue for women. Even when I was the Head of Department, if you look at the cultural context, Pakistani men never look at a female as a Head of Department in a good way. They don’t accept it easily. I handled this very tactfully, in a very friendly way. If I had been authoritative, then everyone would have been against me and would have tried to hurt me. Men have this issue that they don’t accept orders from females.’

The above response shows that being a female, who is in a position of authority; you have to be very careful in dealing with issues as *it is against men’s egos to be a subordinate of a female who is very strict and bossy*. They at times challenge you on your competence and attitude, which puts you in a position where you have to keep everyone happy to run the system.

Another respondent who had 30 years of higher education experience, a PhD from abroad and was a Head of Department indicated that she has 60 academics in her department, out of which 50 are males and 10 females and all very respectful to her. She said,

‘In our department, majority of male faculty comprises of lecturers and Assistant Professors. They treat me with immense respect as in terms of experience and age, I’m quite elder than them. The case may be different for young female faculty’.

The above response shows that age and experience are important factors that give credibility to females who hold higher positions in the university. Another respondent who had a PhD from overseas and is an Associate Professor said that she was very articulate and assertive and made sure that her voice was heard,

‘My view is that we need to be seen and heard. Men should not be allowed to be bossy. Personally, I challenge them at every corner because they think being a man gives them a divine right to boss women. You see in Pakistan men use culture and religion to put us down. I use my doctorate to good effect. They respect that I am highly qualified and articulate so they are forced to listen to me. Some of my female colleagues do not do this. They get intimidated too easily. I feel

that unless we stand up for our rights, they (men) will keep trampling us. No one gives up power if they benefit from it.'

According to this Associate Professor, female academics have the knowledge and expertise in their fields and they should be able to challenge the male dominance and speak for their rights but at the same time, some female academics resist in conveying and communicating due to the conditioned social confirmation that has become part of them due to societal low expectations.

One of the respondents, who had seven years of experience, explained her views about 'maleness' in academic institutions and meetings,

'When I went to XYZ University (Peshawar), there were very few females on the staff. I was part of the Board of Governors, and I was the only female there. The environment of KPK (Province) is very different. They were trying to develop curriculum in the graduate board of studies. There were all males in that as well. And there are some different protocols of KPK. In Islamabad, I didn't cover my head, but when I went there, I covered my head like in our culture. I mean, in the meeting. There were many seniors – all men and I was finding it uncomfortable. Those few hours were very hard for me. I wasn't even able to go to the washroom as it was in the meeting room.'

The above response shows that there is an under-representation of females in higher levels of management, which makes it difficult for women to actively participate in staff meetings and therefore their valuable contribution is being lost. The cultural silence expected of female staff is quite common in Pakistani organisations since women are expected to be non-confrontational in face of authority. This leads to continued *male dominance*, as the respondent explained. Women staffs have to compromise in many more ways than a male staff member does. This includes that they have to dress in a particular way, staying silent and respectful in meetings due to certain expectations.

Whilst accepting the above positive viewpoint it needs to be noted that there are some problems. For instance, a view was expressed by a number of respondents that on occasion some female academics may even have been thrust into position of responsibility by benevolent senior managers. Reason may be that these managers

either genuinely care for equality or were being set up in order for them to fail and they may just be ‘pawns’ in a game of chess which was ‘totally controlled’ by those in authority (men). One respondent who is an Associate Professor with 9 years of experience described such staff as ‘appeasers’ and the ‘oppressors (men) were belittling all that is good in the female struggle for equality’. These women, it was pointed out by the respondent ‘were subdued, passive and accepted female subordination, are part of the problem of keeping male hegemony nourished’. These women had also become ‘bona fide experts’ and the management took on-board their opinions as being ‘representative of all female academic opinions’. This led some respondents to describe these women as ‘instrument of male oppression’ since they were colluding with the system.

7.2.2 Harassment at workplace

It was interesting to note that all the respondents were aware of the existence of the institutional policy on harassment. In Pakistan, gender equality for many people, whether it is academia or other facets of public life, means that its main purpose is to stop male harassment of females. This view was shared by many of the respondents in the interview encounters. They went on to suggest that verbal comments are also considered as a form of sexual harassment, furthermore ‘sitting for a long time in a female colleague’s office’ is a common practice in all organisations including universities. This may not sound like an overt act of harassment but given the nature of the work environment it can be perceived as quite threatening. For instance, a divorced colleague was told by her male colleague that ‘I wonder how a man can divorce such a pretty woman like you whom any man aspires to marry’. Many women have to live with such attitudes throughout their working lives. The same respondent went on to say that,

‘The experience of Pakistani-based academics is in sharp contrast to the developed countries in the West where if a male senior colleague makes sexual or derogatory comments such as appearance of a female colleague or sexual joke that makes the female member uncomfortable it can be taken as a form of harassment but here in Pakistan there is no such concept.’

It would seem that females go through these attitudes in their daily work life and that is one of the reasons that they avoid networking with male colleagues at times. According to the respondent, *‘the coping strategy for females is to avoid unnecessary contact with male colleagues and try to ignore any such comments with a smile or change of topic.’*

A respondent with over ten years of teaching experience said that there was an incident of harassment at her university whereby a male lecturer helped a student to get a job. Later he forced her to go out with him and that student came to the respondent, who advised her to make a formal complaint, which she did not,

‘Firstly, they will not even know there is any verbal abuse going on. We are used to it. I mean he told this student that “we will go on a long drive and then stay at a guest house”. He is telling you clearly that “I want to do this thing”. Even then, the girl did not raise her voice against him, because she knows that it would bring disgrace to her family, because she was unmarried. She probably thought that who would marry me if I speak up about this?’

This above response shows that females, especially the young lecturers and unmarried, become more suppressed and afraid if some colleague approaches them and harasses them however, society always blames the females for leading them on and blames women if they report or say anything. In addition, even a female’s dress can become an issue when any harassment is reported i.e. *‘she was wearing provocative clothes’*. A respondent who talks about social issues on different forums discussed and was very upset about the issue saying,

‘How can you expect women to feel safe where people come after you when you speak up against harassment or abuse? A country where the length of your *kameez* (shirt) or the size of your *dupatta* are apparently the reasons as to why you were harassed. When we know the harsh reality that women have to face every day, at home, at work, and outside, then why is it still so hard to believe a woman when she speaks up.’

This supports the viewpoint discussed by the respondent above that females are afraid to speak up against any harassment as they will be blamed and their character

questioned rather than supporting the abused. In Pakistani society, the victim *'becomes someone morally corrupt and the harasser being a male gets no liability.'*

Another aspect discussed by a respondent was that at times in official gatherings, men approach you and give compliments and in Pakistan people think complimenting women is not harassment,

'He kept on giving me compliments and I was showing my annoyance that I didn't like it and he would not behave, so I told him that my husband is on such and such post and then he stopped so I think in Pakistan you need these sorts of protection and some male support otherwise you are up for a lot of harassment.'

The above respondent said that she can handle situations like this confidently as she has the support of her husband but for an unmarried female it becomes a difficult. It would seem that if a woman highlights her treatment it goes against her and if she stays quiet then it is considered as acceptance or weakness.

7.2.3 Female academic engagement at work

Discussing employee engagement with my respondents was very interesting as it gave varied and contrasting opinions about how they see engagement. Most of the respondents said that it depends on the individual and their goals in life and how passionate they are about what they are doing and gender does not matter in that. At the same time some felt that female academic staff were more engaged than their male colleagues however it was also indicated that most female staff existed in the *'margins of the organisation'* in terms of representation and decision making which at times makes them disengaged as well. One of the respondents with 7 years of teaching experience and experience in the corporate sector said,

'I think it depends on you, who you are personally and how much you need the profession in your lives. I think that's what matters. I've seen some males really engaged and I've seen some males who don't even show up. So, it's about how serious they are about their career. Because I am serious about making a career, making a difference since we are here, on this planet, we have to spend time productively. And wherever I

am, I try to give my all. So I think it varies from whatever your goal in life is.'

It shows that engagement is something personal and no one can make you engaged. One of the respondents did say that females are at times 'not that committed' due to their family circumstances as they are juggling with many roles at a time,

'Well, it really varies. Some females are very committed and some are not. Again, it's the same with men. So, I won't generalize. You can further analyze it, there are many causes for that, such as females are over-burdened, they have so many rules applied on them at home as there is a lot of discrimination in households, you know. There are a lot of imbalances at different levels which does impact their performance.'

This respondent suggested that females have so many other roles to play and so many expectations to fulfil that at times they might not be that engaged and committed. Interestingly another academic with 15 years of experience explained the fact that females are more organized and conscious of their responsibilities,

'I have seen that all the women that I have worked with, they were very motivated and professional. Firstly, it is in their nature that they do everything in a very organized way. There is also the thing that they don't want people to say things behind their back. There is even a research on this that women are more honest, whereas gents are the ones to go forward with corruption. Females are scared and worry more about their reputation.'

One of the respondents with 3 years of work experience said that females were more engaged and committed to their work, she said that *'Yes, here I have seen that females do their work with a lot of dedication. They will do it on time and honestly'* This respondent further added that:

'Our performance here is not affected by our work at home. Our health can be affected, physically and psychologically, but not our performance. Females actually take stress upon themselves. The female

academics that I have seen are very stressed as they want to fulfill all roles in the best possible way’.

It is interesting to see the responses and different perspectives about engagement. Some respondents said that females want to complete their tasks on time and care about the students more. They make sure that they follow the deadlines and manage everything in an organized way and are more committed compared to men who take a more relaxed approach to work. It may be argued that women want to give hundred percent to their work and home and that is why they feel more stressed. However, a few of the respondents said that level of engagement does not depend on whether you are a male or female but how serious you are about your career and goals in life.

7.2.4 Career progression and Management support

Gender discrimination in case of female progression and employment was highlighted by various respondents and there was a general view that women faced many more hurdles in their career progression than men. There was recognition that men were more social and good at networking, therefore it was ‘easy for them’ to excel in their careers as compared to the female staff, who lacked market knowledge as well as exposure in certain cases. For instance, one of the respondents said,

‘What I have noticed is that men look after each other when it comes to career progression. They have their own little social clubs and they always meet outside of work where jobs are dished out. Being a female I am effectively excluded’.

Another female Head of Department with seven years of experience said that males are preferred for faculty posts rather than females. She further added that,

‘Frankly speaking, we do have certain reservations for hiring too many females into our staff because there are issues related with females that in a way hinder our goals and requirements for the job, for that matter, for our institution. Because with women there are certain issues involved, like they have to go on maternity leaves and they might have problems with raising their kids.’

At times, these are the issues that are considered when universities are hiring and they may be why they prefer employing males. The other reason can be that males are perceived to be the breadwinners of their families and would stay in the job longer as compared to females. One of the respondents said,

‘Their fear, probably, is that a woman might leave the job at any point in time, because of family pressure or any other thing like you know, her husband gets transferred to some other place or she wishes to start a family. So, why invest and hire a person who could leave the organization down the road. That’s the fear. On the other hand, there’s a person whom the organization might have hired could equally leave that place for a better opportunity, but that’s the chance the management is willing to take’.

There was also a viewpoint that female teaching staff needed to be more focused, a point highlighted by a respondent with four years of experience when she indicated that ‘*women should be more focused with their careers*’ and ‘*show professionalism*’ to get promoted. She outlined her position,

‘I am focusing more on my job than on my family and to be honest, it is the requirement of my job. If I have to progress in my career or if I have to get somewhere in my profession, I have to show more professionalism. At times, I am sacrificing things with my family and thus focusing more on my profession to keep the university management satisfied’.

In contrast to the above view, a Head of Department with over thirty years of teaching experience said that ‘*when it comes to considering someone for a higher position, men are considered and there are a lot of reasons behind it. Men can communicate and negotiate better and can spend more time at office as compared to females.*’ In Pakistani context, women-staff at the earlier years of their job and life face many family problems. At that stage, a lot of them are reluctant to take additional responsibilities. She further added that ‘*they wouldn’t be able to get such positions in the later stage of their careers as they don’t have such initial experience*’.

There was support for the above argument from another Head of Department with six years of experience. She clearly recognized that there was a problem as they do end-up hiring '*more males into our faculty*' and '*we are not supporting our female staff as we should*'. However she also went on to state that '*female pose a lot of problems*' and it becomes difficult for administration to support them. She elaborated,

'When we pose too many family problems even though they are genuine issues which a normal person has to deal with, the management doesn't take it that positively and then at that point they think that maybe it's a liability they are carrying on. Sometimes HR also suggests that rather than taking so many leaves of absence from work and if you are not able to manage your personal life with the work, then you better leave the organization.'

What the above viewpoint shows is that the management in higher education is not supportive of the female staff, although there are more new lecturers attempting to enter the profession. One of the considerations taken in to account when making hiring decisions is asking young women when they are likely to get married. A number of young respondents indicated that this is something that needs to be challenged. One of the respondents added that,

'I don't think there's any other university except for Fatimah Jinnah Women University or other women only universities that have a positive employment practice in place because that's a women's university that supports women.'

All of the female academics said that men have better networks especially in administration, so they get to know about all the schemes and loopholes, which can help in progressing their careers since they are better informed than them because they get the information first. Women cannot network as it is taken negatively and society does not accept and '*the price is far too great in terms of being labelled*'. It would seem that they are usually the last ones to know about any management opportunities. This often means that females' careers become stagnant.

7.2.5 Experience with female managers and colleagues

Most of the respondents highlighted their experience with female managers and colleagues in senior positions. According to them the women who had made it to senior positions in their institutions, *'were not really interested in helping other women in joining them'*. Whilst recognising that it was important for women to progress in their respective institution many respondents pointed that such *'women should help promote other female staff'*. One respondent stated that the females who had made it into senior positions but were not keen to promote equality issues as *'anti-rationalist'* since they were working *'against the interest of female academics'*. It was pointed out that the reason may have been that these women depended on *'male benevolence'*. Further justification comes from a quote from an established Professor with 30 years of experience, who stated that,

'In most of the departments and universities I have observed that women say I have struggled, let the other one (female) struggle as well. My view is that females don't support other females when they reach a higher position. Women feel that giving a higher position to another female would not do justice to that job and she won't be able to cope with the requirements of the job. One of the sayings that people quote here is that there was no female in Margaret Thatcher's government. So, there is a problem.'

It was interesting to listen to this perspective as females did not have a good experience with female managers and they thought that *'when females reach a certain position they want to see other females struggle rather than supporting them which is very upsetting'*. These female managers, it was indicated, would prefer to promote and support male applicants into senior positions rather than females. Now there can be many reasons for this. For instance, they think either the females will not be able to give full attention to the task or they think males would be more likely to listen to them but such practices were criticised,

'I am sure there are those who will act against the interest of other women by excluding them from moving up in the organisation. These women see other women as a threat. Personally, I think these women are

evil since we should all be involved in the struggle against discrimination.'

Another respondent with four years of experience, who is unmarried and studied abroad, was quite angry and emotional in discussing the female management attitude towards other aspiring female colleagues. She explained the reason,

'I used to wear jeans with kurta (shirt), and I don't like to take the dupatta on my head so a colleague from another department stopped me and said, "Can I tell you something as your elder sister?" I said, "Okay". She said, "You wear tights and jeans and it's not good as you teach these big boys, and when they look at your legs, they can get excited." At that time, I couldn't control my tears and I complained to my Head of Department who was a male and he sorted the issue.'

She went on,

'Then there were a couple of other women as well who walked up to me and they said that you're so tall and broad, you should cover yourself properly and I said, it's none of your business. So, harassment comes from the female side as well. They really judge you.'

The above discussion would indicate that aspiring female academics are having a tough time from male managers as well as female managers with each coming from a different perspective.

7.2.6 Institutional equality policy

Views on equality issues were ascertained since this will highlight the females' perspectives in this very important area. Responses indicate that males are the ones making the decisions in the university management with females relegated to a passive role and not involved in institutional decision making even when they may sit on bodies that make policy-making committees. In fact there was a gap in understanding of the term 'equality' with most respondents indicating that this term was used by the management to deal with female harassment rather than equality of

opportunity for employment and employee treatment within the institution. An equality aware respondent who had experience of studying overseas for her PhD described this as allowing the management ‘off the hook’ since it was easier to deal with harassment with some ‘punitive action’ towards an individual whilst the ‘core issue of gender equality was being ignored’. The result of this failure to address equality issues often resulted in female staff being denied development opportunities. When coupled with social stigma of females being unable to go to academic conferences in Pakistan or overseas it was perhaps not surprising that female academics’ careers remained much more stagnant than their male colleagues.

It was pointed out by a number of respondents, especially those who had overseas exposure or had worked abroad, the debate on equal opportunities in Pakistan is in ‘its infancy’ and needed to reflect all aspects of the employee experience from the employment practices to how they were being treated subsequent to their employment. It was up to the university management to bring themselves into the 21st century by embracing the equality agenda as the following respondent with an overseas-acquired PhD and 10 years of experience articulated,

‘The problem we have, not just in academia but all sectors of Pakistan society, is that there is no real understanding of equal opportunities when it comes to gender issues. Providing equality training is fine however unless this is attended by senior managers and females who are the decision makers and then followed by action it really is a waste of time. We have a bizarre situation in Pakistan with senior managers all ascribing to equality however very little is done to address the imbalances that exist in their institutions when it comes to employment issues.’

Another lecturer with 6 years of experience said that she feels that young lecturers are kept out of the loop and their ideas and inputs are not taken into consideration, which puts them in a situation where they are afraid to exert their rights. She went on to say that the management needs to take the equality agenda seriously in support of female staff,

‘However what they have to do is look at all areas of equality agenda. For instance, do women get equal opportunity to training, career

development, research opportunities or promotion? I feel that these issues need urgent action.'

There was also a view from quite a few respondents that the management looked towards a 'tokenistic' or the 'lone woman' to sit on certain committees i.e. someone who would lobby on behalf of all women on equality issues and harassment committees. The tokenistic representation was criticised as '*wasteful*', '*ill-conceived*' and '*working against the interest of women academics*', as the following associate professor pointed out,

'They want a woman to sit on equality or harassment committee so that they can say 'we have female representation or we have female opinion' on an issue to do with gender. In fact this works against the interest of women since it allows them to write in reports that they have done something about gender equality. The reality is that this is nothing but tokenism and does more harm than good.'

These women, it was pointed out, were developing their own careers and *not 'really interested in promoting equality for other women'*. This led one respondent to describe them as '*opportunists who were living in the pockets of the management*'. Another respondent labelled such women as '*our enemies*' since they were '*pushing the female struggle for equality backwards due to having a selfish attitude that only benefited themselves*'. It was pointed out that women in the higher position, which are very few, tend to agree with the male majority viewpoint who made decisions and policies which are not beneficial for female academics.

7.3 Respondents views on inequality and injustice in society

It would seem that most respondents were not happy with their treatment in society or their experiences in academia but at the same time, they were constrained by a '*conservative set of values*' whether it was based on cultural norms or religious constraints. For instance, a respondent stated,

'We are talking about a society where you are striving for gender equality, but you have not redefined the roles and responsibilities and

the basic definitions of being men and women. If you do not redefine the fundamentals and you are striving for something that is really far-fetched, it really complicates the situation rather than making it better.'

One of the respondents said that she remembered recalling a talk by Chimamanda Ngozi who is a novelist and feminist from Nigeria and said,

'Why can't a woman be as human as a man and why is women empowerment a threat for men. We need to work together for this equality and change the culture as people make culture and not culture makes people.'

However a minority of respondents were equally vocal in saying that at times women who are educated do not stand up for their rights nor support other women even when they saw injustice,

'Because we co-exist we need to understand masculinity too, in order to fight for equality and promote femininity. However most women I know, despite having the opportunity and talent and being educated, are themselves patriarchal and don't take initiatives to support other females. They have their eyes closed to social problems being faced by women.'

She went on to state that,

'Most women don't take opportunities as they wait to get married. Even some educated women think that working women are not family oriented. They miss the point that if they talk about equality, they have to share the burden with their partner too. And in worst cases, some think that 'good women' don't work-and I am talking about women thinking here not men! IRONY!'

The power discourse and socio religious expectations do not let females think beyond the constrained and gendered role expectations and at times it becomes difficult for them to cross these set boundaries. Another respondent also talked about resisting the male hegemony and said that academics need to raise their voice,

‘The norms we live by were created by the generations before us. Unless females take a proactive role to speak up sensibly on the very sensitive issues, the future generations will suffer the same fate. Social justice is the prerequisite for lasting peace.’

Another respondent said,

‘The main problem of our society is that most educated people are not ready to use intellect to analyse huge injustice in the society. Religion is misinterpreted by men and used to justify gender-based violence. On top of that women themselves at times are not ready to understand and take a stand as their thinking has become patriarch.’

The above response shows that even the educated people often ignore injustice and gender bias in the society. This led to a respondent stating that ‘*females have been so submissive and constrained that they cannot critically think beyond those realms and boundaries set by the social expectations*’. She went on to point out the social dilemma faced by Pakistani women,

‘The most vulnerable are the most stigmatized! Unfortunately educated women in our society find it difficult to open their eyes to the injustice around them’.

Her viewpoint was that media, especially television where the so-called religious scholars make pronouncements thereby this medium, is used by the oppressor to subjugate the oppressed especially women so they remain ‘*subservient to men*’. I found these views very interesting especially in light of the feminist literature that I had been reading. One of the respondent with six years of experience said that males and females co-exist and there should be a balance,

‘I am a feminist, and I am a very proud feminist, but I would not entirely throw myself into women’s rights. I think there needs to be a balance. I would also work on men too. For me the approach for fighting for women’s rights is multi-pronged. We coexist with men in a society, so we have to work with them too. I think in Pakistan it will take 70 years to break this gender gap.’

According to the above respondent, in order to talk about feminism and equality, we need the help to change the mindset of the men as well. She further added, *‘if you are not telling them what is wrong and if you are only working for the other half (women) it will not take you anywhere.’* According to her men can support women in having an equal position in the society, which is not the case due to the patriarchal mindset.

7.4 Summary

This chapter discussed a variety of gender related issues that led to frustration among Pakistani academics working in the higher education sector. The chapter started with looking at female academics’ personal circumstances from childhood followed by their professional experiences.

Girls from a very young age were coerced into religion and performing household duties by both sets of parents whereas boys were given time and space to venture out to perform what could be stereo-typed as male activities. This did not change throughout their lives. Parents were much more likely to support male education by providing them a better learning environment i.e. better schooling or tutoring, from inception to adulthood. View was that the girls’ education was just a vehicle for them getting married therefore relatively less important than boys’ education. Marriage for many often meant end of education due to husband’s family pressure. There were some instances where husbands were supportive of their partner’s education however, this was more likely where husband and wife lived away from in-laws. The respondents also indicated that there were also shoots of resistance with those like themselves standing up and demanding the right to acquire higher education.

The interviewed academics indicated that the reason for acquiring education included self-fulfillment, to satisfy the craving for knowledge, wanting to impart knowledge and contribute to the future of society. Education also gave these young women economic independence, which was seen to be important especially if their marriage broke down. It also led to transformation of their lives since they became more confident and secure. Those who had acquired higher education from overseas were particularly vocal in recognising that women should have greater freedoms in

society. These women openly challenged the inequality that they experienced in Pakistani society.

It was generally acknowledged by all the respondents that they had to operate in a patriarchal society so the world of work and home were intertwined. This often led to a certain amount of tension at home since finding the right balance between home and work created conflict. The unsupportive family structure, especially from in-laws, further exacerbated the respondents' position in the family and work. The married women were expected to perform multiple tasks, such as attend to household duties that included cooking and cleaning, work, attend births, deaths, marriages etc. of extended families, which compounded their difficulties. On the other hand some respondents indicated that they were fully supported, especially by their husbands, when they wanted to acquire higher education or joined academia.

There was a major concern that cultural norms and religious interpretations were militating against the interest of women in Pakistan. Islam preaches equality however, the religious fraternity use out of context quotes to subjugate women to accept male authority. This leads to an acceptance of patriarchal values of male dominance even among many women across all segments of Pakistani society. The respondents consistently pointed out the difficulty of challenging this conservative male mind-set. This particularly applies to situations where a female is divorced or single and her social standing in society, even in educational settings makes them vulnerable to innuendos and worse.

The institutional experience of female academics would suggest that they are expected to be silent members of the academic community, which is male dominated. Many female respondents indicated that gender harassment is common and ignored even though there were policies in place. The women fear that their reputation would suffer if they reported a sexual harassment incident since it could potentially lead to their career becoming stagnant. This leads to a culture of silence among the female staff. This is not too surprising since their career development is controlled by men, through close contacts with those working in administration and without management support, little career progress was likely. The respondents indicated that whilst institution policies on equality existed its focus was on sexual

harassment and there was no understanding of broader gender equality. Somewhat surprisingly, there was also a view that in cases where there were female managers, there was also a preference by them to appoint male staff. This would indicate that Higher Education Commission has a major responsibility to educate senior managers to ensure that there is genuine equality for females in higher education.

Having presented female academic staff's views of various aspects of their experiences the stage is now set for me to discuss my findings in light of the results obtained in this chapter.

Chapter 8: Discussion of results

8.0 Introduction

The previous chapter analysed the findings that emerged from thematic analysis of the in-depth interviews from the Pakistani female academic respondents. The analysis of the interviews shows that their upbringing, family support, education, social status and the academic work scenario influenced the respondent's experiences. Research findings also highlight that there are many shared experiences among the academics due to the social and cultural expectations that are linked to being a female in Pakistani society.

My research acknowledges that there are significant differences between my respondents and the rest of the women in Pakistan due to their high level of education and middle class upbringing. My respondents had a somewhat privileged upbringing, which availed them the opportunity to get higher education that ordinary Pakistani women are much less likely to have had. Therefore the views expressed need to be taken in the socio-cultural context of their upbringing. Similarly, there were also differences in the context of national boundaries which may have had an influence on their responses depending on which province the respondent comes from as well as whether they came from a city or had a rural background (as discussed in Chapter 2). A woman in the city is likely to have values that are more liberal and a higher level of awareness than the one who comes from a rural area. Having said that, I would also point out that all my respondents belonged to middle class therefore the differences in general outlook were relatively minor and they had more in common due to their class rather than regional variances. In either case, when women joined academia, they were equally and likely to experience difficulties due to the masculine nature of the organisations.

In this chapter, findings and themes identified from the data will be discussed in relation to the research objectives and the literature reviewed in the previous chapters. The chapter is divided into 3 main areas of discussion, which are cultural and social experiences for female academics, female career journey in relation to

their institutional experience and lastly the coping strategies adopted by the female academics within their institution in light of what many termed as a conservative and genderised society.

8.1 Cultural and social experiences for female academics

Female academic careers in Pakistan are heavily influenced by family circumstances. Factors include husband and family support, number and age of children, cultural norms and religious values. When discussing cultural and societal issues, my findings clearly indicate that the family circumstances of Pakistani women are burdened by repressive socio-cultural norms. This viewpoint coincides with Morley and Crossouard's (2015) findings in a study for British Council on women in higher education in South Asia which shows that low participation rate of females reflects socio-economic, gender and regional inequalities. My research indicates that little has changed in the lives of Pakistani academics. There was a general overview among respondents that when Pakistani women overcome these obstacles they then have to face a number of other hurdles at work that militate against them developing a successful career that their male counterparts are much less likely to face.

There was an agreement among all the respondents that the intertwining of culture and religious virtues continues to shape male attitudes in all aspects of Pakistani society including academia. This is despite the principle of gender equality in Pakistan, which is enshrined in the national constitution and various laws. It would seem that the oppressive cultural norms and religious beliefs are taken out of context and used as exploitative tools to subjugate women. It appears that the experiences of Pakistani academics are similar to a study of Malaysian academics by Shah (2018) who suggested that in Muslim countries, gender discrimination and lack of equal opportunities become a more dominant phenomenon due to the gendered role expectations, cultural and belief system. I would argue that discrimination against women in institutional settings is quite widely practiced which violates their basic human rights. All respondents agreed that the 'backward' cultural or religious practices need to be weeded out in the 21st Century since the manipulators (male managers) have always tried to justify female subjugation by referring to the cultural and religious norms. My findings agree with the statement by Rehman *et al.* (2017)

that the female experience in Pakistan is characterised by poverty, ignorance, the bondage of a repressive system and now, the aggressive onslaught of born-again fundamentalism, the Pakistani woman bears a heavy cross. This is true for many women in developing countries, especially the majority Muslim ones, where power lies with men due to the patriarchal norms, which are further reinforced by the cultural, religious or societal norms.

One of the interesting findings from my research is that the age and marital status of female academics defines how women were viewed at workplace. This is a new finding and cannot be related to any existing research that I have come across. Some of my respondents were married with children and their husbands were in professional jobs whereas some were single and few were divorced. The interviews showed that women who were married felt more secure and were 'respected' at work whereas those who were single and had acquired higher education, whilst commanded a certain respect for their academic achievements, were also stigmatized at times for not being married. Rather surprisingly, stigma came from married female colleagues too who took on a certain 'virtue of holiness'. It was not that these highly educated women were averse to getting married; in fact, it was quite opposite- a point, which was articulated by a number of female academics who had acquired their PhDs from abroad. They indicated that it became difficult for them to find a suitable marriage partner as there was a perception in society that having been abroad to study and attending conferences made them liberal minded. In Pakistan being 'liberal' amounts to having low moral standards. Therefore, these females were faced with two problems. The first problem being that they were too educated and likely to have confrontational attitudes and therefore less likely to compromise. Secondly, many of these academics had gone past the traditional age for marriage, which is often regarded to be between 21 and 25. Some of my respondents were in their late twenties or early thirties, which would suggest that they had to face the negative perception of the society for which getting married is the norm.

Another key finding of my research was that divorced women in the Pakistani culture had emotional experiences of how they are treated as few of my respondents were divorced. Divorce is a taboo in Pakistani culture and brings disgrace to the whole family even though it is a women's legal right. Pressures comes from the family and

society. The result is a woman often prefers to stay in a relationship, even in an abusive one, for the sake of her children. Divorced women faced further hardships since there is no or little support from society or government. With husbands often paying minimum maintenance allowance for the children women often faced financial hardships. These findings are unique for the cultural settings of South Asian or developing countries where staying in marriage is an ultimate priority for women and divorce is considered a disobedience and public defiance. This somehow links with Malik and Courtney (2011) who state that females in all sectors of work, including higher education, although are familiar of their rights, face many hurdles, which stop them from exercising their rights. Reason being that it is considered undesirable for a woman to go to the courts and ask for divorce or inheritance for the fear of being alienated and ostracised by their family members and society.

There was an overwhelming viewpoint among the respondents that children were socialised from a very early age as to their role in society and the expectations related to them. This resulted in the male child having greater freedom whereas the female child had less freedoms and limited opportunities. There are certain expectations linked to females in the society that restricts their mental and physical boundaries. Pakistan being a patriarchic society where the definition of a good woman is the one who stays within the four walls, sounds similar to the ‘respectable femininity’ concept which is referred to a set of behavioural norms commonly linked to the 19th and early 20th centuries (Fernando and Cohen, 2014; Ansari 2016). In the Victorian era, British women achieved respectability by adhering to moral rules and gendered expectations relating to behaviour and appearance, dressing up modestly and demonstrating self-restraint (Radhakrishnan, 2009). This concept resonates with my research findings as women are expected to behave in a certain way at the workplace and the society in order to be accepted.

Due to the social expectations and norms, most of the women’s time is being spent at home, especially after giving birth to children, whereby the kitchen and home dominates the female activity. This has results in a reduction of educational and work opportunities.

In most cases extra tuition was provided to the male child in Pakistan to ensure that he achieved better grades which could potentially take him to better universities and later enter the world of work as the main breadwinner. This phenomenon was equally true of many middle class families. The female respondents who participated in my research were clearly exceptions who bucked the trend by acquiring higher education and then entering the world of work with the support of their families. This is a massive problem in many Muslim societies where culture and religion are used to legitimise female subordination however there are no easy answers since challenging societal norms is a very difficult task. This is in agreement with the findings of Shah and Shah (2012) which discussed the issues of women college heads in the context of Pakistan about the power discourse and the subordination and depowering of the females with the interpretations of religion as well.

I argue that Pakistani women have to look towards more progressive societies such as Lebanon, Malaysia and Turkey, which have a large Muslim population and generally considered as being relatively conservative, where women have got equal participation in the workplace. Whilst the notion of gender equality in these societies cannot be compared with that in the West as culture and religion is much integrated in these societies, there is recognition that women must become part of the economic activity for the betterment of a nation. A large body of knowledge that highlights the organizational and societal gender-based inequalities (Thanacoody *et al.*, 2006; Tlaiss, 2014; Shah, 2018) support my findings of Pakistani women.

8.1.1 Work-life balance and multiple identities

The issues of work-life conflict and multiple identities were consistently pointed out by all of the respondents as being significant factors in the lives of working women. My findings suggest that, despite their middle class upbringing, Pakistani working women found it difficult to compartmentalize home and work as men could do, since both required simultaneous attention due to the complexity of domestic life. Indeed, there was an interdependence of work and family duties amongst all respondents whatever their position or level of seniority. Respondents indicated that there was a conflict between work and home life and they found it difficult to achieve a balance

between these two conflicting demands. This had a negative impact on female career development. The problem appeared to be more acute in cases where the women were married and had children. These findings support Amin and Malik (2017) study which discussed the impact of work life balance on employee performance in the context of Pakistan. My findings also support previous research by Tlaiss and Kauser (2011) in the context of Lebanon, which discussed the impact of gender, family and work on the career advancement of Lebanese women managers. My findings show similarity to the above studies due to the patriarchal nature of the society and traditional gendered roles. Women are socialised and conditioned in such a way that their family responsibilities, marriage and children become their priority and it becomes more difficult for a working woman to manage all these roles without support. In my research findings, even women at senior level recognized the cultural and religious constraint despite their positional power. It links to the study of Shah (2015) where she compared the findings of 11 female only college heads and 8 women Vice Chancellors and found that primacy of family, moral and cultural codes and accommodation of male perspective was important for them.

My findings are consistent with a study undertaken by Ahmad *et al.* (2011) when they researched work-life conflict of Pakistani working females in the banking sector in Attock (KPK) and Islamabad. They argued that strategic support was necessary for the women in the banking sector since the dual role having to be performed by women resulted in domestic conflict as well as negatively impacted their career development. Similarly a study by Khan (2014) of conflict among working mothers in UAE also came to the conclusion that there was interdependence of work and family and supports my findings. Mothers had to perform dual roles, which led to conflict between the two roles and therefore negative work outcomes. It would seem that female academics in Pakistan are also facing similar problems to those working in the banking sector. Therefore, despite having acquired high level of education from within Pakistan or abroad, the academics in the teaching profession were also experiencing career development frustrations. I argue that the genderised roles are militating against the female academics whereby they are having to face additional pressures compared to men in their daily lives at home and work. This is partly cultural but also the men are using religion to reinforce the virtues of a patriarchal society.

My findings also coincide with McIntosh *et al.* (2012) study of Western women when they observed that family life had a major negative impact on female careers. However, I argue that there is even greater demand on the Pakistani females in terms of time and commitment to fulfill the role of being an academic and more so if she is a mother due to little support. It would seem that working female academics have to perform a dual role, one at workplace and the other at home. My findings suggest that whatever career a female follows, whether she is a mother, a wife or a daughter, she is expected to take care of the household responsibilities which has a negative effect on her career which leads to a high level of stress. Whilst this may not be different to that which women perform in the West, the major difference is that family often means extended family which can consist of many members hence a lot of family commitments. It may be argued that the position of women in Pakistan is that they are living under the watchful eye of 'male hegemonic subordination, polarized gender stereo-types', as a respondent said, adding that there are low expectations in terms of career progression for women. The experience of Pakistani female academics is similar to working women in many other countries as found in a study of UAE women by Khan (2014) found it. She concluded that there was a close relationship between family involvement and organizational commitment. This interdependence, I argue, plays a significant role in female career development since the pressure of domestic commitments led to low self-esteem amongst my respondents. My findings are similar to Amin and Malik (2017) study in the context of Pakistan, which discussed that the impact of work-life balance improves employee performance and depends on supportive culture, autonomy, work family enrichment and flexible work arrangements.

It was difficult for men in Pakistani society to acknowledge that females need to be independent and can choose a career by themselves. My findings suggest that we were living in a period where most nations in South Asia are experiencing growth in terms of economic development with greater opportunities for women whereas gender equality in Pakistan remains an issue that is largely unaddressed. This was the case in all spheres of organizational life. A working woman is largely considered a burden and liability despite her earning capability and despite both husband and wife working, females are less likely to be supported and were expected to take care of the

domestic roles. My findings coincide with Tajlili's (2014) study of work-life integration where she discussed that if a woman immerses herself in her professional pursuit, she is considered a bad mother and if she takes time off to be with her children, she is thought to be neglecting work which puts her in a conflicting situation and work life balance becomes unachievable. Females were often left juggling their responsibilities in order to perform their domestic and professional roles. My research findings also agree with conclusions of Shah and Shah (2012), Khan (2014) and Shah (2018) that female's careers are blighted by a lack of support in domestic and social settings. These include having to look after extended family members, number of children, other family commitments and domestic chores. It seems that, as Oakley (2000) states, women's careers compared to men's careers are multidimensional and multifaceted with very few opportunities provided to women in organizational structure, it is the same for Pakistani academics. Even though most of Oakley's studies were conducted in USA the above discussion would suggest that the idea of work and career development in Pakistan are based on the traditional models where women are expected to perform and compete at work like males in additions to their personal obligations in the house.

My research indicates that there are major implications for the female career if her burden at home and at work is not formally recognised since the working woman is likely to be mentally and physically exhausted and thus will be unable to devote time to her career development. If the women continue along their path of having to perform household responsibilities in addition to discharging her work duties it will lead to her exhaustion which may make her think that her career is less important than a man's which is a perception that has already been embedded in her psyche from childhood (Ahmad *et al.*, 2011; Fakhr *et al.*, 2016). Therefore my argument here is that support from the family is essential in order to achieve a balance between competing roles of the two-earning couples even though it may be challenging especially for the career minded women as men's careers are more likely to be prioritized due to the cultural and religious norms (Tlaiss, 2015). In addition, not looking for benevolence, I also argue that men, especially those from middle class background, need to stand up and challenge the societal, cultural and religious norms where men go to work and women are expected to stay at home. The progressive men need to become exemplars for the rest of society by taking greater responsibility

for the household chores and supporting their working spouses as this will help in creating a perception that women are their equals. These acts, although may appear to be localized, are important and will help in challenging patriarchal perceptions and contribute towards creating a more equal society in Pakistan.

My findings also suggest that in some instances women are forced to abandon or shelve their academic careers at the point of getting married and become homemakers due to pressure from husband or his immediate family as well as perceptions from broader society. Husbands and the family, into which the women marry, prefer a woman not to work, especially in the early years of the marriage. I would argue that a possible reason for this is that men in Pakistan often feel insecure about the social mixing of their newly acquired wife. This behaviour is embedded in cultural practices and encouraged by those in position of power who often find religion a convenient vehicle to enforce their conservative views. For instance, in Pakistan we have a 'rigid, restrictive and often misleading interpretation of the status of women in Islam' (Ejaz, 2007, p. 19) driven by conservative clergy. There is a concern that women who are effectively being forced to 'withdraw from work', deprives institutions of valuable intellectual raw material and knowledge gained over many years being lost. Furthermore, it leads to female marginalization and devaluation of the female career aspiration, which is neither good for the women nor for society. I strongly claim that devaluing the careers of women send a signal to the future generation of young women that their careers are not as important as those of their male counterparts do. Given that teaching is considered to be a relatively 'safer' career for young women coming out of universities, it is important that this is further enforced by seeing more female role models in position of authority at the higher education. This is likely to encourage more young women to enter the teaching profession (Shah and Shah, 2012) and contribute towards female emancipation. The findings show that the struggle for equality is long however it is through these acts that the chains of domestic enslavement can be challenged (Shaukat *et al.*, 2014).

8.1.2 Gendered Roles

Pakistani female academics experiences fall in line with all patriarchal societies, especially in developing countries, whereby a married woman coming back from work is expected to carry on performing (or having to organise) household duties such as cooking, feeding and cleaning the house whilst her husband rests. This would suggest that being a university lecturer does not give a female academic that much free time at home as she needs to prepare for the next day lectures, research, do marking or carry out other administrative duties. My findings are similar to Shaukat and Pell (2016) who states that discharging gender-related domestic responsibilities by women, which have been drilled into responding Pakistani academics from a young age, mean that they perform these responsibilities undaunted. Women academics find themselves in this position due to their personal histories, circumstances as well as societal norms, which are heavily skewed towards male dominance. My findings link to Syed *et al.* (2005) observations that modesty, gender segregation and inhibition are strong and explicit features of Muslim societies and act as a barrier for women to participate in employment.

My findings also show that women, unlike their male counterparts, face important career questions when they are married and have children. For instance, women have to make a choice whether to take a career break when they have children or keep on working due to economic necessity. Should they take a career (temporary) break or leave their job permanently? Should they listen to their spouse or family or quit for the sake of child rearing? I would argue that these questions are more relevant in a country like Pakistan where the culture is male dominated and women are expected to prioritise family by sacrificing their chosen career paths or opting to select those careers considered to be more suitable and acceptable for females. The findings of the current study support the arguments of Mainiero and Sullivan (2005) who stated that women's careers are relational as compared to men's careers since women have to wear multiple hats in order to attend their numerous responsibilities such as family and workload.

My research findings suggest that many young female academics in Pakistan experience other restrictions at work, which further enforce conservative behaviour

whereby religion is used to legitimise this. For instance, there is a strict code of dress at work and male and female managers have an expectation of female staff to dress conservatively i.e. no tight jeans, having scarves etc. Whilst this may sound reasonable for many, it also sends a message to the female staff that they have to conform to societal values, which are conservative. It seems that institutional management, both male and female, are actively promoting behavioral norms in the workplace, which are endorsed by society. This conservatism was also influencing other values, such as men and women are often being discouraged from any kind of casual dialogue; less contact with male colleagues to keep the relationship formal; one-to-one meetings between male and female staff are kept to a minimum and so on. These findings show connection with the studies by Shah and Shah (2012) in the context of Pakistani female heads of women colleges. They found that the women are working under greater pressure because of the social norms and having to care for their reputation due the concept of *izzat* (honour) of the family. This makes them to remain silent, invisible and immobile and puts them in a vulnerable position 'in the name of cultural and religious appropriateness' (Shah, 2009, p. 20).

Another issue that emerged from my analysis indicates that academia and broader society in Pakistan, has to grapple with is the female staff harassment by male colleagues which sometimes includes derogatory or disparaging language full of sexual innuendoes. Respondents consistently pointed at this aspect of male behaviour. The problem seemed much more acute when it came to male attitudes, regarding their unmarried female colleagues and those that were divorced. This often left the female staff feeling helpless since neither society nor institutions recognised this as a problem. It seems that there is a failure to identify this as a problem even in the academia where one is expected to have more understanding and sensitivity due to their higher level of education and the middle class upbringing of academic staff. I would argue that there is a need to redefine harassment so that it highlights the above behavioral traits. These behavioral norms are similar to those discussed by Yousaf and Schmiede (2016) and Qureshi (2016) in their study of Pakistani Higher Education harassment issues.

All of my respondents were quite vocal in asserting their viewpoint in challenging the female genderised roles and social expectations linked to them. It was interesting

to note that those who were openly challenging the negative aspects of Pakistani culture and societal attitudes were careful not to be critical of religion as it is considered to be a sensitive issue. This again shows the conservative nature of the Pakistani society where women are not allowed to question or challenge things openly. These women often used a variety of social media platforms to highlight their issues and to galvanize resistance to male authority. Many of these women academics acquired their doctorates from overseas universities and were exposed to greater freedoms, which gave them the strength to challenge some of the male hegemonic powers.

On a positive note, it would seem that working females had the flexibility of leaving their child in care of a family member. This fitted in with the acceptable cultural norms, which do not allow females to have a fulltime job if their children are not taken care of by family members or relatives. It appears that more recently it has become common for working females, who are often middle class, to leave their children attended by a 'maid' (servant) since it not too expensive. Some female academics with young families who often found themselves at the lower rank of the university hierarchy had no choice but to use the service of a maid. This allowed both partners to work. It would seem that these findings resonate with the studies by Rab (2010) and Tlaiss and Kauser (2011) whereby they concluded that where both partners worked it was quite normal for them to employ a maid to look after their children and do household duties. In concluding, I would say that the maid culture has become much more common for the middle classes families since females that are working can afford to have hired help to take care of their children and perform household duties.

My findings also showed that women were more committed and engaged in their work than men and tried to balance their work and personal life despite the many challenges they faced. Most young female academics indicated that they had to do the housework after coming home from work whether their husband was working or not since it was considered her obligatory duty to serve the family and in-laws if they lived in a joint families system. This resulted in the working women often doing double duties compared to their male colleagues. These findings are consistent with the study by Umer and Zia-ur-Rehman (2013). One hopes that the free time resulting

from the utilising of maids will allow female academics to have a better quality of life at home, to allow them to develop their careers with the knowledge that their offsprings and the house is being looked after.

In conclusion, I would argue that women are not looking for benevolence from males but to be treated as equal to their male colleagues. This places a significant responsibility on the progressive men whether it is in the house or at work.

8.2 Career journey and institutional experience

On a general level, all respondents in my research were committed to their profession and the academic life since it gave them ‘a sense of freedom’ which resulted in personal satisfaction as well as provided them financial independence in what they described as a ‘male dominated and conservative society’.

One of the key findings that emerged from my interviews is that there was also recognition and even a fear by many respondents that due to a lack of professional employment opportunities in the country they could easily be replaced by a male or even female staff member. More disturbingly some female managers also held this view, which confirms the ‘queen bee’ syndrome discussed by Mavin (2008). Reason given was that young women were likely to get married or go on maternity leave whereas males are able to stay longer. This mode of thinking has grave consequences for potential female applicants and the country since a nation that fails to utilise young talent whether it is male or female is likely to develop less slowly. This rather jaundiced view of female work contribution remains prevalent in Pakistani society.

Respondents expressed concern that getting a job in education was a very competitive and is not always based on merit or ability to do a job but on gender of the applicant as well as ‘*who you know*’. Respondents also pointed out that in many instances men were preferred for the job as young women were likely to have child rearing and other responsibilities which are taken negatively while hiring people. The respondents had a concern that if they take longer maternity leave or become unwell, they might lose their job.

Most of the respondents also pointed out that there was a lack of childcare centers in the universities and little flexibility in working hours. Similarly, the maternity leave is only granted for 3 months and the female academic is expected to be performing and contributing hundred percent on joining back with very little support. My findings coincide with a study of parenthood and its negative impact on female career progression by McIntosh *et al.* (2012) and Tlaiss (2015). They concluded that motherhood has a negative impact on the career of a female as compared to a male due to the institutional failure to give career breaks and reducing working hours for women with young children. My research findings suggest that in Pakistan the difficulties experienced by young working mothers are much more difficult and therefore detrimental to their careers. Having a child often means an end of a career for many women since the concept of maternity leave is a relatively new one and career break often means ‘end of a career’ since re-entry into the profession is not always assured. Given the lack of opportunities in the teaching profession and increasing competition with more women wanting to join, there are a significant number of challenges faced by women.

There was also a view among many of my respondents that men are considered to be the breadwinners in family settings since they were expected to financially support not only their immediate family but their parents and younger siblings. Support for this argument can be found in a study by Shah (2018) of Malaysian universities, which concluded that traditional ideology of male domination is prominent in most Muslim societies. This somewhat devalues the working female’s role to being less important than a man’s role which poses a major problem in that either the women are excluded from work due to negative cultural and religious norms or due to bad employment practices. It is a societal problem and it is likely to take a long time to address this. Having said this, the number of female students entering higher education (48%) in Pakistan is almost in par with male entrants and it is hoped that more will overcome the barriers inherent in the system to become lecturers in universities.

There also appeared to be less support and facilitation of female academic staff requirements in institutions, which were largely male dominated. It seems that when the issue of gender equality was discussed at institutional level it often related to

women's mistreatment i.e. harassment, rather than equality in terms of employment practices which relates to the research conducted by Morley and Crossouard (2015). This needs to be looked at by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan since they are the body responsible for providing direction to institutions. My findings suggest that whilst harassment issue is essential, equality has to include all issues that lead to females being discriminated. This requires a fundamental shift in institutional thinking. The starting is a recognition that management masculine behavior is unacceptable.

8.2.1 Masculine Academic Institutions

One of the key findings from my research is that universities in Pakistan, like many other organisations in the country, are masculine by nature, which limits the career progression opportunities of female academic staff. We should not be surprised by this since higher education institutions have been shaped by men therefore their main purpose was to essentially serve the perceived societal needs which were determined by men. This historical development of higher education is true for all societies as articulated by Caplan and Caplan (2009) and Agarwala (2015).

The elitist nature of higher education in Pakistan means that opportunities for women to enter as students (this has changed more recently) or staff are often limited. When men become managers they exercise their authority to maintain status quo which they have been trained for from an early age. It showed that organisations in developing countries and to a lesser extent in developed countries remain masculine in terms of their organizational culture with a lack of opportunity for adequate female networks, female mentors and role models, work and family imbalances and therefore backward whereas the developed countries are carrying the torch of equality by taking concrete actions. These findings are consistent with a study by Probert (2005) of two prestigious Australian universities who concluded that gender based discrimination exist in appointments, promotion and workload. Support for this viewpoint can be found from academic opinion in Western institutions (Thanacoody *et al.*, 2006; Shuck and Wollard, 2010) as well as in developing countries (Tlaiss and Kauser, 2010; Shah and Shah, 2012; Shah, 2018). My research

findings concur with these observations in that gender-based discrimination in recruitment, promotion, performance appraisal, and training and development opportunities was a common practice in Pakistani higher education institutions. This endorses the patriarchal and masculinity nature of society where traditional ideologies of male domination prevail whereby men pursue careers whilst most of the women are expected to play a domestic role. Women in these societies are often socialised from a very young age to accept male domination and later their authority. This results in uneven power being bestowed on men, which becomes the norm in subjugating women, which is similar to Shah and Shah (2012) research about Women College Heads in Pakistan which discussed that practices and power discourses.

My findings indicate that life for many Pakistani female academics is about being caught with the weight of male dominance and exclusion at workplace and society in general. Their overwhelming experience was one of male authority, suppression and ‘women in academia were effectively outsiders’, underrepresented and invisible which is supported by the Kemp *et al.* (2015) study about workplace identity of women in academia. My findings are consistent with an earlier study by Tlaiss and Kauser (2010) of Lebanese universities who concluded that women managers’ experienced gender-based discrimination in recruitment, promotion, performance appraisal, and training and development opportunities. A more recent study by Shah (2018) of Malaysian universities also suggests that gender inequities are deeply embedded in organisational and social structures in most Muslim countries. I argue that there are many similarities and relevance as the culture and religion in Lebanon and Malaysia is somewhat similar to Pakistan. It has a major impact on how females conceptualize the power discourse, which sees men in leadership roles and women are there to obey.

My findings also show that many Pakistani female academics exist below the organizational radar screen by often keeping silent in meetings since challenging the status quo effectively could mean that they would be labeled as ‘trouble makers’ which could further curtail their career from progressing or in extreme they could be victimized by their male managers. I argue that male domination of senior position may be a common experience of most academic institutions in developing countries.

This practice in Pakistan is possibly more acute due to the patriarchic nature of society as well as the general conservatism, which is a hallmark of most Muslim societies (Shah, 2018). Whilst this is clearly and historically located, there is concern that Pakistani female academics are suffering in silence since the male domination is a powerful phenomenon and challenging it was considered to be difficult by most of my respondents as an Assistant Professor articulated ‘Martyrs die! I cannot afford to become a martyr to the cause since I have a family to support’. I am arguing that this is not being defeatist but a kind of realism since the price of being labeled as a ‘rebel’ can leave permanent scars. Furthermore, I believe that struggle for equality can take place on many fronts and I did not become discouraged by those female academics who did not want to actively take part in resistance. I argue by saying that the fight against male dominance has a long way to go in Pakistani institutions including those working in the academia since managers had to ‘unlearn’ roles in which they had been socialised by society and culture and then ‘rethink’ their position in their current institution.

8.2.2 Motherhood and career progression

It would seem that only a handful out of the 185 universities in Pakistan had childcare facilities. The maternity leave in Pakistan higher education institutions is 3 months with full pay, which applies to all state institutions as enshrined in Article 37 of the Pakistan Constitution. This period was considered to be far too short by my respondents and resulted in many new mothers ‘being forced’ to leave work to take care of their young babies. Furthermore, the implementation of maternity leave was also somewhat arbitrary with many private institutions ignoring it all together. Waldfogel (2007) describes this phenomenon as ‘penalties of motherhood’. When faced with limited childcare facilities women had to make a difficult choice. For instance, whether to take a career break when they have children or keep on working due to economic necessity; should they take a career break or leave their job permanently; should they listen to their spouse or family or quit for the sake of child rearing? This led to a perception among my respondents that motherhood equated to ‘devaluation in employment’ both as a woman and as an employee. These findings are consistent with Longhurst’s (2012) and Probert’s (2005) findings of Western

women which also came to the same conclusions. There is further support for female institutional inequality by the work of Ali (2013) in Pakistan, who concluded that the primary role of women in patriarchic societies is that of a home-maker therefore they are considered as 'inferior employees' or less competent. My research findings are consistent with Ali's (2013) research that the problems were far bigger and organizations cannot be entirely blamed for the lack of equal opportunities for females since change was needed in many other areas including cultural perception of female role, social treatment of women in society and acceptance of their competence and existence.

The above discussion leads me to conclude that young females were unlikely to be employed by many higher education institutions since it was believed that they will need to be replaced if they became pregnant, either on short time cover contract or if they left the institution. Perhaps more disturbing was the fact that this view was also expressed by two senior managers working in Pakistani universities. These managers were rather apologetic in saying that this was a dilemma they faced since there were limited funds for replacing staff on temporary basis. Whilst there may be some truth in this argument, I would argue that these senior managers need to understand the damage being caused by them, and their male colleagues who held a similar viewpoint, to women's development. Support for such views have been expressed by Gatrell (2011) when she states that usually new or expectant mothers are perceived to have less commitment towards their work and used by some employers to exclude them by not employing them or control them when they work for the institution. This view was confirmed by many respondents who believed that some employers even become anxious and associate motherhood with reduced employment orientation and minimized commitment as it leads to disruptive routine at the workplace. Such views, of not employing young women and expectant mothers, have too many implications not just for women but the whole Pakistani society. I would argue that the expectations based on the male model of traditional continuous working and single minded dedication in organizations cannot be implemented on contemporary females since it often leaves them marginalized and disadvantaged and perhaps keen to exit their career.

There was an overwhelming view among all of my respondents that the opportunities for women in academia were ‘extremely’ limited due to various facets of socio-cultural prejudices which are similar to experience of Lebanese female academics as identified by Tlaiss (2015). This included opportunities to progression, training as well as childcare facilities. My findings are also consistent with Shaukat *et al.* (2014) quantitative research of 180 higher education institutions in Pakistan, which suggests that gender discrimination is in all sectors of Pakistani society. They go on to argue that women in lower positions i.e. lecturers, experience the greatest discrimination in various areas of their work environment. Life at home also does not get easier for them where they tend to work harder and continuously to manage their domestic tasks along with their careers. My research suggests that women in order to be successful in their careers tend to continuously make personal sacrifices. This is likely to have a detrimental effect on working females who are constantly trying to juggle and balance work and personal life.

The above discussion leads me to conclude that motherhood and career progression are closely inter-linked. Therefore, the question of how young women are treated is more relevant in a country like Pakistan since it shows that there is a long way to go in the quest for gender equality. I would endorse the viewpoint of my respondents that women should not be expected to choose between family and their career. This places a significant amount of responsibility on the shoulders of the ‘responsible’ managers to ensure that young female academics are given the opportunity to have a career after becoming mothers.

8.2.3 Support from managers for female academic staff

Respondents expressed various views on support from their university managers. The level of support varied between those who were senior i.e. in management position, and those that were relatively in junior positions i.e. lecturers. Whilst some managers were supportive of their female subordinates there was also a concern that many more managers were keen to keep the women in lower positions since women disturbed the ‘departmental balance’. This is driven by their desire to keep the intuitions male-centric, which leads me to determine that the female

underrepresentation in academic management is a hallmark of masculine practices in Pakistan. I am not denying the fact that some positive movement has been achieved with 18 Vice Chancellors being women (HEC, 2018). My primary concern is with those female academics that are in relatively junior positions. Their experience often consists of a lack of opportunity for development or outright harassment despite the existence of harassment policies.

Another negative aspect of female academic experience in higher education in Pakistan was to do with women being unable to socialize with their male colleagues away from their immediate work environment by religious as well as cultural norms since it may lead to promiscuous behaviour. The result of not socialising was that women were also excluded from social networking in their work environment. Networking especially in societies where there were few job opportunities, is important in all work environments but perhaps more so in higher education, where at times classes were sometimes co-taught, research articles needed to be co-authored and national as well as international conferences attended. Furthermore it is through networking that job opportunities were availed or promotions discussed by managers and failing to network effectively left the female academic staff uninformed. I would argue that importance of networking cannot be overemphasized since it creates a vacuum which only those who are informed can fill.

An area of concern that a number of respondents highlighted was that female managers prevented other females from getting into senior management positions. This was described as the 'Queen Bee' syndrome in reviewed literature (Staines, 1973; Kanter, 1977; Mavin (2006; 2008). Some of the junior lecturers in my research pointed out that these women were part of the problem since they did not stand up to fight for the rights of all of the female staff. Respondents who highlighted this issue especially those who were more aware of their location in a society that felt the 'Queen Bee' was reinforcing the genderised and conservative societal values which militated against their own 'kind'. Reviewed literature also highlights the negative impact of these senior female managers who were actively working against the interests of other female staff. Support for the 'Queen Bee' syndrome was provided by a female professor who was instrumental in hiring of staff in a prestigious university when she stated that 'there were many reasons for hiring men' and 'men

communicate better and can spend more time in office'. She later went on to contradict herself by saying that women did not face a 'glass ceiling' but 'a thick layer of men' and argued for 'zero tolerance policy' on gender issues however she did not elaborate whether she was talking about equality issues or female harassment.

On the other hand, it was pointed out by some respondents that some of the male teaching staff were supportive of the female colleagues in their daily activities but some of their male as well as female colleagues perceived that as negative. This led the staff who were sympathetic to female colleagues to become hesitant and unable to take sides openly since they feared the repercussions from the senior managers or other colleagues. These liberal minded colleagues were described as being 'silent allies' which was deemed to be useful since the daily teaching and research activities necessitated this. I would argue that in every organisation there will be some staff who will support the female cause and help in fight inequality. It is important for such staff to openly support the female agenda for equality. Failure to stand up amounts to collusion with oppressor.

I argue that whilst the attitudes towards hiring of female staff run far deeper in the institutional veins, female staff treatment once they were employed also remains an area of concern in Pakistani higher education institutions. It appears that women applicants are faced not just with 'maleness' hiring hurdles but an equally negative and unsympathetic management practice which at times is from female managers.

8.2.4 Views on institutional gender equality policies

The concept of equal opportunities in Pakistani higher education needs to be looked at more critically since respondents indicated that there is little 'equal opportunity' and motherhood surmounts to punishment. My findings are further supported by the research carried out by Shah and Shah (2012) and Ali and Knox (2008) who argue that higher education despite efforts by the enlightened academic staff and some managers still remains gendered with restricted opportunities and there is little to say that gender equality is even vaguely addressed. In fact, there was a common view among most respondents that institutional policy rhetoric about equality of

employment opportunities was restricted to Committees and there was little evidence of its implementation when it came to gender issues. Having worked in Pakistani higher education for several years I agree with this viewpoint. Therefore, whilst institutional policies and laws were there they are not implemented because of the male power dynamic within institution. Even the Harassment Act, which is very important and features highly in the HEC priorities, was somewhat ineffective since if a female reported an incident it was unlikely to be taken seriously and in worst cases the woman would get the blame for blowing the matter out of proportions. My findings coincide with an evaluation of 41 studies by Willness *et al.* (2007) with a sample of around 70,000 respondents in USA on workplace harassment. They concluded that sexual harassment leads to decreased job satisfaction, lower commitment towards job, ill mental and physical health and general stress disorder. My findings affirm that addressing sexual harassment is very important and links to the findings of Yousaf and Schmiede (2016) who also said that the Harassment Law is there but has not been implemented by most of the Higher Education institutions. My concern is that if the primary focus of institutional policies, as being promoted was sexual harassment, this represents a narrow view of gender equality and does not address broader equality issues. It appears that despite gender equality being enshrined in the Pakistan Constitution, implementation is somewhat lagging behind at the point of employment and experience for those women who managed to penetrate the academic gates. These findings are consistent with views expressed by Ali (2013) of Pakistani working women as well as a study of Irish female academics undertaken by O Grada *et al.* (2015) and an earlier study by Priola (2004) of women managers in UK academic institutions. The O Grada *et al.* (2015, p. 358) study in particular challenged the inherent inequality that is found in institutions which they described as attempting to ‘fix the women’.

My research findings indicate that limits to female academics included opportunities at the point of recruitment as well as promotion, training and development opportunities as endorsed by a study by Shah and Shah (2018) of Malaysian universities. They pointed out that Muslim societies were characterised by patriarchal structures and interpretations of religion by males, which reinforced male domination that carried on from home to society to work. Male dominance was not only normal in academic institutions but also viewed as being the ‘norm’ by most of my

participants. Therefore, the internal organisational culture, perceptions and attitudes are heavily skewed against the women staff. A study of Australian universities by Probert (2005) also concluded that women academics faced discrimination or bias in appointments, promotions and workloads. These views are consistent with Tlaiss (2015) of Middle East women career development. My findings confirmed that this type of treatment militates against female working women in Pakistani higher education settings and sends wrong signals to the next generation of young females who are going through their university education. I argue that perceptions and assumptions about women career progression and their role as a leader are at embryonic stage in Pakistan and much needed to be done by those who manage higher education institutions.

It was interesting to note that female academics that were willing to stand up against repressive customs and practices that were being promoted by the fundamentalists were always fearful of the religious lobby that was to be found in most institutions. Religion is often used by these figures especially when they use out of context quotes from the *Quran* and *Hadith* to legitimize their anti-women views. For instance, out of context Islamic quotes related to 'sex, chastity, morality, and code of conduct to control women' (Shah and Shah, 2012, p. 38) in relation of women's position in society. What they fail to understand is that women before the advent of Islam were abused with little rights therefore what Islam introduced was truly revolutionary and supportive. It emphasises the findings of Shah (1999) who said that in Muslim societies the discourses are produced and manipulated through self-acquired power of interpretation of religion by those in authority who are men.

Having said that, there was total agreement amongst my respondents, even those HoD's who had argued for appointment of male staff that in the 21st Century there was a need in Pakistan to challenge the conservatives and fundamentalists who violated female equality rights in all sectors of society. I would add to this by stating that reforms will not be easily won however, HE is an important battleground due to its liberal environment where women have an opportunity to challenge many of the oppressive male attitudes despite some hurdles they are being currently faced by them. This may require forming alliances with the liberal minded men to move the equality agenda forward. This viewpoint was acknowledged by all my respondents

who recognised the importance of support from liberal male academics in institutions however, my respondents were also keen to point out that these individuals should not sit on the fence but actively support women's quest for equality. I fully support the view of many of my respondents who acknowledged that male and female academics being highly educated allows them space to form think tanks for promoting a progressive agenda in Pakistan and thus work together to bringing about equality for all oppressed groups in society. This view is supported by Mavin *et al.* (2004) study of British Business and Management Schools that universities were uniquely placed in society to challenge their own unequal practices as well provide direction for change in broader society.

A concern is that many of the appointments are in the hands of benevolent senior managers who control the entry point for hiring of new staff. It seems that whilst some appointments are made on merit there is also a culture of nepotism in Pakistan whereby male managers are more likely to appoint staff in their own image i.e. men, since they do not always see women fitting in with their male dominated organisation. Such practices can be rooted out by the HEC since this body is responsible for allocation of higher education funding and has a significant amount of power to bring about change in institutions with regards to gender equality.

The above discussion leads me to conclude that solution for addressing gender disparity needs to be developed and imposed on institutions by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) as the overseers of HE in Pakistan. They must encourage universities to rethink and redefine their equal opportunities policies so that the equality policy goes beyond addressing harassment. This can be done by providing training to senior managers on the need to embrace equality of opportunity for all staff. Furthermore, targets can be set to ensure that there are an equal number of women and men working for the institutions including at middle management and senior levels. This will send a message to broader society that gender equality issues are important and being addressed. Furthermore students, both male and female, will also see that women are valued in society. Female role models in the teaching profession would create a positive image of teaching leading to even more women entering the profession.

8.3 Resistance

It seems that many of the female academics were aware of their rights and willing to challenge the male hegemony. Whilst some respondents respected authority, perhaps an expression of their cultural upbringing, there were also those who were quite bold and ready for challenging male supremacy. This change in attitude was driven by their oppression so despite coming from a male dominated household many women were willing to stand up in the face of male authority even though this was often outside of the institution. This leads me to conclude that resistance is a major driving force for many female academics as they move from passivity towards assertiveness. Once again the conservatism being displayed by Pakistan female academics is consistent with the study of Malaysian female academics (Shah, 2018).

Whilst opposing female oppression there was also a realism among female academics that they existed in institutions where men had absolute control therefore they had to protect themselves since open resistance within the institutions could potentially lead to victimization or at worst end their careers. Open revolt against gender related oppressive practices may sound like a way forward however I would argue that resistance can take many forms especially given the conservative, gendered and religious nature of Pakistani society (Badran, 2009; Jamal, 2005). Liberal thinkers may argue that women should stand up and fight for their rights at work and in society however those who argue for this position, I suggest, do not really understand the Pakistani culture or societal pressures. A culture where a woman cannot say openly what she wants to do, without the consent of the family and the extended family and where she cannot think beyond set boundaries, definitely limits her aspirations and hopes. The struggle for change is going to be a long one. This certainly is the view of all my respondents who acknowledged that it may take several decades to change the mindset of society to treat its women as equals. This may sound negative however, I firmly believe that change will come since masses of women are entering higher education as students and they are not going to accept what some described as a 'raw deal' for women.

Quite encouraging there is also a polarization of subjects being studied by young females entering universities despite pressure from the families that their daughter

should only be a doctor or gain a school teaching qualification. This broadening of curriculum was quite noticeable in my research when I found out that many of my respondents had moved away from traditional subjects towards social science degrees, which allow for a broader debate outside of formal curriculum. Many of these women studying social sciences had become torchbearers for equality especially those who experienced higher education from overseas. I found that the women were energized and as Freire (1970; 2000) put it conscientised. This may be considered as quite a revolutionary step in the conservative culture where female silence and conformity were the norm however, the drive and progression towards truth and equality had equally necessitated these women adopting tools of resistance (Belenky *et al.*, 1986; Harding, 2004). So, rather than becoming passive and depressed or adopting the cloak of a victim many of my respondents had learnt to fight back by organising and sharing their knowledge by various tools at their disposal such as social media and sharing of research via publication. A number of academics were actively using blogs to share their thoughts with a wider audience whilst others used publications and conferences to spread their message of equality and resistance. The blogs are interesting since ideas can be shared very quickly, which make it less likely for the authors to be victimised. This leads me to conclude that social media is going to become a weapon of choice for women since it allows ideas to be shared seamlessly across the country as well as continents. I also argue that Pakistani women or a women of Pakistani Diaspora working overseas will find a common agenda which the oppressor, be it men in organisations or fundamentalists who use religion to keep women subjugated, will not be able to control. These female academics will highlight the injustices they have to endure by coming together to fight for equality of all women. Their aim is to change attitudes towards women within their institutions and in broader society.

8.4 Summary

The level of respondent articulation shows that the Pakistani female academics are as articulate in expressing their voices as any other educated class. I would argue that their education and middle class upbringing had given these women the confidence to be able to articulate their propositions and experiences openly with me in what they felt was an opportunity to share their views in a trusting environment. This

enabled them to express their feelings in detail with some becoming very emotional and at times angry at their treatment in academia and broader society. In many instances, they articulated a sense of frustration at their treatment due to being women, which they endured on daily basis from their colleagues and managers.

What this chapter has highlighted is that socio-cultural factors had a major impact on the female academic life of Pakistani women in higher education. This created a major imbalance in the lives of female academics and led to work-life conflict. Female academics were expected to work and then discharge domestic duties, which imposed additional stress on their lives. This was due to being an academic, a wife, a mother and a member of extended family. Whilst these concepts of multiple identities may not be new if one looks at the lives of Western women, what my research shows is that Pakistani women are under greater stress than their Western counterparts due to the society being gendered where women have to perform certain duties irrespective of what their husbands did in relation to work. The female gender stereo-typecast was further being endorsed by those in power using religion to justify women's place as the family male and are expected to carry the domestic burden. This had a major influence on female academic careers.

Female careers were often blighted by negative experiences in the hands of uncaring managers who often displayed masculine traits. Those females who had made it into management were often 'standing passengers' in these somewhat oppressive and genderised regimes. There was little care or even concern that young female staff with young families needed support and maternity leave of three months was deemed to be wholly inadequate. Many young women who had babies would often not return to work after taking maternity leave due to pressure of home life and work demands. There was a common view among the respondents that the Maternity Policy needed to be revised to adequately meet the young mother's needs. In fact there was also a view that institutional equality policy was restricted to paper with little sign of implementation. The policy of gender equality only related to female harassment and did not really address issues, which were more important such as recruitment and female career progression. The institutional understanding was that the gender equality policy meant female harassment, but even here, there was a concern that the women who reported harassment would be victimized by their managers therefore

quite often harassment incidents were unreported. This led to many academics describing the Pakistani female academic experience as amounting to being reduced to a 'second class passenger on a slow train to nowhere'. This places responsibility on Higher Education Commission since it has the power and finances to make a significant contribution towards forcing universities to implement gender equality in Pakistani institutions.

Many of the respondents were excited about future prospects since an increasing number of young women were entering higher education as students. There was also a polarisation of subjects being studied, which again bodes well for Pakistani women since it is more likely to act as a driver for change that will come from the ranks of those who have studied social science subjects such as sociology, management sciences and politics. They will provide the critical mass with many more young women that are likely to enter the teaching profession. It is envisaged that this change could potentially lead to a change in male attitudes so they recognise the contribution that can be made by employing more women. I agree with Mavin *et al.* (2004) who argued that there was a need for conscious raising among women and gender blindness among management schools was no longer acceptable.

It seems that many of the respondents were willing to challenge the male hegemony and were aware of their rights. Whilst some women respondents respected male institutional authority, perhaps as expression of cultural upbringing, there were also those who were quite bold and ready for challenging the male supremacy. This change in attitude was driven by their oppression so that despite coming from a male dominated household they were willing to stand up in the face of male authority. This resistance drove many from passivity towards assertiveness in challenging many of the virtues of a patriarchic society. This may be considered as quite a revolutionary step in the conservative culture where silence and conformity were the norms however the drive and progression towards equality had equally necessitated adopting tools of resistance. So, rather than becoming passive and depressed or adopting the cloak of a victim many of these female academics have learnt to fight back by organising and sharing their knowledge by various tools at their disposable such as social media.

Chapter 9: Conclusions

9.0 Introduction

The research aim was to explore female higher education staff experiences in a number of Pakistani universities. When I met my respondents they were all very articulate and reflective in outlining their experiences. They had shared their life stories, which were accompanied by emotions of anger, happiness, frustration and tears by trusting me, which has made my research possible. Faced with the challenges at home, in society and at work, they showed remarkable resilience and were full of vitality. Furthermore there was a commonality of experiences amongst these women such as cultural repression and the notion of *Izzat* (honour) and *Muslimness* linked to the gender and power discourse in the context of Pakistan (Shah, 2009). This made the interaction fascinating as my respondents shared their views and perceptions about the way they have seen and experienced life.

In terms of my research of these Pakistani female higher education academics, my approach had leaning towards the feminist discourse after deliberations with a number of colleagues and my supervisors. The starting point of my approach was to develop a broad understanding of some of the key issues, which had and continues to influence the gender equality debate. I started by reading the core concepts propagated by the feminist academics which led to my deeper understanding of feminism that shaped my thinking. Attempt was made to study literature as widely as possible however, various searches revealed that a great body of literature was generated between 1960 and 1980 and for this reason these three decades, regarded as the most influential for generating new ideas and thinking, forms the basis of much of the discussion on this discourse. Having said this, I did attempt to include later day literature to develop a deeper understanding of gender inequality. Furthermore, I also discovered that much of the reviewed literature tended to be Eurocentric or American inspired. I can defend this by stating categorically that this in no way belittles the struggles of women that are or have been taking place in other parts of the world. It simply means that this strategy was adopted for the sake of

convenience i.e. availability and easy access of materials, both in terms of physical and virtual materials as well as convenience of being available in English language. My goal was to develop a better understanding of the processes as well as to be in a position where I draw tangibles with the female academic experiences within higher education in the context of Pakistan.

I will start by addressing my research aim and objectives with the salient themes, which have been articulated in this section. This is followed by an explanation of how my research has contributed to knowledge in this very important area. The next section talks about the practical implication of my research findings. Section 10.4 contains a reflective account of my research journey in the field, which at times was quite challenging giving the female dynamics in Pakistan. The Research Limitations follow and then there are recommendations for action. Finally, the last section concludes the chapter.

9.1 Contribution to knowledge

My research contributes to knowledge by giving a new perspective to the understanding of Pakistani female academic staff experience. Using a feminist approach gave my study a unique approach highlighting the female view on how things are for female academics and how they experience institutional and personal life in a male dominated and patriarchal society. The absence of work in this area gave impetus to my research.

My research approach placed female voices at the center of my investigation in a society where the norm for most women is to remain silent, and thus my research addressed an important gap in knowledge. Furthermore, my discussion of the feminist theories attempted to relate this to the Pakistani society as feminism has different meaning in different countries and cultures. I feel that using the feminist lens gave a unique perspective to my research in a conservative and patriarchal society. When I began to explore my research topic, I soon discovered that there was little available data on female academic numbers or any detailed studies on Pakistani female experiences in higher education. My research focused on the personal, socio-

cultural and the institutional experiences of the female academic journey in the context of Pakistan using a narrative and feminist approach. Reading feminist literature, even though it was mostly Euro-centric, gave me the tools to understand women's position in society. I soon realised that applying a feminist approach in the context of Pakistan was problematic since the cultural and religious contexts were very different. This point was elaborated by several American Black Sociologists, since it did not fully understand or appreciate the context of Black experience. I would argue that feminism is a situated concept, which has different conceptual and philosophical underpinning in different cultural and value systems. Studying feminist literature certainly made me question power dynamics and the nature of truth. For instance, whose truth? Whose reality? Whose life? I would argue that there is not one singular truth; in fact, there are multitudes of meanings and infinite versions of truth depending on one's situation and experience and it is different from men's worldview, which is usually taken as the norm. I would argue that truth and values are matters of a person's personal choice which have been influenced by their upbringing therefore the oppressor will have one way of looking at reality whilst those resisting will have diametrically opposite viewpoint of the same event. Whilst it may be argued in liberal thinking that, everyone has a right to their thinking and certain behaviours are not acceptable or negotiable, whether they are justified by religion or culture. So those in power who are subjugating women to lower rungs of academic community need to be challenged.

My research findings suggest that Pakistani society like other South Asian and developing countries is going through transition and change and female and male roles are being redefined in the changing cultural and socio-religious discourse. It is important that females who are half the population are given equal rights. This viewpoint is based on a rejection of the old adage in developing countries that argues for the maintenance of status quo and therefore by default male domination in academic institutions.

I would also put forward a view of the Pakistani female academics that they can come together to develop tools of resistance and confront their subordination by becoming 'more visible' in their respective institutions as the invisibility has led to denial of their voices from being heard. My respondents showed a sense of solidarity

in recognising that they existed in an environment where they felt powerless which turned the social interaction into mostly sharing negative experiences. These liberal minded respondents feared that by openly challenging the male domination and the dictates of authority, they might be left out or accused of being rebellious.

Given that 31% of academic staff in Pakistani HE institutions are female it is pertinent that their experiences are further explored so that policy makers can develop a strategy to address some of the imbalances at their place of work. I would argue that an understanding of experiences of female academics responsible for delivery of education is essential in order to deliver a more effective service to all students in the Pakistani higher education sector. I would also add that with a greater number of females entering the workforce in the last three decades, my research addressed issues and experiences of working females and thus will contribute to practice in Pakistani higher education sector. I will now address the research objectives of my study to explain the contribution to knowledge.

Research Objective 1:

- Explore how an interdependence of work and family impacts the female career progression in academic settings in Pakistani higher education.

Pakistan is a patriarchal society and there is a prevalent view at all levels of the society that women, whether they are educated or not, should remain at home and take care of the household chores while the male members are expected to be the breadwinners. It may be concluded from this view that child rearing and family responsibilities were a major liability for women's career development. Religious interpretations fused with culture are often used by men to keep women submissive and confined to the house. It appears that differentiation between gender roles is going to be difficult to erase but this debate strikes at the core of gender inequality. However, there is also recognition of women's working role, especially teaching, due to the economic necessity and status in society with some men encouraging their wives and daughters to work.

My research finding suggests that the cultural and gender stereotypes for women put them in charge of the household where they try to balance and satisfy the social expectations related to them. The result is that a woman often finds herself in a conflicting situation to prove that she is competent and capable at workplace as well as being a perfect housewife and mother.

Furthermore, the expectations of teaching, research publications and administrative roles at work as well as certain conditions to promotion for example, academics cannot be promoted from lecturer to Assistant professor if they do not have a PhD or if they have not published ten research papers in high impact journals puts extra pressure on female academics. It makes things extra difficult for them on top of their domestic duties. It is a concern in the respondents' view that a working female is not taken seriously in the organization as well as the society in general as the perception is that she needs to be domesticated and a good wife within the four walls. Females feel burdened by the stereotypical expectations and being judged by their abilities and position in society. They have to prove themselves constantly to fulfill the expectations that the family and job has from them. Therefore female career satisfaction is at times adversely effected by these factors.

These cultural differences and attitudes in Pakistan show that what is acceptable for men and women here may not be accepted in other cultures and countries. This is so important in Pakistan where employment for women (and men) is not necessarily based on merit and on *safarish* due to very high levels of unemployment. Therefore it is quite normal to find women with Master's Degree or even PhD's sitting at home after marriage. These include a perception in society that working females are not modest, are too liberal and ignore their children's upbringing by becoming too independent financially and socially. This notion of 'protecting' the female by a male be it the father, brother, husband or son is a social and cultural perception that acts as a barrier and stops females from achieving or even dreaming about their goals and passion. However, teaching generally, whether it is school or higher education, is considered to be respectful profession for females and offers a relatively safe working environment where women can combine work and maternal roles but there are also many issues that remain a major concern. I conclude, based on my research findings, that women's commitments at home makes it very difficult for them to

pursue successful academic careers as compared to men since the conflict of home responsibilities and work demands are not easily reconcilable. Furthermore, the pressure on newly-wed females from the in-laws family often results in young female academics giving up their careers.

Research Objective 2:

- Explore the gender equality agenda in relation to the socio-cultural and religious norms in the context of a ‘conservative and gendered society’ and its impact on female career advancement in Pakistani universities.

Female academics in Pakistan have less diverse career options and limited career choices based on their status, family background and education, which are influenced by cultural and regional norms. Through external eyes, all Muslim countries are seen to mistreat their women whether it is by prohibiting them to drive (until recently) as in Saudi Arabia or the mandatory wearing of *Hijab* as is the case in Iran since it's seen as the ‘Muslim Way’. I would argue that in reality the notion that Islam makes countries such as Pakistan less progressive is unreasonable as none of these imposed values are suggested in the teachings of Islam. Yet what the notion does achieve is unquestioned submission to the belief that women are indeed lesser able gender and have to listen and obey men. This is in sharp contrast to countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia and Turkey that are predominantly Muslim where there seems to be a much healthier attitude to working women. So, what makes Pakistan different? Why are women in Pakistan plagued by the evil called ‘work’? The answer lies in the cultural values, which have spread across the Indian sub-continent and the blurred line between century old cultural traditions and socio-cultural perception of female working outside home which is not accepted especially if it involves male interaction at place of work. These are further reinforced by warped interpretations of religion. A lack of education for the mass of Pakistani women ensures that inequality is regarded as the norm and questioning the status of women in any walk of life is deemed to be unacceptable.

Most of the females were committed to their work, as it was a source of satisfaction as well gave them financial security as they aspired for a good living. This is a

common trait of the middle classes anywhere in the world. In addition, the academics knew that there was a lot of unemployment in the country and a male with no liabilities could easily replace them. Although people in Pakistan talk about modernization and diversity in employment, it appears that there is little in practice. This appears to be the norm in most of the developing countries where men are still considered the breadwinners as they take care of not only their immediate families but also their parents and siblings. Many institutions prefer to hire men rather than women because of responsibilities linked to females. Men are given preference over females as they do not go on maternity leave and there is no concept of paternity leave in these countries, no childcare issue as they have a wife to look after the house and children and so they have less strings attached to them as compared to women. In addition, there is less support and facilitation for female academic staff in most of the male dominated institutions and example is of having no childcare centre in the institute or no flexibility in working hours. The paid maternity leave is for 3 months, which makes continuity of job difficult for females with no support.

Research Objective 3:

- Understand how women navigate their careers in male-centric Pakistani higher education sector

Evidence from my investigation shows that organisational nuances are heavily skewed in favour of male staff in all aspects of institutional life. There was a general agreement that male chauvinism and organisational politics curtail a somewhat already fractured female institutional experience against adversarial set of circumstances where only the fittest (men) can progress. Male-dominating attitudes in institutions at management levels mean that there is tendency either to ignore female voices or to reject their opinions in formal meetings. I would argue that it is unacceptable state of affairs when many female academics in Pakistani institutions are resorting to silence in meetings since they feel that their voices are unlikely to be heard. This is more disturbing since higher education should be a bastion of free speech and opinions should flourish.

I would argue that there is no place for such attitudes and men have to unlearn much which has served their dominant position since such behaviour is not acceptable in

the 21st Century. I am also of the opinion that the battle for equality is long and not going to be won without making sacrifices. However, I am also a realist and fully recognise that change will take time and will not come about by appeasing men. We women have to be assertive but at the same time chose our battles very carefully. This certainly was the message from my more ‘progressive’ respondents. Having said that I am a realist, therefore, believe that changing of attitudes is something that will not come about so easily. Women academics have to become organised whilst at the same time seek alliances among the progressive men to mount an effective challenge to male domination. Tools such as social media, workshops and conferences provide excellent forums for debate and dialogue.

Research Objective 4:

- Investigate the institutional constraints that may be impacting female academic career development in relation to appointments, promotions and workload in Pakistani universities.

I would conclude that at the university level female staff absence from senior positions in higher education does not seem to be considered as an issue by those who manage higher education, namely the academic institutions or the HEC hierarchy. The primary focus for the institutional equality policy is preventing of female harassment by male staff. This quite clearly is not acceptable in 2018. This leads me to conclude that the traditional equal opportunity policies in higher education in Pakistan do not serve the needs of women so that there is no recognition of female contribution or female role models in position of authority. Therefore, males remain the custodians of knowledge and truth, in line with history whereby, males have overwhelming domination. Theories have been constructed, histories written, societal values established - all by men and now appear to be the norm and accepted by men and women.

I would add that structural changes can to be adopted by the institutions at several levels. Firstly, in terms of equality policies that must adopt a holistic approach to gender equality by looking at all aspects of gender equality within institutions such as employment, career development, opportunities for research etc. of female

academic staff. Secondly, there is a need for equality policies to be enshrined in law in Pakistan so that all institutions are compelled to follow them. Thirdly, there should be monitoring of the effectiveness of these policies so that progress can be measured and actions taken where there are inconsistencies. Lastly, all staff, especially senior managers with management responsibilities for implementation of the policies should be trained on equality issues. I feel that unless there is a robust monitoring little change is possible since male dominance is enshrined in male psyche.

I would also argue that whilst challenges of addressing gender equality in academia are quite tough, it is equally important to start challenging the inequality here, since this is where there is greater freedom for expressing opinions in a relatively safer environment. Change is needed in many other areas including cultural perception of female role and social treatment of women in society. Being an optimist I would also add that there was some positive development especially since now there is a critical mass of young women entering higher education in Pakistan. It is this pool of women that are likely to be attracted to become academic staff of tomorrow.

Finally, I would say that my research shows that working opportunities in Pakistan have improved quite considerably for the educated females with more working females entering the job market than two decades ago but the acceptance of women's role in academic institutions still needs improvement and inclusivity. Areas such as the societal, organizational and individual level gender discrimination continue to militate against the working academic female. Such attitudes towards work are heavily influenced by culture and religion. It seems that as the rest of the Muslim world moves forward, albeit with baby steps, making progress in the area of gender parity in Pakistan remains somewhat challenging. My research concludes that cultural and organisational norms as well as social factors confirm the conservative and gendered nature of Pakistani society. My findings indicate there was low regard for working women, which resulted in the women's low status in society. However, I would argue that 'years of obedience' has been replaced by a new resolve in women academics expressing their opinions more openly than ever before.

9.2 Contribution to practice

My research has significant policy implication for the education providers in Pakistan. This includes Higher Education Commission as well as the universities. My research indicates that there is a very narrow view of equal opportunities policies in Pakistani higher education, with most of the institutions equating it with female harassment. I would argue that this is a somewhat jaundiced view of the equal opportunities policy. I think it is important as a starting point to have a policy; however, the policy has to go beyond harassment and address the broader issues of equality of employment and experience of those who are employed as teaching staff.

Issues such as recruitment, training, career progression ought to be an essential part of the policy implementation and the human resources departments in the university need to address these disparities. Furthermore, the human resources department must monitor female staff progression rigidly and plans put in place to redress any imbalances. When gender discriminatory practices are evident, appropriate action must be taken to address them and correct those who are responsible for perpetuating them. At a general level, it is the management responsibility to support female academic staff in terms of flexibility of working hours and providing childcare facilities so that female academics can play their part in institutions unhindered. I would also advise the HEC to increase the maternity leave for females from 3 months to 6 months in line with my respondent views since it would give more time for females to recover from child duties. Furthermore, female academic staff should be given greater time flexibility when they come back to work after their maternity leave.

Whilst changing the organizational culture is tough but do-able, changing national attitudes is much tougher since societal changes require challenging cultural norms that have been practiced for hundreds or even thousands of years. Having said that there is a change in society brought about exposure to higher education especially those who have studied overseas and the exposure to social media. This is important for a society in a developing country such as Pakistan, which needs its men and women to work together for the prosperity and economic development of the country. Education empowers women but the support and positive measures from the

institution and the government can help develop a safe and equal opportunity platform for them. There is a need for developing and implementing equal opportunities policy at the organizational level to support women academics as they are the one responsible to bring about a change in the new generation. The government should make sure that the policies are implemented to ensure that females are not discouraged by the lack of support in the HE institutions.

I argue that there needs to be regular confidential surveys of female (indeed all staff) to find out their experiences of their institutional experiences to get firsthand knowledge of the issues they face. These need to be undertaken by human resources department. Furthermore, female academic staff should be heading the Equal Opportunities Committee to demonstrate the importance of any such initiative.

There is a need to develop policies for supporting and mentoring the female academic staff as it can lead to transformation at the individual, structural and societal level and result in a less gendered and patriarchal society. It is also important that female staff are encouraged to form 'women only' committees or discussion groups so that they can address issues of common concern. This will also allow female academics to share their experiences and challenges they face as individuals in these forums. They can also review the practices and policies of their universities and the higher education and demand changes and reforms. These committees should be allocated a budget for their training and coping up strategies in male dominated organisations. Training could include various courses such as assertiveness, influencing skills, management courses etc. This is in recognition of the seriousness the institution places on addressing inequality issues.

I would also suggest that there is a need for greater collaboration between female academic staff within Pakistan as well as outside of the country by organising conferences and giving them a chance to express themselves. This can bring untold benefits to the institution such as showing Pakistan as a progressive country that recognises the contribution of its women. An understanding of the female narrative from the participating academics suggests that it will generate its own political energy in the quest for political action, which will ultimately lead to empowerment of women as well as prompt Higher Education Commission policy makers in

addressing female inequalities. Furthermore, I would that progress requires an open acknowledgment of the working female visibility and contribution as does their career progression to the managerial or top positions. Higher education institutions need to move away from the notion of ‘think manager’ and ‘think male’ and be inclusive rather than exclusive and marginalizing women in policy and decision making.

9.3 Recommendations

The power to bring about change at local level largely lies in the hands of management in individual institutions and more centrally with the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan. There is a need for short-term and a long-term strategy. Therefore based on my research findings, I put forward the following recommendations:

At national level:

- Higher Education Commission needs to set up a Working Committee that can redefine equality agenda so that it incorporates not just Female Staff Harassment but broader gender equality. This includes appointment of staff, staff training and development, leadership training for female staff, opportunities for research and attending conferences.
- Higher Education Commission needs to initiate training programmes on gender equality for senior managers in universities to implement change in their respective institutions. This should include highlighting the benefits of gender equality.
- Higher Education Commission needs to issue guidance to institutions to ensure female representation on appointment panels.
- Higher Education Commission needs to monitor progress made by individual intuitions in progressing the gender equality agenda.
- Higher Education Commission needs to advise institutions to develop Action Plans with clearly defined targets for change with specific timeline to address gender inequality especially at senior management levels.

- Higher Education Commission should monitor progress made by individual institutions and take affirmative action where institution do not comply with their instruction on gender equality.
- Higher Education Commission should set up a national ‘Women Only’ Committee of senior female academics representing all universities to share common concerns and to share good practice.
- Higher Education Commission should relook at the provision of maternity leave for young mothers and increase it with international standards.

At institutional level:

- Universities need to create a supportive environment for the female academic staff and involve them in the decision-making processes.
- More female academics should be appointed in leadership positions and head the Committees to address female academic issues and develop policies to facilitate women at all levels.
- Universities should provide a mentoring scheme for young female academics.
- Universities, being the hub of knowledge generation, should support female career progression by providing training courses as part of female staff development.
- Universities should implement Gender Harassment policies in order to provide a safe working environment for the female academic staff.
- Universities should facilitate workshops and training to educate senior managers about the importance of gender equality as women academics are contributing towards transfer of knowledge to the future generations.
- Universities should ensure female representation on short-listing and appointment panels to ensure that there is female voice in the appointment process.
- Universities should set Action Plans for implementing gender equality policies with clear deadlines and monitoring.
- ‘Women Only’ Committees should be set up in each institution so that female staff can meet to discuss issues of common concern as well as provide a

forum for networking. A representative of this Committee could sit on Senior Management Team meetings.

At personal level:

- Female staff who are assertive should take ownership of the equality agenda and come together to challenge male institutional hegemony.
- Female academics should set up a national or even an international forum where ideas could be shared and lessons learnt from each other's struggles.
- Those female academics who are activists should disseminate their experiences in broader local, national and international forums.
- Female staff who are victimised and mistreated should take their case to Higher Education Commission if the institutions fails to take action.

9.4 Research Limitations

The fact that I have lived in UK for the past 9 years, and therefore was out of the Pakistani academic loop, means that I may have been viewed as an '*outsider*' so some of the respondents may have been reluctant to be totally truthful with me. I tried to overcome this limitation by establishing a relationship with my respondents prior to the interviews being conducted via social media and email correspondence.

Although there are valid reasons for restricting this particular research to 16 participants (as discussed in section 6.3) the sample size for the research could have been increased to reflect more accurately on the regional and provincial differences in my respondents. My sample selection was based on snowballing which brings with it inherent biases however this fact was recognised from outset by me categorically stating that their accounts were not representative of all female academics.

9.5 Areas of future research

A number of areas warrants further investigation. For instance, it will be interesting to research the experiences of female academic staff in all female universities to illicit differences in experiences with academics from co-education universities.

A number of other themes emerged from my research that can be the avenues for further investigation. These include: an investigation of work-life conflict being faced by academics; a lack of development opportunities for female academic staff in higher education; a study of societal and religious constraints that may be preventing female academic career progression; the impact on female staff perceptions due to a lack of female role models in senior positions; a comparative study of UK and Pakistani female academics experience and see what are the commonalities and differences that can improve female experiences. I would also suggest a comparative studies of female academics and working females based on different cultures. Further research to explore differences in experiences of female academics based on their years of working in the higher education to see how these changed over the years.

9.6 Reflections on my research journey

This research has been a long, arduous and at times a frustrating journey for me for a variety of reasons. I soon developed a realization that I had embarked into something far more challenging than had previously envisaged since the interaction would generate its own energy and emotions. As a woman with experience of having worked in Pakistan and UK higher education, this research has transformed me as person in the last 6 years since I started my doctorate.

My doctorate journey has not been a linear process and had diverse and challenging facets. My position in relation to self and society and my thoughts have changed throughout the journey due to this exploration, widespread reading and interaction with my respondents. I learnt, as many women in my position, who I was and what was expected of me at home, at work and the society overall in light of being a single mother and a full time academic undertaking a DBA.

Whilst I changed in my DBA journey, both as a woman and an academic, so did many of my respondents. It was a rich interaction, full of reflections on both sides of the divide i.e. researcher and the subjects and perhaps in an equal way my supervisors. Personally, the knowledge I gained by reading has been critical in this research as I encountered a variety of gender perspectives which highlighted the masculine nature of Pakistani society. The more I read, I noticed a gradual shift in my perspectives and it made me question the nature of 'truth'. Furthermore, on reflection, it led me to a conclusion that knowledge in this area of research is not only new but also the perspectives in the way they have been articulated by women provide a rich account of the situations that these academics face. It was as if the voices of silence and acceptance had been brought to life which for too long been silenced by cultural and religious straitjacket.

I share many of the views of my respondents that the marginalisation of female academic staff has to be challenged in every forum for mine and their intellectual and emotional development as well as for utilising human capital. I feel that the hierarchical world where men dominate has to be challenged in various forums. I also agree with the respondents that gender discrimination, whether it is culture or socio-economic, has no place in the 21st century and needs to be firmly opposed. Women cannot win equality by being passive but by actively campaigning and making their voice heard. True, that the concept of equality may have different connotations in the West and is very different from the East with the influence of culture and religion here, however inequality is equally brutal in the way half of the world is treated and it is through sharing stories of resistance that women's struggle will progress.

My research led to some of the respondents becoming close friends and it is envisaged that further engagement with them will lead to sharing of experiences at personal and academic levels leading to collaboration at political and academic levels. Given that a number of respondents are now located in different countries and have varied experiences and exposures it is hoped by spanning the geographical boundaries these can be harnessed into a positive force. In fact, as a consequence of this research, I have decided to set up a group of these academics to further the

equality agenda in Pakistan by organising conferences and writing papers for publication. Living and working for a UK university, I have greater freedom despite being a single mother, thus able to nurture and facilitate a debate and even perhaps broaden my sisters' minds. Having said that, I am fully aware that as a researcher, I should not be invading or colonialisng the minds of my peers therefore my intention is to open up space for debate and dialogue.

In doing this research I have experienced a range of emotions and anxieties. At times I have been inspired by colleagues who have left an everlasting mark on my life and yet at times it has been a lonely place with little support or guidance since the University was going through so many staff and policy changes.

Looking back, my first research topic was to look at part-time academic staff experiences in a UK University using action research however, after a year I learnt that the University policy resulted in these staff members being dismissed from employment. It was then agreed with my supervisors that the new research focus could be organisational citizenship behaviour and employee engagement of academic staff in Pakistan. After spending a year looking at this research area, I felt a certain disconnect with the topic however, once again a lack of supervision meant that I really did not make any significant progress. It was at this stage that I began to refocus and decided to investigate the experience of female academic staff in Pakistani higher education. My supervisors approved the topic however, before I could make much progress they both left the university and new team of supervisors was appointed. It was at this stage that I really began to get to grips with the topic being researched. All my three supervisors have been inspirational in terms of clarity of thought and their expertise. Given that I had undertaken a significant amount of reading and research, I was able to progress rather swiftly.

Reflecting on the experience, I feel the negative research experiences were an important part of my learning as I have come to realise that the life of a researcher is never linear and it is the experience of failure and frustration that develops them to understand the wider picture. The experience of facing the initial difficulties and frustration has turned me into a better person and ultimately an academic with increased experience, developed strengths, optimism and a sense of self-belief. The

experience of being an academic in Pakistan combined with being a doctorate student and an academic in the UK University has truly been life changing through development of a multitude of skills. These include self-confidence, articulation, and perhaps equally importantly a level of humility and humbleness.

The question which I confronted (and still confront) on daily basis is to do with me living in the West as a ‘liberated’ woman and yet at the same time questioning myself as to where this cultural and religious conservatism left me. On one hand I espouse all values that are ‘conservative’ and therefore ‘traditional’ and adopting some of the gender-stereo-type roles and yet at the same time living in a social group that may be viewed as non-traditional and more latterly embracing ‘feminist’ ideology. My socialisation also took somewhat conflicting route whereby at one moment I will be sitting with conservative Pakistani/Muslim women in the neighbourhood and at other times sitting with Asian, Muslim and European women who are angry and challenging the male domination due to their position in society and an unjust set of circumstances. This led to a sense of pain at times and yet a sense of liberation at other times - a kind of paradox. What is true is that I have found a sense of balance whereby I am able to differentiate between my social identification and the wider social-change orientation so that belonging to either group is neither a threat nor driven out of a sense of attachment to women like myself.

9.7 Concluding remark

Knowledge is power and truth a ‘weapon’ that is articulated through words and thoughts, therefore, what this research tried to do is to raise the female academic consciousness for equality and female empowerment focusing on their own life narratives and experiences. These powerful narratives can be an agent for change for other female academics to initiate awareness and make their voice heard. There was an inner belief among the respondents that laws should govern the institutions, and not men. It is often said that ‘justice’ is blind’ however in the case of Pakistan one may say justice is ‘gender blind’. Pakistani society cannot keep on hiding behind the ‘veil of ignorance’ and culture as people make culture and not vice versa. The female

academics I interacted with, whilst may not go on to become ‘street fighters’ for female equality but there is no doubt that they are also likely to have become changed due to our interaction. It is envisaged that my research will generate its own political energy in the quest for positive actions, which will ultimately lead to empowerment of women as well as prompt Pakistan university policy makers in addressing female inequalities. Like a famous saying goes ‘if a butterfly flutters its wings in the East the state of the world in West would have undergone a fundamental change’.

Women in Pakistan are resilient as demonstrated by the interviewed women, who by and large belonged to the middle class. It indicates that there was room for optimism despite the oppressive cultural practices and religious conservatism. The fact that there are significant numbers of women in academia shows that there are ‘green shoots’ in higher education. This is a result of awareness that education has given to Pakistani women. Finally, I would suggest that gender role ideology and the societal mindset needs to be redefined in Pakistan to ensure that if women cannot be equal to men in absolute terms; at least there is a significant drive to improve the gender balance and justice.

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