Restrictions and Challenges that Prevent Women from Moving up in Leadership and Management Positions: A Frequency Count

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ABSTRACT

The number of women occupying senior management positions in Pakistani universities remains significantly low, with only 8.2% of women holding such positions in 2020, as reported by the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan (HEC, 2021). A recent report by the HEC also revealed that out of the 197 universities in Pakistan, only 16 have female vice-chancellors, indicating the underrepresentation of women in other senior management roles, such as pro-vice-chancellor, registrar, treasurer, and controller of examinations. In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the factors affecting women's career progression in higher education management, this qualitative study conducted semi-structured interviews with 48 women in various management positions, alongside a focus group discussion. The data was subjected to thematic analysis, revealing the multifaceted challenges and limitations impeding women's advancement to senior management positions. The findings suggest that factors such as women's non-assertive behavior, preferentialism, Queen Bee syndrome, subtle discrimination, lack of professional ambition, and limited awareness of legal rights are the most significant barriers to women's advancement in senior positions. Interestingly, themes related to women's families were found to have the lowest frequency scores.

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INTRODUCTION

Although women have made great strides in the workforce and have increased their enrollment in higher education, it is widely acknowledged that very few of them succeed in top management positions. Women are still underrepresented in senior management positions in the majority of countries. Though for the past few years, there has been an increase in the percentage of women holding managerial and professional positions in some countries. According to Grant Thornton (2021), all across the board, the proportion of women in senior management is steadily increasing. In 2021, 31% of senior management positions were held by women, which is the highest percentage ever recorded. Catalyst (2022) reported that "90% of businesses around the world have at least one female senior management position. But it has been slow and sporadic. Contrary to this increase, in Asia-Pacific, women are less likely than men to hold senior management positions. For instance, the selected Asia-Pacific countries
have the lowest percentage of representation of women in management positions: India made 10%, South Korea 8%, Russian Federation 6%, while Pakistan is at 4%. (Kersley et al. 2021). Which is the lowest ranking of all of them. That is extremely depressing. Although it seems otherwise, the apparent picture is not all that gloomy.

As since its founding in 2001, the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan (HEC, 2021) has created a number of initiatives aimed at reforming the higher education sector. The Government of Pakistani has also increased the budget for higher education. They took different initiatives ranging from the development of human resources (Muhammad et al., 2022) to structural adjustments in the governance and management of higher education institutions (Siddique and Chaudhry, 2022). Since the GOP is committed to promoting female education and special attention is being paid to strengthening women's education, as a result of the various initiatives, girls' and women's access to educational opportunities continues to improve at all levels of the Pakistani educational system, from elementary and secondary school through college and universities (HEC, 2021). New women's universities have been established across Pakistan (HEC, 2023). Women's universities are crucial to the education of female professionals, according to the government (Ibid).

Due to government's commitment and relatively better budget allocation in the education sector, women now hold some positions in management of higher education. According to Malik and Courtney (2010), women's progress toward economic independence is now a major factor in their decision to enroll in higher education. Women have been steadily entering jobs, professions, and managerial positions previously held by men (Jadoon and Jabeen, 2010). However, the real cause for concern is that, despite GOP's efforts to advance women's status, not all of the opportunities are equally benefited by women. They are considerably underrepresented in senior management positions when compared to men.

To reflect on how it happened, what are the root causes of this gap? This study investigated the degree to which family, society, organizations, and the individual barriers stood in way of women achieving top controlling roles in the unique cultural context of Pakistan. This study was essential to support the strategies and decisions of government made to increase the number of women in senior administrative roles because it recognized the current situation of women's employment, particularly their modest representation in senior roles. Additionally, the Pakistani government requires data and research to support the global agenda of reducing gender imbalances. In addition to identifying the barriers and disparities that deter them from wearing big hats. The current study offers verifiable evidence of the effects of organizations that don't treat women fairly, both at women universities and co-universities. This study brought attention to the seriousness of the barriers that may guide future research and provide some possible actions that educational institutions could take to enhance current organizational and societal norms regarding female's professional development in senior controlling positions particularly in the universities.
LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature generally suggests that a number of intricate factors are impeding women's advancement in management and leadership positions. Such as work family conflict (Higuchi et al., 2021), Gender-based behaviors (Koenig, 2018), gender inequality (United Nations, 2020), Social networks are structured differently by women and men. (Szell & Thurner, 2014), lack of opportunities for women to advance their careers (ILO, 2022), all prevent them from moving up to the top. According to some studies discrimination among competent women in lower managing positions prevents them from getting the same opportunities for professional growth as their male counterparts. Thus, women are denied opportunities for career advancement. Babic, and Hansez, (2021) also discovered proof of discrimination against women in management, planning, and once they were in senior positions. Women receive lower pay than men due to bias and discrimination (ibid). The glass ceiling has also been discoursed in different studies. Which is existing at all levels. (Cohen et al., 2020). According to Ibarra et al. (2010) and Mann (2009), due to their more authority over the resources of the economy, politics, and society, men will probably continue to dominate Consequently, Women often quit big organizations to advance in their careers in smaller ones (Davies et al., 2017). Liu et al. (2020) suggest the same that women’s career advancement is constrained by societal and institutional context, inadequate job opportunities, and work-life harmony, linked to financial resources. Seale et al. (2021) present their point of view that there are more opportunities for women to find employment in Asian countries like Pakistan and India, they still face challenges in their quest for equality. Advancement of women's career in high administrative status at all levels of employment is also cited by Coleman (2011) as being significantly hampered by the marginalization of women from male developmental associations

Likewise, a dearth of networking and mentorship helping the career progression of women (Mcilongo and Strydom, 2021). Women's "social capital" is constrained when they are excluded from male networks (Espi, et al., 2019). As a result, they receive hardly any professional guidance, and bias is frequently present in decisions regarding their promotions. (Ibid). Bornman's (2019) research reveals that organizational structures activate gender differences rather than merely importing them from external sources, in the context of examining the correlation between gender, power, and organizations. According to Fiske and Lee (2008), discrimination in the workplace is caused by prejudice and stereotypes. Due to macho administrative set up (Von Hippel et al., 2017) and “masculine organizational culture” men are expected to behave not only as managers but also as men (Espi et al., 2019). According to Born et al. (2018) these organizations continue to prioritize male leadership and place a strong emphasis on women in their workplace cultures that are dominated by discriminatory practices Chun et al. (2019) also studied crucial role of women in the family, men's prejudiced approaches, and associated institutional values are the main obstacles that women in senior positions must overcome. Women feel threatened and receive less support and acceptance in male-dominated organizations which usually support stereotypically macho standards and behaviors (Ibid).
Kanter’s theory, states that decision-makers and internal networks are likely to be men in hierarchies that are predominately male (Kanter, 1977). This is unfair to women. Without sympathetic managers, female employees are also more likely to feel that their workplace is unwelcoming to women (Mitonga, 2020). White (2001) noted that it would seem that women encounter male dominance once they reach senior levels in any organization, though they often choose to put up with it rather than challenge it. So, it would seem that a lack of institutional and professional support is a contributing factor to the dearth of women in managing roles. Ronnie and Glaister (2020) assert that there is another phenomenon that is called the "glass cliff," where womenfolk purposefully appointed to challenging management roles to make them fail. This restricts the opportunities for career preparation and advancement for women (Ibid). Whereas Women who are pursuing careers in environments where men predominate may believe that having a female boss will benefit them (Wichert, 2011).

"Women already in high positions should try to support and affirm other women and not close the doors on them once they are inside," says Zulu (2003, p.103) However, contrary to Zulu's expectations, women working under female supervisors exhibited signs of emotional stress compared to those working under male supervisors (Larsson & Alvinius, 2020; Mavin et al., 2014). Research by Mavin et al. (2014) also examined power dynamics between men and women in the workplace. Consistent with their findings, hierarchical relationships were observed between men and women, as well as among women, known as the "queen bee syndrome" (Staines et al., 1974; O'Neil et al., 2018). It reflects issues with authority are not associated with men only. Therefore, it would pose a greater challenge to ascertain whether women perceive institutions more favorably when they are in an environment with only one gender or when they have female superiors. It is concluded that women encounter numerous challenges in every setting when they want to move forward.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

**Research Questions**

The research was conducted in Pakistan’s public sector universities. The main question posed to the study participants was: to what extent the possible obstacles that women face on a family, societal, organizational, and personal level that act to prevent them from achieving top management positions?

**Sample Population**

In order to explore the major barriers that women encounter on the family, societal, organizational, and personal levels that act to prevent women from achieving the top management positions. In this case, the convenience sampling approach was used for sample selection. From eight public sector universities in Pakistan, a sample of 30 senior women and 18 junior women aspiring to senior positions was chosen for the study. Comprising Deans, Directors, Heads of Department, Registrars, Treasurers, and other employees in the cadre and
basic pay scale (BPS) 18 and above who were married, single, with children, or without children’s representatives of other university management departments. 18 younger women with similar demographics to the senior women who were employed in cadre/BPS 17 as assistant controller, assistant registrar, assistant treasurer, and assistant director were also interviewed.

Data Collection

Interviews

This study utilized qualitative research techniques to explore the obstacles that women face in advancing their careers at the levels of family, society, organizations, and the individual. The researchers conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 48 women who held senior and junior management positions. Additionally, a focus group discussion was held to complement the data gathered from the individual interviews.

While the majority of the interviews were audio-recorded, four participants had different preferences. One senior manager expressed discomfort with being recorded by citing feeling "media shy," while three junior managers objected to the use of audio recordings. However, all four participants agreed to allow the researchers to take notes. The interviews lasted between 60 to 90 minutes, and in some cases, follow-up interviews were conducted with two senior women to delve deeper into certain topics raised during the initial interview.

Focus Group Discussion

During the conference lunch break at Punjab University, a focus group discussion was held in a faculty lounge close to the conference room. The discussion, which lasted for an hour, was attended by participants who were interested in the topic and saw it as an opportunity to discuss important issues. The facilitator, who was also the interviewer, guided the conversation by asking questions, encouraging participation, and ensuring that all participants had a chance to express their opinions.

The facilitator recorded the discussion to capture all the important points made by the participants. The use of a focus group discussion provided an opportunity for the participants to share their views and experiences, which could help to enrich the findings of the study.

Data Analysis

Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is a qualitative research technique used to identify, analyze, and search for themes and patterns that emerge from the data in relation to the research questions (Broun & Clark, 2006; Bryman, 2001). Themes represent groups of related categories with common meaning, discovered through an inductive analytical process inherent in qualitative research (Greg, 2012). During thematic analysis, researchers continuously move between the data and new concepts to develop the themes (Cohen et al., 2011). The researcher's goal in thematic
analysis is to select a small number of themes that accurately represent the textual data and achieve the desired level of analysis (Tuckett, 2005).

In this particular study, thematic analysis was employed as the research technique, and the themes were derived from a thorough examination of the qualitative data (Thomas, 2003). To quantify the data, the frequency of comments for each theme was tallied. Vaismoradi et al. (2013) and Cohen et al. (2011) recommend that high-quality studies incorporate both qualitative and quantitative methods. In this study, such an approach was carefully implemented to effectively conduct the analysis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The Figure No. 1. Illustrates graphically all of the themes and the frequency count that emerged concerning the obstacles in the family, society institutional, and individual domains which may obstruct female from proceeding to the top level (Inayat, 2014). Its in-depth analysis is provided next to it.
Discussion

The following is a detailed analysis and discussion of the themes emerged from the data, with frequency counts ranging from high to low:

Non-Assertive

The capacity to voice one's opinions and fight for one's own rights without disregarding the rights of others is referred to as assertiveness and is regarded as a desirable quality. According to the data, the workplace was the area where the participants' lack of assertiveness caused the most issues. Since the majority of interviewees (83.3%) lacked assertiveness in their interactions with others, it was difficult for female to progress to senior roles. Because in times of adversity, they lacked the courage to stand up for their privileges and allowed others to take benefit of the situation. As a result, they lost ground to others. The participants believed that their own lack of assertiveness in confronting unjustified prejudiced attitudes cost them dearly in terms of their careers.

Favoritism

Favoritism, defined as the practice of treating one person or group more favorably than others, highlights the bias of decision-makers (Kwon, 2006; Prendergast & Robert, 1996). However, when leaders show favoritism towards an individual instead of the entire group, it tends to have negative consequences (Dasborough et al., 2009). The research findings indicate that favoritism was prevalent in 75% of the academic institutions attended by the participants. The participants expressed concerns about how funding allocation and information dissemination regarding career opportunities were influenced by favoritism, particularly in terms of access to such opportunities.

The universities' preferential attitudes caused qualified women to be underrepresented when they should have had opportunities to receive the benefits that were due to them. Favoritism was viewed by participants as one of the main reasons why career development opportunities were lost, which were thought to be a requirement for moving up to senior managerial roles.

Queen Bee Syndrome

The term "Queen Bee Syndrome" denotes to the tendency of some powerful women to work against the advancement of other females. According to the interviews, a sizable portion of the participants (72.9%) expressed a strong belief that the powerful women did not show support for other womenfolk. Most participants favored having managers who weren't women. They felt that at the time of their promotion other women had undermined them. The findings indicate that professional women face multiple barriers when attempting to progress into senior positions within universities (Inayat, 2014). Despite the recommendation that women in high positions should support and affirm other women rather than impede their progress (Zulu, 2003:103), contrary to this notion, the women in the study not only had to contend with prejudice from men but also felt threatened within their own gender.
Glass Ceiling

According to Smith (2021), the term "glass ceiling" refers to an imperceptible barrier that presents subtle forms of discrimination against career advancement. The majority of study participants (70.8%) reported that there was a glass ceiling on their ability to advance in their careers and they experienced bigoted attitudes that had restricted their job prospects. These had typically covert rather than overt actions. Thus, by creating the obstacles, they made it extremely difficult for women to advance to senior Managerial positions.

Lacked Professional Ambition.

It is frequently believed that a key element in defining career aspirations is the driving force behind choosing a particular occupation (Burke & Mattis, 2005). According to the data, 68.7% of the respondents required the motivation necessary to succeed in top positions. The participants admitted that they lacked professional ambition. They didn't have high expectations for landing such a prominent position. They had pursued their profession in an impromptu manner. They succeeded in a management position either accidentally or to fulfill the aspirations of family members. According to the findings women's comparatively little career ambitions served as a barrier to their professional advancement. Some women resisted seeking advancement into senior positions because they preferred not to pursue a career in management cadre.

No Awareness of Legal Rights

Women's legal rights in organizations are reportedly unknown to 68.7% of the participants. They were not only denied opportunities for professional development but also had their legal rights affected by ignorance of university laws and regulations. The data demonstrated that women faced numerous obstacles in their career advancement to higher management levels due to their ignorance of their rights and lack of familiarity with organizational rules and regulations.

Non-Cooperative Organizations

66.6% of the participants in the study who were interviewed reported that in the form of organizational irregularities and structural issues, universities required a supportive environment for professional improvement. The Individuals and organizations can both benefit from professional development, which is crucial for enhancing abilities through acquaintance with new knowledges (Roscoe, 2002). It is a career advancement tool, especially for those aiming for senior positions. Several institutional obstacles stood in the way of the participants' professional development. They were concerned about the peculiarities and complications in how universities operated when allocating funds to support women's professional development. They stated that their organizations had provided funding for them to pursue higher education abroad, but most of them had struggled to have the funds disbursed at a regular pace. Processes that ought to have been completed professionally and promptly took a long time, which was indicative of the universities' shortage of a setting that encourages women to pursue careers.
Misconceptions about Women’s Capabilities

Most of the participants (62.5%) voiced distresses about social bigotries regarding the leadership styles as well as skills of women. Social bigotries typically presumed that men were better leaders. It was thought that there would be fewer women in senior positions, because it was assumed that they wouldn't be devoted in demanding roles. Men are seen as having superior management skills in society compared to women. The Study participants argued the idea that certain leadership qualities are gender-specific is not true. Such bigotries had a negative impact on women's career advancement, relegating them to supporting characters.

Issues of Networking

The results demonstrated that various formal and informal alliances are formed at the universities to give their fellows the assistance they need for career advancement. The women participants clarified that they joined such organizations by virtue of holding an academic or administrative title at the university. However, the majority of its committees were made up of men. Based on gender men occupied key positions. The participant claimed that women are never urged to run for the most important positions in the various alliances. These groups arrange meeting late in the evening, and their members frequently interact with one another to keep them active. Due to their societal structure, Pakistani women were unable to meet these requirements. Participants thought such platforms were important and would aid them in gaining access to high-ranking positions. Male members reportedly supported and nominated their fellow male members for representative positions on these statutory bodies. In exchange, they render favor to their male coworkers for jobs and career advancements.

Hiring Policies

The participants (62.5%) stated that hiring policies were the major features manipulating advancement of female to top managerial roles. The information showed that their underrepresentation in high-ranking was a result of structural barriers in universities. It also appeared to be largely influenced by administrative experience-based promotion procedures. Vice-chancellors frequently hired people who had extensive experience in line with the demands of the administrative positions. Women entered the management field later than men, which prevented them from gaining the necessary experience requiring for senior roles.

Gender Role Labeling

The most important obstructions to women's career promotion to high-ranking positions was social attitudes toward gender-specific jobs. The majority of participants 62.5% thought that stereotypes about gender-specific occupations had an effect on women's career advancement. Participants reported encountering opposition from peers when accepting or pursuing management positions, particularly in the early stages of their careers. This was seen as a significant obstacle to their career success. It seemed that gender stereotypes about leaders could make it difficult for women to advance in their careers.
Unprofessional Behavior

Generally speaking, the participants had negative opinions of women's attitudes toward the workplace. According to the study, most participants (68.7%) thought that women exhibit unprofessional behavior at work. According to the interview data, women's underrepresentation at senior management levels was exacerbated by their own unprofessional behaviors. Their abilities and potential were undermined by the lack of these qualities, and other women's chances of being considered for advancement to senior management positions were also constrained.

No successful Public Profiles are Available

According to the interview data, the 58.3% respondents were very cautious to talk about their accomplishments on media. The society therefore was ignorant of their prospective. The participants acknowledged that they did not find self-projection to be comfortable. They were reluctant to be interviewed by the media. They made no effort to sway public opinion. They women avoided talking about their accomplishments and skills. The most brilliant female leaders remained undiscovered as a result. The absence of female experts and authorities in the media may also give the impression that they are less knowledgeable. This raised questions about their ability to lead.

Occupational Segregation

Preconceived notions about the proper roles for men and women in the workforce led to occupational segregation. The frequency counts 58.3% suggested that women's representation in management positions was significantly harmed by misperceptions of women in Pakistani society. Historically, they select a few professions, like those of doctors or teachers, were seen as being extremely prestigious for them. Now the variety of profession had expanded to a wider range. However, there were still strong traditional social expectations in Pakistani society, in which women still considered more suitable for careers in medicine or education.

Women’s own Preferences

52 percent of participants believed that by happily choosing to handle the majority of household responsibilities, they were not advancing their careers. They proudly performed the roles of housewives who also have outside jobs because they considered themselves to be the primary stewards of the children and other family members. According to Foster (2001), women find it difficult to abandon their traditional roles as mothers and housewives, which leads to role limitations.

Stereotypes Regarding Gender Roles

In this context, the majority of participants (62.5%) indicated that beliefs about particular masculine or feminine roles were influenced by Pakistani culture. The Pakistani society established roles and identities. As a result, most men are reluctant to assist with household chores because they were raised to be unconcerned with them. It seemed that the female research participants had to handle multiple responsibilities, including childrearing, elderly care, carrying and caring for children, and household chores alone.
Defiance to Women’s Leading Role

The frequency counts 52% stated that they had encountered challenges from men when they first started their careers in university management. One of the main obstacles to their career success was male dominance. A few of the participants believed that when they got big hates, both genders created an unfriendly environment, which they later claimed to have experienced as work harassment. They encountered a sort of conspiracy against their leading roles. Thus their aspirations for a career were not aided by these factors.

Lack of Self-Reliance

Participants who scored at 47.9% acknowledged having low confidence in their managerial abilities. Either had less assurance of their administrative aptitudes or they thought the workplace would be for them extremely tough to compete. Their lacked confidence prevented them from applying for more difficult jobs, which marginalized them. According to the data the willingness of women to apply for top level management is believed to be restricted by personal limitations. Even though they were eligible and had enough experience to apply for. But they lacked confidence in their capacity to work for big responsibilities made them marginalized.

Family Responsibilities

The frequency counts 45.8% told the demands of professional growth occasionally clashed with the responsibilities to their families. This was especially true when training opportunities were offered far from where they lived. Despite the fact that they valued their domestic roles, they saw family obligations as a barrier to their professional advancement. They were not keen to accept training offers that might had improved their employment scenarios at the expense of their obligations to their families. They acknowledged and agreed that their primary obligation was to spend quality time and attention on their kids. These were seen as cultural norms that women had to live up to.

No Importance to Women’s’ Career

Given that Pakistani women are expected to dedicate themselves to household duties 45.8% of participants said they encountered barriers to their careers in social structural systems where women's professional careers were not given much value. Parents cared about girls' education but not about their employment. Participants argued, for instance, that parents were concerned with their daughters' well-being and focused on improving their quality of life rather than on helping them advance their careers: Women's careers were significantly impacted by the social approaches who upheld conventional views about the best role for females.
Social Restrictions

Despite being qualified for promotion, it seemed that 31.2% of participants were restricted by a variety of traditional values, which limited their options for managing their career advancement. There had obstacles caused by the location as well. These problems persisted, and their continuation was justified by regional and cultural norms that served as barriers to women's professional advancement.

Domestic Chores

Due to cultural traditions, men never share domestic responsibilities and are not cooperative in household chores. Despite having jobs outside the home, the study's findings showed that 31.2% of participants were constantly juggling household demands and family obligations.

Added Workload

According to Yang et al. (2000), senior women in particular and professional women in general experience constant worries and stress due to the demands and overload of their work. Twenty-eight percent of the participants in the current study claimed to have encountered work pressures that negatively impacted their health at various points during their professional careers. They associated their senior positions with unnecessary burdens and did not enjoy them. They felt guilty or selfish because they believed that the work, they did was burdening their families unduly.

Elderly Caregivers

Prior studies on elderly care responsibilities have suggested that time spent caring for defendants and handling other household duties equates to time spent not working. Because it takes a lot of time to manage good care for elderly family members, this time commitment negatively impacts career success. Nevertheless, only 25.2% of participants reported being the main caregivers for elderly parents. They seemed to be shouldering the majority of the responsibility for taking care of their elderly parents.

Family and Work Conflict

Due to the incompatible behaviors required for each, participants (14.5%) said they felt pressure when work and family obligations clashed. A study published in the Journal of Occupational Health Psychology in 2021 also found that women who experienced greater work-family conflict also reported higher levels of job stress and burnout. The authors concluded that organizations should prioritize efforts to reduce work-family conflict to support the well-being of their employees (Michel et al., 2021).

Women are Prohibited from Working

There was some evidence of pressure from family members in some cases (10.4%), preventing participants from accepting senior positions. Even though they were qualified for senior management positions, some participants simply chose not to apply because they lacked approval from the family members of their husband to work. Few women with advanced degrees chose to launch a simple profession and commit to their obligations at work.
CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATION

Overall, the findings are consistent with earlier research (Onsongo, 2004; Zulu, 2003). Which contends that internal and external barriers account for the dearth of women in top management roles at university level. The obstacles include limitations placed on women by their families, society, and organizations, as well as other issues related to their lack of professional and personal qualities. Women's career advancement was invisibly hampered by stereotypical beliefs about gender roles. In relation to family members, it was found that the perception of women as housewives consistently supported Moorosi's (2000) findings. She asserts that women are customarily linked with domestic, private, and dependent activities, in contrast to men, whose activities are openly performed and independent.

A few participants in the current study stated that there were times when they had to put their families first in order to balance work and family obligations. Due which they occasionally felt pressured, exhausted, and anxious. Generally speaking, Pakistani women's careers are restricted to few jobs due to stereotypes about the types of careers that would suit them. Many women's career decisions were influenced by misconception regarding gender-role toward women's career choices, which prompted several of them to select teaching over management roles. As they were less at ease in management positions because of the gender roles that existed in society. This is in line with earlier research that found occupational segregation was a barrier to career advancement due to cultural and social attitudes about what roles are appropriate for men and women to fill (Coleman, 2011).

Social norms were linked to the absence of spousal support. Due to their family’s opposition to them getting a job and lack of support for their household duties, some married participants were forced to fulfill traditional roles. They had a full-time management workload in addition to being in charge of most household tasks on their own. This confirms that the marginalization of women at top level roles has been a result of the entrenched patriarchal perspective. According to the research, there are some organizational barriers that prevent women from advancing in their careers because of prejudice and discrimination. This was sometimes overt and other times covert, posing significant obstacles for women in a field that was predominately male. The study's participants worked very hard to compete and establish their suitability for top administrative tasks. The women participating in the study felt that institutional policies hindered their ability to advance in their careers and were unfair. They didn't think the selection and promotion processes treated women fairly. When they applied for senior positions, some highly qualified women were passed over during the short-listing process. In line with the findings of Tharenou (2005), the participants in the current study also had trouble getting into academic organizations where men predominated. When appointments were made through these networks as opposed to fair selection processes, this hurt them. The study found that the majority of participants had what has been called "Queen Bee Syndrome." Highly successful women who discriminate against other women do so by abusing their position of authority within an organization to stifle and try to block the advancement of other women (Staines et al., 1974). According to the study, a few women working in top positions were actively impeding the career advancement of their coworkers and subordinates. The participants who had attained top positions or who aspired to them had not receive support from their female
boss and coworkers. Which is consistent with a large body of existing research that shows some women have a propensity to obstruct the advancement of other women and denigrate rival coworkers. Although some researchers have questioned the existence of Queen Bee Syndrome, there is a lot of evidence for it (Morley & Walsh, 1996; Gray, 2013).

However, it wasn't thought that the issue of women's underrepresentation in senior management was solely brought on by cultural limitations, institutional limitations, or Queen Bee Syndrome. According to the findings, personal limitation, such as women's own personality traits and professional attitudes, were at play in the dearth of women in top positions. The current study identified a number of constraints that were related to the women themselves. Usually, these consisted of non-assertive behavior, (top ranked constraint 83.3%) lacked confidence and a lacked professional ambition. These were connected to misconception about gender role in which female were seen incompetent of managing. Such opinions, along with difficulties and setbacks encountered, were probably going to affect one's motivation as well as self-assurance. According to the current study, the majority of the women still saw their lack of knowledge of their legal rights as a potential barrier to their career advancement. This also demonstrated their lack of self-assurance, which marginalized them. Some participants were unable to handle the demands of a management position and the ensuing workload. They made the decision to pursue an academic career in order to advance their status. They occasionally lacked a distinct career objective. All of this diminished their motivation to assume management roles and exercise leadership. Because of this lack of desire for management positions, fewer applications and related career planning were made. This partially explained why there weren't enough women in the top management positions.

**Practical Implication**

Given the current regulations and the accessibility of funding provided by the Government of Pakistan and Higher Education Commission, the results presented here raise concerns about universities' capacity to support women's career advancement. A few amendments to public policy that need to be made. First and foremost, legislation is needed to protect women's right to an education and to address their professional needs. Second, unless the Pakistani government establishes appropriate protocols for regulating the allocation of budgets for professional development, it is impossible to achieve equity for women in top managerial positions.

The results of this study have added implications for future. With regard to institutional prejudices present in universities in particular, they provide additional research directions for examining the factors influencing women's advancement to top management.
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