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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

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# Barriers to women's representation in academic excellence and positions of power

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## Abstract

Nearly for half a century women's advancement in the workplace has been in a debate. Women's under-representation in higher education institutions and universities across the globe, and especially in the most powerful or influential posts, is well established. Despite gender equality commitments and women's educational attainment, still, they are underrepresented. Regions and countries may vary in terms of culture, achievements and development, but barriers for women's representation in academia are surprisingly similar in many regions. It is found that there are several barriers which women might be experiencing in academia ranging from personal, organizational to societal.

**Keywords:** Women, Academia, Barrier, Underrepresentation

## Introduction

Women's advancement in the workplace has taken significant strides in the past 50 years (Carr et al. 2015; Oltmann 2009; O'Meara 2015; Schwanke 2013; Weiss 2012). Women's under-representation in higher education institutions and universities across the globe, and especially in the most powerful or influential posts, is well established (Avin et al. 2015; Bruckmüller et al. 2014; Cook and Glass 2014; Howe-Walsh et al. 2014; Machado-Taylor and Özkanli 2013; Montez et al. 2003; Taylor-Abdulai et al. 2014; Zeng 2011) developing countries like Pakistan, is no exemption (Saher, Ali, & Matloob 2014). Higher education institutes and universities are facing increasingly complex challenges in attracting and retaining women (Uche et al. 2014). These challenges are even more critical for women academics in Pakistan.

Although, women, underrepresented in universities in Europe, where gender equality is supposedly higher than in Asia and especially Pakistan. It is established that in twenty-seven countries of the European Union (EU), women occupy only 15% of full professorship and/or tenured positions (European Commission, European Commission 2012) and the number of women faculty between the years 2002 and 2010 have been doubled. In some cases their numbers have decreased over time (e.g. IMD Switzerland from 11 to 9%, INSEAD and Duke from 17 to 14% and NYU Stern from 19 to 18% (European Commission, European Commission 2012). Similarly, women represent only 33% of European researchers, 20% of full Professors and 15.5% of heads of institutions in the higher education sector. Importantly, although their number has been growing faster than that of their

male counterparts (+5.1% for women annually, compared with +3.3% for men from 2002 to 2009) in all sectors, but female researchers still struggle to reach decision-making positions, on average, only one woman for every two men on science and management boards across the EU. Although in Scottish universities the percentage of women Professors is 21.8% whereas the women population in universities is 45% (Herald Report 2015). With reference to the Europe, Sweden is usually described exceptionally with overall high rankings regarding gender equality and has even earned the reputation as a 'pioneer in the gender equality area, but there were only 22% of the women professors till 2011 (Statistics Sweden 2012). Despite having an ambitious policy towards gender equality, there is still a long way to go before the goal of gender equality is actually achieved in Swedish higher education (Statistics Sweden 2012).

On the other hand, the situation of the UK is not much different than rest of the EU member states; just one in five professors are women, despite making up almost half of the non-professorial academic workforce. Women make up 46.8% (76,500) of non-professorial academic staff across all UK higher education institutions, but only 19.8% (3450) of the professoriate. A report published by the University College Union (UCU) 2013 cautions that the current pace of change will take almost 40 years for the proportion of female professors to reach the same level as the proportion of female staff in UK universities. In 159 of Britain's 164 higher education institutions, women's representation at professorial grade is proportionally lower than their representation at all other academic grades (UCU, University and College Union 2013). According to the statistics of Times Higher Education (2012) all over the UK on average one in five professors are female. But several universities are falling well short of that low benchmark. At Bournemouth University, which is the second last in gender equality of women professoriate list, the figure has been just three out of 30 professors. Which is only 8.7%, while at the University of Bath, it was 18 out of 163 (10.8%). Whereas, at a few of the world's top ranked institutes like Imperial College London the proportion was 14.1% in 2011–12 and at the University of Cambridge it was 15.6% (Peetz et al. 2014a, 2014b; UCU, University and College Union 2013).

Despite, gender equality slogans and efforts in Europe women have been rare at academic excellence and position of power in academia. Thus, the underrepresentation of women at higher academic and senior management level within universities continues to be a matter of concern. But, it is fundamental for Pakistani perspective, as if we look at the situation of Pakistan with reference to women labour force participation and women's representation in the upper echelons of academia or institutional hierarchy, it's far more poor than the rest of the world, as Pakistan is placed in 135 positions out 136 countries with reference to Gender equality Index (Hausmann et al. 2012).

Although, according to Punjab Development Statistics (2013) in 2002–03 there was only 708 (total 1753,40.3%) female teaching staff working at various hierarchical levels in general universities of Punjab (one of the biggest populous province of Pakistan). However, till 2011–12 the number of teaching staff in universities has raised to 2132 (42.8%) from 4976 in universities' of the Punjab. But the majority of them working on lower hierarchical grades. Unfortunately, the data regarding the number of women working on various hierarchical positions and fields in universities has not compiled yet.

In such scenario, it is significantly important to find the situation of women academics in Pakistan and which challenges and barriers they facing? This study would be an insight to existing literature, regarding Pakistani view to the least explored issue. It is assumed, that

increasing the representation of women at higher and decision-making positions might have comprehensive effects of diminishing discrimination and improve gender equality. As Pakistan, a developing and challenging society might ill afford to lose talented women from its leadership pool (Kellerman et al. 2007). Because women tend to gravitate toward non-hierarchical, consultative, collaborative, and interpersonally sensitive approaches, women can be assets in leadership settings (Kellerman et al. 2007; Bornstein 2007).

### **Literature review**

Current literature intended to focus on structural, organizational and personal barriers which might impede the women to climb academic hierarchies. As many types of researches demonstrate, that despite, an increased presence of female employees in mid-management positions, executive positions and full professor positions across the globe continue to be male dominated (Mayuzumi 2015; Liu 2013; Oforiwaa and Broni 2013; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2004).

### **Structural barrier**

At the managerial level, recruitment, hiring, and promotion processes are informed by images of the successful manager. This image is stereotypically masculine; the successful organization and the successful leaders share many of the same characteristics, such as strength, aggressiveness, and competitiveness. As Berger et al. (1974) expectations states theory enlightened, that certain traits typically associated with men and women are taken into consideration by hiring managers. Traits like competence and authority are typically affiliated with those of higher status, and because cultural and stereotypical beliefs have led us to associate these, with men, there is a correlation between gender and higher positions within organizations (Berger et al. 1974). Essentially, employers' expectations of an employee based on status, gender, or role shape the chances of that employee's opportunity to take on greater and "valuable" responsibility (Correll and Ridgeway 2008). Such stereotyping has been documented, constituting a major barrier to women's entry into top level hierarchical positions of diverse organizations, including academia and in the public sector till recently (Lühe 2014).

These cultural stereotypes are communicated to men and women from early childhood and become embedded in their behaviours. It is this socialization that molds the ideas and minds of children, hinting at whom they should be and what roles they should take on, as they evolve into adulthood. Connell's well-known theory of Hegemonic Masculinity (1987) similarly argues that society privileges a single version of masculinity above all others, which guarantees the dominant position of men and the subordination of women. Secondly, child-care and domestic works are all structural factors that have affected women's possibilities of shattering the cultural and stereotypical beliefs. If it is inevitable for women than for men to stay at home when the children are small, it might affect women's chances of advancement within the organization. It becomes practically impossible for women to obtain the same merits, and compete on the same terms as men, these structural factors, directly or indirectly might hold them back (Taylor-Abdulai et al. 2014).

Most disturbing, though, is that gender stereotyping remains a significant problem over 40 years later. The majority of people hold implicit biases most of us carry the prejudices of which we are unaware, but that nonetheless play a large role in our evaluations of

people and their work (Bombuwela and De Alwis 2013; Faiza 2013; Batool, Sajid, and Shaheen 2013; Cocchio 2009; Ahmed et al. 2008). Such biases create inequality by causing people to expect greater competence from men than from women, and thus to expect greater rewards to go to men rather to women who are otherwise their equals, biases also lead men, on average, to pay less attention to information that undermines expectations based on gender (Bombuwela and De Alwis 2013; Schwanke 2013; Ghaus 2013).

### **Organizational barriers**

Pakistan is a traditional and man oriented society, where the male is the head of the family and is responsible for taking or approving all the decisions about the women of his family like education, selection of subject, fields of occupation, mate selection, and many others. Since centuries, women were confined to the home and were only responsible for doing domestic or non-paid work. But for the last two decades, women considerably came into higher education and eventually started coming into paid labour force. Once women have successfully found their way into the workforce and landed a position in their desired organization, other types of discrimination become apparent. Although, women in Pakistan have worked in gendered academic institutions for long. But population expansion, advanced and professional education paved their way for employment into co-educational institutions. Where usually women were under-represented in universities, as inherently universities were masculine in nature. Moreover, the discourse of academic meritocracy may also be masculine and reproduce masculine practices, as the typical career path in academia is structured according to a male perception of success, which involves being research active, stay at work more than designated time and submit to the research assessment exercise. A work ethic grounded in long hours of conducting research, teaching, or writing papers were the norm in the “male” university (Brink et al. 2013; Remler and Perma 2009).

### **Personal barrier**

With reference to personal barriers, there are two important points of views on women less representation in the upper echelon of academia, Firstly; women do not have the skills or the interests or time to do serious scholarly work. Secondly, men intentionally discriminate because they do not want to share power. But it is not as simple as shows rather, there are some more subtle dynamics at work, and that exist both on the individual and the institutional level (Bombuwela and De Alwis 2013; Batool, Sajid, and Shaheen 2013; Acker 2006; Bailyn 2003). There are predictably some striking differences, or “gaps” for women’s academic responsibilities, household duties, and family situations. Many academic women believe that they have disproportionate responsibilities for service in their departments as they tend to put in longer hours than their male counterparts for childcare, housework, and elder care (Bombuwela and De Alwis 2013; Robbins and Simpson 2009; Side and Robbins 2007). Some women sacrifice their careers to be wives and mothers. Many women take maternity leaves or request shorter workdays to take care of their children. This, too, can hinder their chances of being considered for promotions. There may be simple answers to explain these trends, such as women are more likely to have their careers interrupted by parental leaves (Acker and Armenti 2004), or are unable to stay long due to home and parenting responsibilities, or are hired with less experience than men.

### **Material and methods**

The current study was intended to explore the barriers faced by women in academia and there were two variations in the selection of participants. Firstly, women working on various hierarchical scales i.e. research assistant to Professor/decision-making position. Secondly, four general universities, i.e. Public (large, small), private and public-private were selected randomly. The sample of the study was selected from eleven randomly selected faculties and institutes in each university except small public university as the number of women staff was few, so all the women were the study participants. A list of employees was taken from the respective university's website (many universities do not update their websites regularly) so during the data collection phase, already developed list was matched with existing faculty and amended as per the actual number of staff. There were four hundred and fifty participants selected randomly, after 7 months of rigorous data collection, four hundred and eleven questionnaires were recollected, although the majority of the participants were cooperative, but, due to their busy schedule many of them returned filled questionnaires after repeated visits.

The study was conducted in the Capital of Punjab, Lahore. Punjab Province is divided into three clusters, i.e. Southern, Central, and Eastern. The central cluster was selected randomly which has four districts out of them Lahore was selected intentionally as there were 22 public and 21 private universities in Punjab, and only in Lahore, there were 12 public and 16 private universities (Punjab Development Statistic 2013).

A questionnaire consisted of background and professional qualification related questions, response categories were exhaustive and mutually exclusive, whereas questions regarding the barriers for underrepresentation of women at academic excellence and a position of power were asked on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, to strongly agree. Reliability of the items was checked by applying Cronbach's Alpha and its value is 0.75.

Confidentiality and privacy were important concerns of this research; therefore the participant's identity and their institutes and department's name were converted into pseudo name and identities. Participants were given informed consent forms and told that their participation in this study is voluntary. They are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time.

### **Findings and results**

There were 48.9% participants from large public, 7.8% were from small public, 22.1% were from public-private and 22.2% participants were from a private university. The majority of the respondents, 91.1% were involved in research and academic activities, whereas the only 8.9% were doing administrative work in academic departments.

There were 18% participants from the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, 18.2% from Faculty of Commerce, 12.4% from Faculty of Economics and Management Sciences, 6.3% from the Faculty of Education, 1.5% from the Faculty of Islamic Studies, 5.4% from Faculty of Social Sciences, 28.0% from the Faculty of Science and finally 6.8% Faculty of Law shared 6.8% participants.

As far as background variables of the participants were concerned, though the majority of the respondents, 73.2% were working on permanent tenure, whereas 22.9% were working on contracts, contracts might last from 6 months to 2 years, usually the long term contracts (2 years) have equivalent provisions and benefits to regular employees



but still their contract is subject to renewal. There were only 3.9% employees working as visiting faculty. Substantial numbers of respondents (44.5%) were having a Master of Philosophy/Master of Science (M. Phil/MS) degrees. Although, 33.8% of the participants had Master degrees (equivalent to international Bachelors). Only 14.8% respondents have done doctoral degrees. The significant majority was having varied work experience ranging from 1 to 10 years and 61.1% respondents were married and 67.9% were living either in joint or extended families.

As long as the number of children of the participants concerned, a substantial number of participants 39.9% did not have any child. Whereas, a significant proportion, 23.8% respondents were having one child, and 20.0% respondents have two children and only 1.5% respondents have more than 5 children in the sample. As the majority of the respondents (79.8%) was less than 35 years of their age, so there are high chances of expansion in family size.

It was important to ask respondents to what extent they have the responsibility of managing household work and if they have any assistance or support at home? Dual responsibilities can have a serious impact on employment growth of the women (Taylor-Abdulai et al. 2014). Most of the universities have eight working hours in a day and 5 days in a week. One third majority 75.5% of the participants were working 8 h in a day. After accomplishing work duty in university, a significant majority of women were responsible for managing domestic chores (i.e. cooking, washing and cleaning) as 37.5% have been working 5–6 h daily, and 42.6% women were working 3–4 h daily for managing family and housing responsibilities. This indicated that the vast majority of the working women had to manage their domestic responsibilities themselves, which could have affected their personal and professional lives; they might have to juggle in between. Many of the participants commented, they were not satisfied with their performance at both spheres.

It is evident that academic work and careers in academia evolve diversification within institutional types and academic fields which primarily depend on the type of appointment (regular, full-time, vs. part-time and limited-term). Teaching and research are increasingly being undertaken by different kinds of faculty on different kinds of appointments. Currently, teaching and research are going to be more specialized and teaching emphasis of faculty work has grown, while the resources and actual faculty effort devoted to research have slightly declined (Finkelstein 2014).

So, the set of questions was asked to get the actual picture of publication in scientifically proclaimed sources. A recent research of Kimoto (2015) indicated that mostly male faculty members have been shown to engage positively in research to obtain research funding and greater results. In contrast, female faculty members struggle to strike a balance between the increased demand for undergraduate education and the effort required to research (Kimoto 2015). First of all, it was asked for the participants to fill out the details of any publication which they had until data collection. Significant majority 48.9% of the participants did not have any kind of publication at all, and at the same time, 9.9% of the participants had only one publication, although 8.1% of the participants have two publications, and 7.5% of the participants have three publications and 2.9% of the participants have four, 4.5% of the participants have five, 5.6% of the participants have six, 3.6% of the participants have seven, 9.0% of the participants have more than eight publications. As per the current data, it is somehow visible that women have published less in the sample universities. Although publication is a major pre-requisite to get the promotion and high rank in academia. It is more

likely that if somebody did not meet the prerequisite criteria for promotion, they might stick to lower academic rungs. Some previous researchers have also found that women tend to have higher lecturing and academic workloads, so as a consequence women tend to publish less (Fridner et al. 2015; Schlegelmilch and Diamantopoulos 2015).

So, the rest of 210 (51.09%) participants, who had publications, it asked for them to further fill out the information regarding the type of publications, they had. In response to this query 32.3% of the participants did not have any publication in internationally proclaimed Journals and 21.9% of the participants have only one publication in internationality accredited Journals. Whereas, 13.8% of the participants have two publications in international scientific Journals. Similarly, 41.9% of the participants did not have any publication in national impact factor journals somehow 20.9% of the participants have only one publication and 12.3% of the participants have two publications. At the same time, 93.8% of the participants haven't published any book and 80.5% of the participants have not written any chapter at all, in any book. Finding of this section somehow strengthens believe that women faculty member has published less. Some other studies also indicated that Jones et al. (2012) women faculty members found themselves more overburdened and they concentrate less on research. Another study revealed that in general faculties tend to publish less in recent years to highly competitive and specialized work. They tend to put more work in teachings as compared to research and publication unless they are appointed solely for research (Jones et al. 2012; Rajiv, Chu, and Jiang 2015).

Opportunity networks, national and international travels are essential for professional growth in academia and Jones et al. (2012) found that some women 'excluded from opportunity networks. Uche et al. (2014) conducted a research to find out how the faculty development training and programs could affect faculty's mobility. They found out that female academic participation in developmental programs and their mobility in the system needed to be boosted. The data from the current study revealed 70.0% participants have not attended any kind of training outside of the country. Similarly, 59.6% of the participants have not attended any workshop or training within the country. In the present study 75% of the participants have not attended any kind of conference abroad and 66.9% have not attended any conference within the country. Such academic activities and exposures in universities might have long lasting effect on women's progress and success. As Bosquet et al. (2014) have found out that gender has no significant effect on candidates promotion rates. In contrast, women have a lower probability of being candidates (Bosquet et al. 2014).

Some studies reported that women tend to have higher Lecturing, assistance and administrative workloads compared to men. However, these duties are overlooked in the promotion process that emphasis almost exclusively research and publication outputs (Peetz et al. 2014a, 2014b). So, it was important to ask the participants that what was their prescribe teaching workload and 0.5% of the participants (teaching and lab assistants) had only one course per semester to teach, whereas 12.7% of the participants who were Professors and Associate professors were teaching two courses per semester, as majority of the participants were Lecturers and 70.1% of the participants were teaching three courses per semester, 4.1% of the participants were teaching four courses in a semester. It clearly showed that the majority of the participants was having more teaching workloads as the majority of them were working on low academic hierarchy. A case study was conducted in Sri Lanka to find the perceived personal barriers that inhibit to the career development of women. The study found that there was a lack of organizational support and extensive tasks and working load



(Jayatilake et al. 2014; Britton and M 2010). Increased teaching workload leads to low research productivity and women academics are more burdened at work compared to men (Peetz et al. 2014a, 2014b).

### **Barriers to women's representation in academic excellence and positions of power**

This section intended to find out possible reasons of underrepresentation of women in academic excellence and a position of power in universities. According to Acker (2006) there could be multiple reasons for women's low progress at workplace like sexual, ethnic, racial, religious discrimination or harassment in the workplace, prevailing culture of many workplaces and lack of family-friendly workplace policies (Acker, 2006) at the same time gender-based stereotypes; discrimination and sexual harassment, differences in communication styles, exclusion from informal networks, limited management support for work/life programs, lack of mentors and role-models, occupational sex segregation, and attitudinal and organizational biases (Bombuwela and De Alwis 2013; Vinkenburg et al. 2011) are also responsible for their underrepresentation.

In order to find out which factors could contribute to the underrepresentation of women in universities, Factor analysis of some set of questions which were asked on five points Likert scale was done. Factor Analysis for the underrepresentation of women at academic excellence (AE) and position of power (PP) are below: (Table 1).

If we look at the table, it showed that there are three factors which have Eigenvalue more than 1 and these three factors are explaining the total 47.419% variance (Table 2).

Here analysis produces the rotated component Matrix of each of 3 factors, the factor loadings explain the interaction of variables with each identified factor. These interactions provide extensive insight into important issues in the data set (Table 3).

#### **Factor 1:- Women Competencies (Personal Barriers)**

The first factor indicated that women lack the leadership qualities. It also stated that women are not suitable to fit the image of masculine leaders, while a leader needs a strong decision-making power to implement/ change various policies, which is lacking in most women. Without such powers, women may be competent but not likable as head or organizational representatives. Studies by Bombuwela and De Alwis (2013) and Eagly and Carli (2007) have found similar trends in their studies. They further elaborated that if women's behaviour seems too assertive and masculine at work they may be seen as competent but not likable; if their behaviour is too feminine, they may be seen as likable but incompetent (Eagly and Carli 2007; Bombuwela and De Alwis 2013). Societies set standards of behaviours for individuals in particular cultures as Expectations States theory (Berger et al. 1974) stated that the roles of women for "vertical occupational segregation" lies in perceived roles. This stems from cultural stereotypes of attributes and roles each gender is presumed to occupy relative to the other. These stereotypes help lead men and women to their "respective" fields. Because women are seen as compassionate and nurturing, women continue to assume these roles by pursuing careers which tend to have lower paying salaries or lower status or low positions at workplaces. Similarly, women at the workplace feel their ideas are ignored, or mistakenly discredited to one of their male co-workers (Berger et al. 1974; Siddiqui 2005).

**Table 1** Factor Analysis for Underrepresented of Women AE & PP

Descriptive statistics	Mean	Std. Deviation	Analysis N
Low organizational hierarchical positions are more frequent targets of sexual harassment	3.13	1.114	411
High hierarchical position are more frequent target of sexual harassment	2.48	1.133	411
Women’s underrepresentation at AE and PP is result of SH	2.95	1.206	411
Women’s underrepresentation due to least interest in Profession	2.43	1.326	411
Women’s underrepresentation due to family and parenting	3.27	1.134	411
Women’s underrepresentation due to sticky floor occupations	3.06	1.115	411
Women’s underrepresentation due to patriarchal system	3.18	1.176	411
Organizations prefer to appoint male heads	3.00	1.187	411
Women lack the leadership qualities	2.40	1.146	411
Women lack decision making power	2.55	1.070	411
Women do not fit the image of the (masculine) leader	2.60	1.096	411
Women may be competent but not likeable as Head	2.69	1.178	411

**Factor 2:- Patriarchy (Societal Barriers)**

A second factor indicated that women’s low hierarchical positions in universities could be due to the selection of “sticky-floor” occupation; consequently, the low proportion of women on top hierarchy could also be attributed to women’s least interest in professional growth. It also found that patriarchal setup could intricate into women’s low hierarchical positions, regardless of women’s qualification and education; organizations prefer to appoint male heads. This factor indicated that women may pick or forced to choose occupations, which might have limited chances of growth. Society might prioritize certain professions as more safe and desirable for women which have limited chances to climb the hierarchical ladder. As Kilgour (2012) and Guerrero et al. (2011) have also found that women are encouraged to work in departments that have fewer

**Table 2** Total variance explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	Percent of Variance	Cumulative percent	Total	Percent of Variance	Cumulative percent	Total	Percent of Variance	Cumulative percent
1	3.364	28.034	28.034	3.364	28.034	28.034	2.337	19.474	19.474
2	1.258	10.482	38.516	1.258	10.482	38.516	1.917	15.972	35.446
3	1.068	8.904	47.419	1.068	8.904	47.419	1.437	11.973	47.419
4	1.000	8.330	55.749						
5	.967	8.062	63.811						
6	.881	7.341	71.151						
7	.730	6.086	77.237						
8	.685	5.708	82.945						
9	.598	4.985	87.931						
10	.516	4.299	92.230						
11	.482	4.019	96.249						
12	.450	3.751	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

**Table 3** Rotated Component Matrix<sup>a</sup>

	Component		
	1	2	3
Low organizational hierarchical positions are more frequent targets of sexual harassment	.064	.030	.854
High hierarchical position are more frequent target of sexual harassment	.433	.324	-.184
Women's underrepresentation result of SH at work place	.147	.282	.696
Women's underrepresentation due to least interest in Profession	-.089	.592	.060
Women's underrepresentation due to family and parenting	.214	.426	.294
Women's underrepresentation due to sticky floor occupations	.082	.768	.083
Women's underrepresentation due to patriarchal system	.416	.518	.081
Organizations prefer to appoint male heads	.337	.492	.169
Women lack the leadership qualities	.706	.099	.178
Women lack decision making power	.641	.284	.070
Women do not fit the image of the (masculine) leader	.673	.066	.048
Women may be competent but not likeable as Head	.645	-.062	.134

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis, Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization

<sup>a</sup>Rotation converged in 5 iterations

developmental opportunities (Assistants, secretaries, and health workers, etc.) or do not translate to executive advancement (Guerrero et al. 2011; Kilgour 2012).

### Factor 3:- Hierarchical position (Organizational Barriers)

A third factor highlighted that women working in lower hierarchical positions could be more frequent targets of sexual harassment; further illustrated that underrepresentation of women at higher hierarchical could be the result of sexual harassment. These trends have also been discussed by various researchers in Europe as two third of the harassment complaints alleged that their harasser was in a superior position to them (AHRC, Australian Human Rights Commission 2012). Some 15 years ago Bose and Whaley (2001) found that women with low organizational powers were at enhanced risk of exploitation (Bose and Whaley 2001), this belief was prevalent till recently, jobs characterized by low status, and low organizational power and short career ladders could enhance the risk of traditional model (Supervisor-Subordinate) of harassment at workplace (Haarr and Morash 2013). In addition, women in lower-status positions are more likely to be supervised or managed by men than by women (Haarr and Morash 2013; Jonnergård, Stafsudd, and Elg 2010), which increases the risk of sexual harassment by their male counterparts.

### Conclusion

It is found that there are several barriers which women might be experiencing in academia ranging from fewer publications to extensive teaching workloads. Similarly, family, parenting, inadequate support at home, lack of opportunity networks could also have an impact on women's less progress. Similarly, through Factor analysis, it is established that women lack the leadership qualities. It also itemised that women are not suitable to the image of masculine leaders, while a leader needs a strong decision-making power to implement/change various policies, which is lacking in most women. Cultural stereotypes might not encourage women to be independent and assertive. Whereas demand for the profession discourages too much femininity, shy and weak images. It is also found that women might prefer a path to remain on the lower hierarchical level. They are more prone to work

minimally to sustain the job not to excel. It also found that patriarchal setup could contribute into women's low hierarchical positions, regardless of women's qualification and education; organizations prefer to appoint male heads. Lastly, it was also endorsed that sexual harassment at work could impede women.

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#### Authors' contributions

The first Author is the main writer of the article, this article is a part of a PhD dissertation and second author Prof. Dr. Rudi Schmiede is the PhD supervisor and thoroughly reviewed and approved the article.

#### Competing interest

The author(s) declare(s) that they have no competing interests.

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