

**The Life Stories of Successful Women  
Academics in Pakistani Public Sector  
Universities**

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## **In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful**

Glory be to Thee! We have no knowledge but that which thou hast taught us; surely  
*Thou art the Knowing, the Wise. (Qur'an, 2:32)*

### **DEDICATION**

**I dedicate this study to my parents who taught me the most important lessons in life; Faith in Allah the Almighty and belief that sincerity, honesty and hard work always lead to happiness, peace and success.**

# ABSTRACT

This thesis presents a small-scale qualitative research study of women's careers in some of the universities of Pakistan. The area is explored through the in-depth life story interviews of fifteen women professors, in senior positions, in public sector universities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad.

The rationale for conducting this research is both personal and professional. My work in public sector higher education for more than a decade has developed the need to explore and research the area of higher education from a feminist perspective.

The objective of the study is to understand the lives of these women through their own narratives. I wanted them to share their individual experiences, opinions about their childhood, family, education, work, progress, opportunities and challenges so that I could develop some positive role models for young women aspiring to pursue a career in higher education.

The factors identified both negatively and positively influenced their professional journeys within a theoretical framework of patriarchy. Semi-structured interviews were used, which suited the objectives, as it was expected that more information would be gathered through flowing conversations. The data collected through this process was thematised, interpreted and analysed in the context of the selected theories of family, social position, women and higher education, childcare, and work outside homes within the broader framework of patriarchy. These emerging themes are embedded in the patriarchal values and norms of Pakistani society. An attempt to develop a local feminist lens was made so that a linkage can be formed between women working in Pakistani higher education institutions and elsewhere in the world.

It is anticipated that this research will be a foundation for future research in the area of successful women in leadership positions in Pakistani higher education institutions, and will fill some of the gaps in existing knowledge in the region. I also expect that this research will contribute to existing knowledge about the issue on a global scale.

# **DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP & WORD COUNT**

I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

The word count (exclusive of appendices, the list of references but including footnotes): 47200

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## **The 2,000-WORD STATEMENT**

I am now the Registrar for the first public sector women's university in Pakistan. I am also the course leader for a modular M.Phil degree programme in Higher Education Leadership and Management (HELM). My post and position at the university represent a powerbase for two distinct reasons; one is the fact that I was amongst the first four employees who were part of the team that established the university in 1998. Secondly, the post of Registrar is itself a high-powered position in any university. However, generally, academics/teachers are more respected than administrators in Pakistan.

My initial decision to join the Ed.D international programme was because as Deputy Registrar I recognised the need and nature of my job. It is primarily an administrative job, but also involves participation in policy planning activities. I wanted to give my ideas and practice a theoretical underpinning and also be able to appreciate the academic and research needs of a higher education institution and to contribute to it effectively. I had already spent a year earlier in London as a full-time Master's student and I could not afford to be away for the next 4-5 years to undertake a doctorate because of my family and work responsibilities. The other significant aspect instrumental in my decision to join this programme was the freedom to research on Pakistani issues throughout the degree programme. This option is not easily available in countries like the USA, which offer financial assistance. My desire to explore current issues and existing policies and practices in higher education through the Institutional Focused Study and the thesis seemed possible through this programme. At that time it was difficult to anticipate what would be entailed, but I have always been an enthusiastic traveller and thought that it would keep my spirits high. Little did I know that at times it would become tedious and travelling would become onerous.

The first module, 'Foundations of Professionalism', was not only a reflective exercise, but also my re-entry into an academic environment as a student. This required an effort to make the transition from a successful practitioner to a tentative learner. The formative feedback was humiliating initially. The focus of the essay was professionalism, and it was devastating to receive criticism about work which, in my opinion, I undertook successfully every day. However, counselling and reassurance on the part of my peers and my supervisor gave a

practical dimension to the concept of mentoring on their part and reflection on mine. This certainly helped me regain my diminishing confidence. The summative feedback and satisfactory grade made me pursue the uphill task, despite pressures and deadlines at work. I would like to place it on record that after being graded for my first coursework I wanted to discontinue the programme, thinking I was not good enough to continue. I explored the significance of 'mentoring' and being a 'reflective practitioner' and both are no longer two words in my vocabulary; rather, they are substantial ideas which are imperative for any kind of professional development.

The second model, 'Methods of Enquiry 1', was my first introduction to research methodology despite having a Master's degree from the University of London. In the past, while reviewing research papers I did not consider the methodology section of vital importance. This view, however, has changed to a large extent. Since my personal exposure to research in professional practice, which has been overwhelming and exciting simultaneously, I have realised the importance of defining my methodological approach before embarking on a research project. In terms of personal development, I would now probably be more sympathetic towards my students in their pursuit of research, but I would certainly be more demanding and encouraging in requiring them to develop a concrete profile of methodological concepts to frame their studies, and I would like to share my own experience while encouraging them in this endeavour.

'Methods of Enquiry 2' for me was a follow up of the research proposal I made in the previous module. It was an enriching experience where new knowledge was generated. I had the freedom to criticise and appreciate the body of knowledge I extracted from the enriching responses of those I researched. As is evident from the marker's remarks, this coursework yielded the best comments and grade for me, which could be attributed to the fact that it was a process of research that allowed me to pursue an idea independent of the other limitations of my work environment and encouraged personal growth. The argument developed from the research outcomes, independent of my expectations. This work reiterates the significance of qualitative research based on the emic approach used in countries such as Pakistan, where many research areas are still to be identified. The findings of my research encouraged me further to pursue a larger undertaking including diverse socioeconomic groups to represent various sections of society. I would like to incorporate a formal transcription of the interviews

in my future studies. Furthermore, as Pakistan is a communal society that emphasises the importance of the family as opposed to the individual, it would be beneficial to include either a parent or parents, and perhaps a sibling as well, to collect data and information.

I was happy with the outcome of the study I conducted, particularly in view of the fact that it was accepted for presentation in two international conferences. My papers were appreciated in both conferences, which were well attended by academics, social scientists and researchers from across the world. As a result of this, I was contacted by two academics from the Universities of Michigan and Harvard to contribute to their respective publications about higher education in Pakistan.

The research exercise introduced through these two modules changed my own perception about myself as a professional. I realised that five or seven years' teaching was just the beginning of my professional journey. I wanted to be a researcher – I wanted to explore and discover the real world, existing in and around higher education in Pakistan.

The last module, 'International Education', was an exposure to concepts of different-isms. The literature was vast and limitless, a result of which was that I almost retreated back into my shell and tried to adopt my guarded critique. The theme was also daunting, because for the first time I wanted to explore the elements that were instrumental in developing the national education policy of Pakistan. As a language teacher I was interested in the medium of instruction, and I tried to keep that the focus of the essay. I think it was the first time anyone from Pakistani academia attempted to explore the area of actually critiquing the national education policy on the issue of the medium of instruction. The handicap of difference in academic discourse between my tutors and me was visible after the summative feedback, which was enlightening for a practitioner from Pakistan. If given a chance to rewrite this essay, I would be more critical of the ideas presented in Pakistan's educational policies, as the local dimension is lacking in most of these policies and may be responsible for not achieving the desired and required results. For the first time, the concept of cultural imperialism and educational colonisation became clear to me.

My belief in indigenised solutions to global issues was strengthened further through the articles of Tikly (2004)<sup>1</sup>, Philipson (1998)<sup>2</sup> and Hoogvelt (1997)<sup>3</sup>, each of whom I quoted in my literature review of the assignment.

At the end of these modules I was in a better position to plunge into research, which I took up in the form of my Institutional Focused Study (IFS). Nevertheless, I came across issues not just as an insider, but also as a novice researcher, for example the issues of making contact, language, ethics and confidentiality. Undertaking the IFS was an interesting experience. I interviewed my colleagues, and although all of them were concerned about the same issues of confidentiality, it was encouraging to recognise that they wanted to share their experiences as well. I explored the theme of capacity building and professional development in the context of international institutional linkages. It was qualitative research. The theme was linked closely to my workplace projects and I had a chance to disseminate and share my findings with a colleague at the Institute of Education (IoE) who was reviewing international partnership programmes under DFID, UK. I also contributed to the British Council feedback on the international links scheme as an active partner in Pakistan.

The thesis is definitely a further polishing up of the methodology and process. I set out to look at an area close to my heart – women in higher education. As mentioned earlier, I have explored different areas during my EdD, but the common thread which weaves the fabric of my degree is imbued with the theme of women in higher education. In this instance, I changed my focus from young women to senior women. My reason for this shift was the recognition of the fact that younger women needed more guidance, role models and moral support from senior women academics to survive as academics and researchers. Studying these women has provided me with an opportunity to think about my own goals in life. The process of self-reflection has given me both moments of peace

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1. Tikly, L. (2004) 'Education and the New Imperialism'. *Comparative Education*, 40(2), 2004,. 173-198 Carfax Publishing, Taylor & Taylor & Francis
  2. Phillipson, R. (1998) 'Globalizing English: Are Linguistic Human Rights an alternative to linguistic imperialism?' *Language Sciences*, 20, 101-112.
  3. Hoogvelt, A. (1997) 'Globalisation and the Postcolonial World: The New Political Economy of Development.' Macmillan. Basingstoke.

and of discomfort. Peace prevailed because I was doing something that I wanted to do. Discomfort nagged because, as I suspected, women at one point or another were mistreated but were mostly non-confrontational about the situation.

However, the thing I found most interesting in the whole process of the Ed.D is that it has influenced my practice at work. For example, when I interviewed the FJWU graduates for my MOE 2, I was taken aback to hear that the conservative *Purdah*<sup>4</sup> observing girls thought they were treated discriminatorily in the administration /registry because of their appearance. As a result of this, I, as head of registry, had an informal session with my colleagues and assistants and counselled them to avoid making personal remarks which would offend a student. I realised that if I hadn't interviewed this girl I would have remained unaware of this issue and would have continued to assume that the policy of equality was being practiced in the university. Interviewing the senior women academics further strengthened the idea that the presence of mentors makes a difference in professional life – women need to recognise their own success before they can support their junior colleagues. The process has made me a better professional inasmuch that I have become a thoughtful and better prepared administrator. I know women's nature makes a difference and I want to be a woman who will make a difference in the lives of many other women accessing higher education in Pakistan.

On the intercultural level, there are two very important aspects: one is the context of Pakistani academic culture and the other Western university culture. As an international scholar, I see myself intermingling both to present local issues in the framework of theories developed in the West. For example, when I talk about the Pakistani academic environment, I do not harbour or stimulate critical argument in presenting a case. It does, however, encourage providing concrete evidence in support of one's argument. I am therefore challenging some social norms of Pakistani society. This is evident in virtually all my coursework; it is a guarded presentation of ideas that I am interested in exploring with the help of Western literature. Another significant aspect is that of gender. Working in a women's university gives me space to critique myself. As a dutiful daughter and a

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4. Girls who either cover their heads or wear a long garment to cover themselves.

problem-solving female professional, I am trained to swim upstream without creating ripples – that is in my culture as a woman in Pakistan. Although I was lucky to be exposed to a very competitive higher education environment, I was brought up to be careful, polite and guarded. Positive reinforcement by my peers, colleagues and friends accentuated my style of thinking. The Ed.D programme has helped me in unlearning my quietness and obedience, and has initiated a thought process where I can hear my voice and make myself heard, not as a reiteration of existing voices but as a professional who has independent thought processes and feels academically independent. I not only question my own thoughts, but I also try to provide young colleagues with an opportunity to step back, rethink and question. I understand that this has created tensions at my workplace, as I am only required to manage the existing systems smoothly and not to question the system. For instance, in a professional setting I may be challenging individuals and institutions by voicing my dissent on issues related to higher education, but at the same time my input is now acknowledged as worthwhile by academics who, before this programme, considered me only an effective and efficient manager. I now feel more confident in putting myself forward as an academic on my university's policymaking platforms – I am redefining my existing position in the higher education setting.

In terms of my writing style, I would like to say that I have gradually developed an academic style of writing, having tried very hard to engage in an argument and to distance myself from descriptive writing. Over the years, my writing style has improved as I have been exposed to an academic environment in the UK. To conclude, I can say that as a result of this programme I have developed peace within myself, a harmony between my professional self and academic soul. It has helped me in understanding the phenomena of being an academic researcher. I expect that at the end of this rigorous exercise I will be a better professional, academic and researcher. I will be in a better position to disseminate my new knowledge to Pakistani higher education professionals who have neither the exposure nor the opportunity to access the competitive research culture existing in higher education internationally.



# Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

## Background and Rationale

I work as Register and an adjunct member of faculty at a public sector women's university in Pakistan, which was established in 1998 as the first government-funded women's university in Rawalpindi, Pakistan. Thus, I see myself as one of the stakeholders in higher education in the country. I chose women in leadership positions in the universities of Pakistan as my research focus because I perceived a gap in Pakistani research / literature on the issue. Based on my observations and thirteen years' experience of working in Pakistani higher education, it is clear to me that, as with universities in the West, there is a real, but subtle, glass ceiling in the higher education system of Pakistan, which hinders the progress of women's careers in universities (Glazer-Raymo 1999). As a doctoral student, I have become aware of the need to explore and research the area of higher education from a feminist perspective. There is little published qualitative research about Pakistani higher education, which became even more evident when I reviewed the existing literature and understood the need for my research to generate new knowledge in the context of Pakistan. The purpose of this study is to explore what helps women working in the universities to reach senior positions, to identify the senior women academics who could be role models, and to help young women, who are either academics or aspiring to be academics, to move forward in their careers. As a practitioner in Pakistani higher education, my assumptions were that, generally, women who made it to the top positions of the professional cadre had some family and social support; this research is an attempt to test my assumption.

Pakistan is a developing country with deep social structures of male dominance (Zubair 2006). The element of patriarchy is deeply woven into the fabric of its culture, norms and values (Halai 2004; Lee 1995). The Women's Liberation Movement was launched in the 1970s in Pakistan. Most women's rights, however, were granted under Islamic laws, which were part of the constitution of Pakistan as an Islamic republic (HEC 2004). Although women's right to education has been a slogan for all political and dictatorial governments in Pakistan, very few governments have actually been able to free women from the shackles of the conservative culture. Women's capability is restrained by the unfavourable social

environment; subsequently, they do not get any support from positive laws (ADB 1994; Hassan 1995). Higher education was never the focus of the governments in Pakistan until the early 1990s when the then government, at both provincial and federal levels, introduced a more progressive policy for higher education (HEC 2004). The Education Sector Reforms (ESR) and Model University Act in the years 2000 and 2002 introduced a policy of merit and equality in employment (HEC 2004). The government, through the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan (HEC), introduced a standardised system for recruitment and promotions in public sector universities. The criteria for progression at present are length of service and other factors such as research publications and relevant teaching and research experiences. As a result of these reforms, Pakistani women have better access not only to jobs in universities at entry level, but also to promotion, including to senior positions such as dean, professor and so on (HEC 2004). The same is elaborated under the section on the structures of Pakistani universities. The statistics, however, remained more or less the same up to 2004 when there were 674 male and only 77 female professors in the public sector universities of Pakistan (Najam 2006).

## **Gaps in Existing Literature**

I explored the publications of two women's studies centres in two major Pakistani universities based in the provinces of Punjab and North West Frontier Province, but I was unable to locate any qualitative research or data about women professors. Later, I identified women's studies centres in three other public sector universities and accessed them during the course of my research. I located literature on gender in the Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) sector, but none relates to women working in higher education or women's progression in university leadership. One piece of published research was funded by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and conducted by the governments of Bangladesh, Indonesia, Lao P.D.R., Malaysia and Pakistan in 1994 (ADB 1994). The study about Pakistan is based on 75 Pakistani women, and concludes that 'family support, notably by the mothers, husbands and other male members of the family' (Hassan 1995: 115) is a strong factor influencing their careers in different fields such as arts, medicine, engineering, and so on. 'Family position and influence' (Ibid) is acknowledged as another significant aspect by almost all the participants of that study, which was published by Allama Iqbal Open University, Pakistan, in 1995. It is important to highlight that out of the 75 Pakistani women in the sample, only four were from



Pakistani universities and the higher education sector. I was also able to locate some more statistics on women vice-chancellors, deans, professors and heads of the departments as part of conference presentations and proceedings, and these refer to the scarcity of women in senior positions (ACU 2002). A recent publication by the Association of Commonwealth Universities presents statistics about women in senior management positions in the university, and the picture is still unchanged for many developing countries. For example, in Pakistan there are 588 professors in the country's universities out of which 116 are women, which represents 19.7% of the total population in 2006. It is important to note that this percentage was at 8.5% in 1997 (Singh 2008). The researchers mentioned above did not go beyond statistics, and there is a need to study the lives of these women in greater depth and detail, so that the factors that have helped these women in their professional journey can be identified and shared with young, aspiring women. Almost all of the abovementioned studies and presentations attribute this situation to government policies, but none of them highlights the narratives of the few women who have made it to the top in the same universities.

The need to explore the patterns of the career progression of other female colleagues working in the universities of Pakistan has emerged from the context I have just described and from reflection upon my own career in higher education. My aim was to research leading women academics in Pakistan in order to understand more generally the factors – both negative and positive – that influenced their career journeys within the social setup of a patriarchal country. This particular feature of the social setup also led me to use patriarchy as the framework for my study. It is important to share that, being a young professional who started working in a university ten years ago, I perceived a gap in the system, especially for women, as there were not as many role models as required.

Before moving forward to an explanation of my theoretical framework and a review of literature around patriarchy and a feminist perspective, in the following paragraph I highlight the concepts that are significant in understanding my research and the themes that have emerged because of this study. The concepts are then retraced in the subsequent chapters as part of the data presentation and analysis.

## **Feminism and Pakistan**

Feminism in Pakistan is nuanced differently for different classes and sections of society. Broadly speaking, for some of the women in the upper social class it is synonymous with liberty and freedom, while for middle class women working in or outside the home it is more like an intellectual debate or dialogue about improving the existing conditions of the women around them. However, it seems to me that uneducated women from underprivileged areas perceive it as a slogan for peaceful protest or holding placards to support downtrodden women.

The West has passed through different phases and approaches to feminism such as the first, second or third waves of feminism. Pakistan, on the other hand, has gone through different phases of feminist activism, and women have shown solidarity with the women of the rest of world, for example, by celebrating Women's Day on March 8 every year. Ali (2000) identifies the 'process of development for Muslim women in terms of their private and public life' and that they 'were given space to participate in public spheres' (p. xviii).

For the purpose of this thesis, feminism will be defined as an effort to contend with patriarchy in the way it is manifested in Pakistan. I have used it as an overall framework to understand the life stories of the women professors working in Pakistani universities. It is appropriate to highlight that in the context of Pakistan most of the Western literature on gender and feminism published in the late 70s and early 80s seems to fit the presently existing social structures of Pakistan at the turn of the century. Therefore, in my experience, some of the issues around feminism, identified a quarter of a century ago in the West, are still pertinent in the Pakistan of today. There are two core points in this research, both of which require a better understanding with the help of patriarchy theory and a feminist perspective; firstly, women by and large do not control their destiny, while secondly, how do they gain senior positions in the workplace? This is with a concern that women do not occupy positions of power.

Pakistan is a country with an oral tradition. There is a scarcity of documented evidence to support some of the points made by my interviewees later in the data chapters, but these points are substantial in understanding their perceptions and viewpoints, so they are presented

in this section. The purpose of introducing these ideas in this chapter is to support the themes that will form part of the later data chapters.

## **Women and Higher Education**

Women are missing from senior posts in higher education globally, a fact supported by studies conducted in the UK, the USA, Norway, Greece, Germany and New Zealand (Bornstien 2008; Brooks 1997; David and Woodward 1998). The European Commission, in its survey a decade ago, found that in 24 countries women outnumber men in the acquisition of higher education (EC 1997). Even in Scandinavian countries, which have the highest percentage of women studying for higher degrees, there is a low percentage of females in academic jobs. For example, Finland, which boasts a 50% participation of women in the labour market, has only 13% as women professors and 22% as associate professors. In a recent report, the percentage of women professors in EU countries had risen (EU 2003; EU 2006; Finland 1998). Similarly, in Sweden, the proportion of women professors a decade ago was just 9%. In the Netherlands, women make up only 5% of professorial posts compared with 60% at lower levels (Blokdijs-Hauwert 1998). Subsequently, like all other statistics on women's representation, this research, which was conducted almost a decade ago to identify and categorise some of the hurdles in the women's career progression towards senior positions in secondary and higher education (Brown and Ralph 1996; Hall 1996; Coleman 2001), is true for Pakistan today. Recent research in Pakistan on the education sector states:

There is very little discourse on Pakistani women and their experiences in leadership and the role of gender in educational leadership.

(Qureshi and Rarierya 2007: 198)

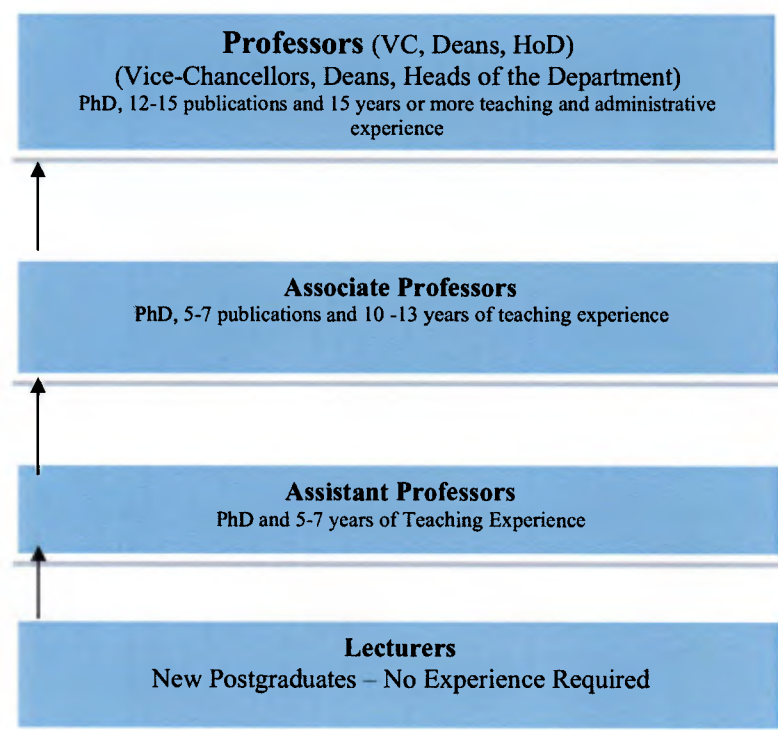
According to Dyer (2004), a report by the American Association of University Women (AAWU) states that women professors only constitute one-fifth, and associate professors one-third, of the total population of academics in American universities. Morley (2005), particularly, observes in her study that 'gender and higher education are rarely researched qualitatively in countries outside the West' (p.111). As mentioned earlier, there are some studies available, but most of them are small-scale, unpublished works. Based on an observation made in a gender equity paper (Najam 2006), and as a member of Pakistani

society and a professional in a developing country, I can say that a few in-depth qualitative studies on higher education do exist in Pakistan. This point is reiterated further in statistics, which indicate that women are far less represented in senior academic and management positions than their male counterparts (Morley 2005). More recently, Singh (2008), in her report 'Whispers of Change', states that there is a 'marginal improvement' in the percentage of women in top positions in academia (p.12). To understand the local scenario in Pakistani higher education, further information on the structures and system will be helpful.

## The Structure in Pakistani Universities

The service structure of Pakistani public sector universities is explained below in order to clarify the career progression of academics working in the universities. The following Figure 1 explains the key stages of promotion in universities in Pakistan.

*Figure 1: Key Stages of Progression in the Pakistani University Service*



The proportion of male to female academics in universities is significant in the case of Pakistan where a larger number of women enter as lecturers compared to men, who often enter on a higher salary and seniority scale. There are no hard statistics to show this unbalance, but because I thought this might be true, I rang the relevant universities to confirm my impression. There are different reasons for this disparity, and some of the more significant of these are mentioned below. Higher education reforms in 2000 in Pakistan and subsequent policies to improve the standard of higher education have made it compulsory for faculty members to have a PhD degree and research publications for any promotion beyond the stage of assistant professor. In addition to this, funding to study for doctorates, at present, is available only to academics below the age of 40 (HEC 2006). As a result, a number of women who started to work in higher education more than a decade ago without doctorates have been disadvantaged and cannot go beyond the stage of assistant professor in a university. This problem does not end here, as some of the women who are able to study for doctorates (for example, in one particular public sector university this figure is 6 out of 28 women) declined to take up the award of foreign funding for doctoral studies because of family commitments, which included looking after their unwell or elderly parents. This is complicated further at senior level, as other women cannot avail themselves of the opportunity to do post doctorates and other research projects because of marital or other commitments. It is comparatively simpler for their male counterparts to pursue such opportunities to advance their careers. Twenty or so years ago, in the West, men reached the peak of their academic career between the ages of 45-49, whereas for women it was almost five years later (Brown and Ralph 1996). The same is true for Pakistan now, where a woman does not become a professor before the age of 50-55. Women in Pakistan, like in other countries, still find it difficult to balance family and work, and so they are slower in completing the necessary qualifications which would lead to seniority and success.

There are a number of other perspectives to the issue. The job structure in universities is pyramid-shaped. For example, a department will have six or seven lecturers' posts at entry level, but only three or four posts for assistant professors, two to three associate professors and only one or two posts for professors. Consequently, women rarely make it to the top positions because they have fewer support networks (see Chapter 7) to promote themselves

within the statutory bodies<sup>1</sup> of universities. For example, in public sector universities there is a higher percentage of male faculty members, who then support their male counterparts in elections for representative positions on statutory bodies. Another significant issue is the presence of male members from government administrative departments. For instance, a public sector university will have ex-officio members from the Departments of Education, Finance and Law along with one judge from a high court, which in most cases are men. Even in the Women's University, the syndicate consists of 14 members in all, out of which seven or eight are necessarily men. If there are no or few women present at such senior levels, there are not enough to influence decision-making on such boards and thus to appoint and encourage more women.

## **Women Working in Universities**

The interviewees in this study were academics exposed to Western ways of thinking, as some of them had doctorates in social sciences and humanities and some in natural sciences from foreign universities. The others had undertaken postdoctoral work abroad. However, most of the interviewees did not have a way of theorising their perceptions and narratives as women working in higher education in Pakistan. Thus, they did not attempt to make a connection between social or economic theories and their own social positions in the context of their profession. This meant that, overall, they did not analyse their perceptions or narratives in their interviews. A reason for this could be that 'reflection' as a practice in the workplace is not common amongst professionals, although they all use the process of reflection in their personal lives at home in the context of their social positions as mothers, wives and daughters, where they rationalise their actions and decisions related to the family situation. Throughout this study, I have tried to embed their stories in the framework of patriarchy from a feminist perspective, identifying the relevant wider and international literature that exists in the field of women in senior positions (Nina 1988; Lather 1991; Maynard and Purvis 1994; David 1998; Glazer-Raymo 1999). This point is elaborated further in the sections on feminist perspectives in Chapters 2 and 3.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, Senate / Syndicate/ Board of Governors and Selection Boards

## **Social Aspects**

The cultures of South Asia are largely gender stratified, characterized by patrilineal descent, patrilocal residence, inheritance and succession practices that exclude women, and hierarchical relations in which the patriarch or his relatives have authority over family members.

(Jejeebhoy and Sathar 2001)

The social and cultural context of Pakistani society is predominantly patriarchal, and men and women are divided conceptually into two separate worlds. Home is defined as a woman's legitimate ideological and physical space, while a man dominates the world outside the home. As the Asian Development Bank (ADB) publication (2000) states, in the social context of Pakistan, women lack social value and status because of the negation of their roles as producers and providers in all social contexts. Women belonging to the upper and middle classes have increasingly greater access to education and employment opportunities and can assume greater control over their lives. The most powerful aspect of social and cultural context is the internalisation of patriarchal norms by men and women.

In the context of the abovementioned details of the sample, it is also important to outline some background information about the social structures of Pakistani society. This covers aspects of social class, family and marriage as well as other aspects such as children, their sex and number, religious beliefs and practices, role models, leadership roles and women.

### **Social Class of the Position of Women in Pakistan**

The status of women in Pakistan is not homogeneous because of the interconnection of gender with other forms of exclusion in society. There is considerable diversity in the status of women across classes, regions and the rural/urban divide due to uneven socioeconomic development and the impact of tribal, feudal and capitalist social formations on women's lives. However, the woman's situation vis-à-vis men is one of systemic subordination, determined by the forces of patriarchy across classes, regions and the rural/urban divide (FBS 2000: 1).



In this study, I am not comparing male and female positions. However, it is imperative to understand that the women I interviewed experienced different class contexts because of their familial background, their fathers' professions or occupations, and later their spouses' jobs and statuses. Subsequently, their own successful positions as professionals working in the academy cannot be identified as a pattern. This diverse experience requires an understanding of Pakistan's class or position system. In the following paragraphs, I have attempted to describe the phenomenon of social class in Pakistan in the context of this study.

Hardly any existing literature in Pakistan refers to the social classes and their classification in the country. However, some psychosocial researchers such as Qadir (2005) and Mumford et al. (2000) have conducted research, which quantitatively measured different indicators of wealth to assess the socio-economic class of individuals and families.

'In the first three decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the term "class" replaced "estates", "ranks" and "orders" as a major word to show divisions within society' (Bauman 1989:110). "Class" is primarily an economic phenomenon, and usually individuals are grouped into classes based on their economic positions and similar political and economic interests within the stratification system. Based on this, there are three classes in Pakistan: lower, middle and upper, and these are then further stratified into lower middle, middle middle and upper middle based on assets and income. There are then specific categories within economic classes that have more social connotations than economic such as the landed gentry (the feudal class), people who work in government or semi-government organisations on monthly salaries (the salaried class) and so on. Unfortunately, there is no Registrar General's definition of social class in this context, as available in the UK. Other classifications include social classes, which are identified around professions and occupations. For example, secondary and higher secondary schoolteachers are middle class, but senior university academics, because of their prestige and status in society, will be upper middle class, irrespective of their assets and income. Different countries have different classifications of social classes, but in Pakistan this particular aspect is hardly explored from a woman's perspective. For this particular research, it is important to understand that these women professors are part of a complex class system in Pakistan that is not necessarily based on economic factors, but, to a great extent, on social positions – their own, their parental family's and their husband's.



I should reiterate at this point that I was not exploring social class in particular when I conducted the interviews, so I did not ask the interviewees about their income and assets; nevertheless, on occasion, they volunteered some information about themselves that was indicative of their class, or at least their financial position, which seemed to me to influence their journey towards success. By design, I was not focusing on class as an individual dimension of the women's experiences, but it has inevitably become a significant feature of the research, as some of the interviewees chose to share their parental social class or financial situation, especially in the context of school choice. I can conclude easily, therefore, based on my observations as a professional, that women professionals can perceive themselves to pass through different social classes in their lifetimes, based on their social positions and marital status.

Published statistics show that Pakistani women in employment account for barely 28% in a country where the female population is approximately 50% (GoP 2007). The effects of this quantity are also observed in the meagre number of women in senior positions in academia (World Bank 1998).

## **Family Structures in Pakistan**

The family is the basic unit of society in Pakistan, consisting of two major types of family structure – joint (extended) and nuclear (Mies 1998). The nuclear family, as evident from the name, constitutes basic members, i.e. husband, wife and children. In some cases, a family may be nuclear in structure, but they may have a joint composition at their permanent place of residence, for example their grandparents' home, where all major events like celebrating religious and other occasions are held. Therefore, there are few households that have a nuclear setup unsupported by a joint family. This type of setup also curtails the power position of women, as the joint family has two or three generations living together under one roof. The joint family system in Pakistan has stronger roots than the nuclear family, and is considered more traditional. The nuclear family is more modern in structure, and is centred only on the husband and wife with their children. The joint family values are deeply entrenched in a patriarchal value system, which is instrumental in defining a woman's position in a patriarchal society from her birth as a female child. A female in a male-dominated society experiences many disadvantages (Qadir et al. 2005b). Therefore, some uneducated conventional or

traditional families consider daughters a burden; a girl compared to a boy is not considered an investment because they are to be married and to become part of their husband's household. Their parents are therefore not expected to benefit from their labour. It is possible that daughters who experience disadvantage or are not welcomed into the family at their birth will be married off heedlessly and relatively young by their families (Khan and Reza 1998). Subsequently, early marriage limits educational opportunity, autonomy and financial independence. This concept is elaborated further in the following section on women and marriage.

## **Marriage and Women in Pakistan**

Marriage is recognised as a significant phenomenon in human life by sociologists and anthropologists. It has been defined as a culturally approved relationship between a man and a woman (Oppong 1989: 487). The same phenomenon becomes more significant in a patriarchal society where the presence of a male child is important in a family, as the powerbase lies with men. Apart from the general notion that procreation is the primary reason for marriage, there are other aspects. One reason for this is the social structure of society, whereby women need the presence of men in their lives for different physical, social and economic needs. In a male-dominated society like Pakistan, marriage is seen as the most standard and stable living form for adults. 'Pakistani women tend to see marriage as a social and familial obligation requiring them to be prepared to adjust as the man seldom does' (Qadir et al. 2005a: 195). Arranged marriages have been an integral part of Pakistani society, and it is quite normal for people to have their marriages planned by their parents and other respected family members. Arranged matches are made in Pakistan after taking into account factors such as the backgrounds of their families (wealth, social standing and caste). In most cases, it is either the father or the brothers who decide the future of the women of the family in the context of marriage. Semi-arranged marriage lies between the arranged and love marriage. It is a relatively new phenomenon in which the girl is given a chance to make a choice before an arranged proposal for marriage is finalised. For example, in some cases, the couple initiates the process and, in some cases, it is the family and friends who initiate the proposal. The second stage is when consent from the family or the couple is taken respectively.

In my sample, I had women whose marriages were arranged or semi-arranged by their parents and families. For example, Professor Andulasite, who is married to the brother of her sister-in-law, shared in her interview that she asked her prospective husband for the marriage proposal. Once it was agreed, both families were happy to give their consent.

Another type of marriage in Pakistani society is the cousin marriage. The Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) of Pakistan states that two-thirds of marriages in Pakistan are consanguineous, which means within families, amongst cousins. The sociocultural determinants of such marriages remain largely unexplored. There is a relation of the cousin marriage with three commonly perceived aspects: religious, economic and cultural. However, following religious traditions, economics is the least commonly cited reason for such marriages (DHS, 2001; Curtis and Arnold, 1994). Despite the reported sociocultural advantages of consanguineous marriages such as adaptability and familiarity, such marriages in some quarters are perceived to be exploitative of women, as they perpetuate existing power structures within the family (Hussain 1999). Most of these types of marriages are decided by fathers or the male head of the family. Love marriages are not socially acceptable, even today in middle class families, but that does not indicate that they are not popular. Love marriages do take place – sometimes families support them, and sometimes they do not. The situation varies from case to case and cannot be generalised (Agarwal 2005; Mody 2002).

The age of women at the time of marriage, as well as the type of marriage, are both very important in the lives of women in general and professional women in particular. A published report generated by the Asian Development Bank (2000) for Pakistan stated that the average age of women at marriage increased from 17.9 years in 1951 to 20.8 years in 1981. At that time, about 23 per cent of females between the ages of 15 and 19 were married, compared to 5 per cent of the male population in the same age group.

The current rough statistics on the average age of women at the time of marriage, as generated by the National Institute of Population Studies (NIPS) in Pakistan, show an improvement of a couple of years from 1990s. The thirteen women in the sample of this study were married in the 1980s, but contrary to the statistics regarding the average age of marriage in 1981, 75% of these women got married after the age of 30, which is at least nine years more than the average age at that time. It is mentioned in the same report that, apparently, a majority of

women were married to their close relatives, i.e. first and second cousins, while only 37 per cent of married women were not related to their spouses before marriage. No such similarity or homogeneity was observed regarding the type of marriage of the women I interviewed. Subsequently, on average, a Pakistani woman bore seven to eight children and peak fertility was between 20 and 24 years (Shaheed and Mumtaz 1996: 59). However, for my sample, the maximum number of children was three. The unique features of my sample are elaborated in the chapter on marriage to emphasise further the unusual aspect of their lives in comparison with the general population of the country, as reflected in the abovementioned statistics. Only two out of the 15 women were unmarried, but this did not come across as a conscious choice in the interviews; rather, they remained single because no suitable men were available for marriage.

The institution of marriage also has some religious connotations in Islam, where it is interpreted from the Holy Quran that marriage is a social duty on the part of the community to preserve humankind. A family can take its origin only through a formalised marriage in Islam, which indicates that the idea of religion has its significance in the practical lives of Pakistani women. The same is expanded in the following section, as all my interviewees were Muslim women.

## **Religion and Women in Pakistan**

Pakistan is an Islamic country in which values are embedded in its culture and tradition. The middle class in Pakistan is not deeply religious or conservative, but is conventional in its religious practices and norms. Most of the interviewees belonged to the middle class and upper middle class, so I was not expecting any detailed comment on religion. In addition, my focus was not on religion or religious practices, although I was looking forward to some comments on Islam and its practices and role in the lives of these women. Interestingly, two women wore hijab and one covered her head loosely with a scarf. Nevertheless, irrespective of the appearance of the interviewees, none of them talked about religion or any specific aspect related thereto. However, some of them talked about conventional ways of living in their parents' houses, as well as some traditional practices in their marital home that they shared with their husbands and parents-in law.

It is also significant to note that Islam in its true spirit is a very liberating religion, as it gives many rights to women, which are usually denied culturally and socially. For example, the struggle to seek knowledge and, similarly, a woman's right to choose a partner in life were highlighted by some of the professors in their narratives for this study. However, none of the perceptions presented by these professors either straightens or weakens the argument that women in an Islamic society/country are in any way supported differently in their careers or professional lives than non-Islamic liberal women.

## **Women as Role Models in Pakistan**

One of the most important aspects identified and recognised globally is the lack of women role models in senior positions in academia (Luke 2001; Lam 2006). For young professional people, it is of high importance to have a role model, usually in the form of mentors who can help them process and plan their careers. In many institutions, the issue of gender is entwined with role models and mentoring. Spurling (1990) observed that women are initially encouraged as junior colleagues by their seniors and peers, but later their colleagues, both male and female, feel threatened by them as they move forward in terms of seniority. The issue of a role model and the need to have one for young women emerges as one of the needs perceived by both the interviewees and the researcher. This is discussed further in Chapter 6.

## **Where Do I Locate Myself as a Woman, Practitioner and Researcher?**

This study was initiated because of personal and professional interest. I am the eldest daughter in a conservative family of three females and one male sibling. A military father and a mother who worked as an academic brought me up. My life as a child was a good mix of patriarchal and conventional values. To add to my experience and exposure as a young woman, I accessed higher education to Master's degree level in a coeducation university in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP), a culturally conservative province of the country. Subsequently, as a professional practitioner, my first job was in a women's postgraduate college as a language teacher, and later I joined the Women's University as an administrator. I had not planned a career in higher education, though. Like any other girl from the educated

salaried class, my family prepared me to be financially independent if the time ever came where I needed to sustain myself; otherwise, it was assumed that I would be looked after by my parents until I was married, and then I would be my husband's responsibility. Interestingly, I have not married so far and have continued to work as an administrator in the university. My enrolment into the doctoral programme was also the beginning of my interest in formal academic research. My appetite as a researcher was whetted when I experienced large gaps in the area of women and higher education in Pakistan. As a woman in higher education in Pakistan, I gained from my senior female colleagues and helped young female entrants at the university. However, I also experienced that women had to work harder than men to prove that they were worthy of the job they were doing, and so they hardly enjoyed their success if, indeed, they recognised it. This presented a morose picture for the young women aspiring to join as professionals in higher education.

In the context of the above, I felt the need to explore and bring out experiences in the lives of women in universities, because I worked in a women's university and had come across many women in senior positions who were successful in their field, but existed on their own island. They did not share their expertise or experience with their young colleagues. For my thesis, I read literature around women professors, leadership and universities, and I was focused on exploring the area as it was related to my work as well. The need to locate the factors behind these women and their success became stronger day by day.

It is fair to acknowledge that in my limited professional experience and fulfilling family life, I never understood what gender disadvantage meant in the context of family. I did not know how one survived without the support from parents or other family members. However, it was a rewarding experience to hear these life stories, as most of the stories these women shared were similar in content, even if they worked in other mixed public sector universities in Pakistan. It was heartening to see that despite their gender, social and class disadvantages, they were able to reach these positions of success in their lives.

## **Insider or Outsider, or Both**

As a researcher, it is important to understand that some issues can be anticipated, while some cannot be pre-empted. My previous research experience in Pakistan led me to believe that my



interviewees, who were all senior in position, would also hold a position or power in the field of research. My own position, however, is substantially senior in the higher education domain, and, as a result, the analysis includes my input as an insider. I want to highlight that I was trying to explore the perceptions of senior women professors as a female researcher. I knew that as a female researcher in Pakistan I was in a better position to talk to my colleagues than a male researcher would be. I had an ethical responsibility to avoid a researcher's bias, which is not to move from the role of a researcher to that of an advocate (Robson 2002). This required careful listening on my part. I was sensitive to sociocultural aspects, as I felt I was privy to information regarding their personal and professional lives and, subsequently, a power relationship was expected to exist during the process of interviewing. I was also aware of the issue of confidentiality, which is discussed in detail on page 65 of this thesis. As my research approach is within a qualitative paradigm, so the possibility of bias certainly existed; however, I kept my interview schedule flexible and made it explicitly clear to the senior women professors who agreed to participate that I was undertaking this research for academic purposes and that I would not be making any personal or professional judgements about them.

The dilemma of identifying as an insider researcher and/or an outsider researcher loomed heavily at the beginning of the research process. As a practitioner in a public sector university, I was automatically part of the community of women academics, and for the research I wanted to achieve the status of an outsider researcher to overcome any biases. The literature supports that both researcher and narrator hold positions of power, especially in qualitative interviews where the narrator has the information and the power to choose how to respond and may give desirable answers (Robson 2002; Mauthner 2002). The researcher, on the other hand, may guide the respondent by interjecting to ensure the direction of the interview. This issue is discussed in some detail in the methodology chapter.

## **The Structure of the Thesis**

This thesis presents a qualitative research study about women's careers in universities in a patriarchal country, namely Pakistan. Using the interview method, I explored this area through life story interviews with women in senior positions in the public sector universities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad in Pakistan. The reason for choosing the public sector was that it is more flexible in terms of promotions, seniority and salaries. My approach to the study was

feminist and interpretive, drawing on such tools as experience and critical events. The second chapter is a brief literature review of the overall framework of patriarchy and feminism from the feminist perspective. As mentioned earlier, I explored the basic phenomenon of feminism and how it can help in improving women's conditions. I also defined the concept of patriarchy and how it is closely linked with higher education, as well as its significance in women's lives, especially women working outside their homes in a patriarchal society. The literature review of different themes emerging from the data is not included in the second chapter, but is explored within the data chapters, namely Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7.

The third chapter is the methodology chapter, which gives a rationale for the methods identified and used for the research. The ethical approach as part of the methodological perspectives of the study is highlighted thoroughly. As this was in-depth qualitative research, within which I conducted life story interviews, there is a distinctive section in the chapter, which is a 'reflection on the process', in which I discussed the physical and emotional strains of the whole research process. As someone who found it difficult to locate a research group at my workplace in Pakistan, I was not initially aware of the stress and strain of the research activity upon myself, while most of my interviewees considered the interview process as self-realisation, self-exploration or therapeutic.

The **fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh** chapters are the thematic data chapters. There were several different themes emerging from the data; however, I have only drawn out the issues referred to repeatedly by almost all of the interviewees in their interviews. This does not mean that the issues, which were unique and not common in nature, were not presented in these chapters. On the contrary, I have tried to give a holistic picture so that it forms a rounded image for the reader.

I would like to bring forward here two very important aspects regarding not so common issues. The first is the nature of particular information that could identify my respondent easily, so for the sake of anonymity and confidentiality I did not make them a part of my data chapter. For example, one of the interviewees talked about her unhappiness in the context of her sexual relationship with her husband, as it was causing stress in her life. The other interviewees did not mention anything similar in their interviews, so I thought it would not be possible to completely anonymise or analyse the point, although I feel it is a significant area



that requires further detailed exploration. The second important aspect is the conscious decision on my part not to draw out issues that show negativity due to personal situations. For example, some of the women made statements vis-à-vis their career journey, which were not in complete agreement with some comments they made earlier in their conversation; nevertheless, I did not highlight these because the purpose of the life story interviews was not to make a critical appraisal of the perceptions and lives of these women. As mentioned earlier, one of the purposes of the study was to bring forth the factors that helped these women in becoming successful. In addition, my aim was to identify them as individual role models for the young professional working in universities and present positive aspects and social support networks which facilitated the career progression of these women.

The chapter dealing with the theme of the family had to be split into two because of the large amount of data collected. Chapter 4 relates to the family of origin, meaning parents and siblings, while marriage and family of marriage, meaning husband, in-laws and children are explored in Chapter 5. Therefore, through these chapters, I present the perceptions of my interviewees about the significance and influence of family and family members in their lives. I attempt to analyse their narratives and determine their impact on their personal and professional lives. There is robust evidence indicating that both mothers and fathers have important roles in their children's emotional stress and self-development (e.g. Li and Kerpelman 2007; Burns and Dunlop 2003; Videon 2005). There is further support suggesting interplay of expectations of gender role within the family and the social class of the family as it affects the growing years of a girl child. When I was planning this research, one of my key interests was to locate the reasons and factors that helped these senior academic women to move forward and upward in their careers. In my interview schedule, I specifically asked them to highlight the presence of any such individual in the network who they perceived as supportive. Almost all of the women, both single and married, narrated instances related to their family support. They also pointed out the presence of one or more male relative including father or husband who influenced and supported their careers in one way or the other. Four women also recognised the support of their mothers, as vital part of support network.

The **sixth chapter** is developed on the theme of 'Educational Achievement and its impact'. This chapter covers educational experiences including schooling and higher educational

opportunities in both Pakistan and abroad. I have highlighted the aspects my interviewees perceived as significantly affecting their professional life in later years. A very interesting phenomenon in this chapter is the work experience outside Pakistan while they were completing their doctoral studies and other research work.

The **seventh chapter** is based on the perceptions and narration of these senior academics about their life experiences and the paths they took to initiate their journeys as professionals. They expressed their experiences of working in universities and their progress through publications and promotions. A significant aspect of this theme was postdoctoral research exposure and work experience, which they thought added to their lives.

**Chapter eight** focuses mainly on summing up the thematic chapters and presenting an overall analysis of the themes and issues identified. As a practitioner in the higher education sector, I have been involved in the issues pertaining to university policy and management of the last ten years. Therefore, I have analysed the interviews in the light of my experience in higher education in Pakistan and the UK.

## **Conclusion**

To conclude the chapter, I can say that a journey of a thousand miles has been initiated by this research. I went through the interesting experience of listening to beautiful and inspiring life stories by some of the very most senior women in Pakistani higher education. It was heartening to see that despite their gender, social and class disadvantage some were able to reach positions of success. I hope that this will be a source of inspiration not only for Pakistani women, but also for the women around the globe, where everyone is trying hard to balance their personal and professional lives.

# **Chapter 2: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES: A LITERATURE REVIEW**

## **Introduction**

In light of the rationale given in the first chapter for taking on this research, I have tried to develop a theoretical framework in order to develop my research questions and my research methodology. I have also kept these theories as the overarching framework for interpreting the data I collected and to develop a particular Pakistani lens through which global feminists can understand practices in Pakistan in the context of women's progression in work and their success in academia.

This chapter introduces the theoretical framework of the research. I have used feminism as a framework, which has helped in developing my research questions and methodology. Patriarchy is used as a main theoretical framework for the research because it is based in Pakistan, which is a patriarchal country (see Chapter1). Subsequently, if I was going to explore the lives of women, it was important to understand how these women dealt with patriarchal structures in their journey toward education and a career. Although it is difficult to admit to being a feminist researcher in Pakistan, I deliberately chose the feminist perspective as my methodology because it helped me to understand patriarchy and gender relations in the country. Both of the frameworks are key concepts in identifying the research questions for my study, i.e. how do women in senior positions in academia become successful? What and who affects their lives and career progression? The fabric of my thematic chapters is interwoven with the data, its analysis and relevant literature specific to the themes emerging from the interviews. The endeavour is to provide an insight into the notion of patriarchy in the context of women's lives as senior academics in higher education through life stories.

## **Theoretical Frameworks**

Before proceeding with the theoretical frameworks, it is important to clarify what I mean by ‘feminism’ and how it is enmeshed with a feminist perspective for this study. As mentioned earlier, feminism is used to understand the structures and role of patriarchy from a feminist perspective. The concept of patriarchy is used as a main theoretical framework that helps in understanding the underpinnings of patriarchal structures and values in a male-dominated society and how women manage it or use it to their benefit. The following paragraphs define the two frameworks and explain how the theories are used for the development of research questions and for interpreting the data.

### **Feminism**

Feminism includes a number of social, cultural and political movements, theories and moral philosophies concerned with inequalities of gender and more rights for women. Some of the authors who have written on the subject say that it is difficult to define feminism because it includes so much in terms of theories and movements (Freedman 2001; Gamble 2001; Freeman 1979). Humm (1992) explained feminism as:

... a diverse movement both culturally and historically and its objectives have been endorsed worldwide. The extent to which feminism has been effective can be evaluated by the extent to which its discourse has become part of everyday thinking.

(p 231)

In the light of this definition, which is not the only definition but probably pertinent to my research, it is quite evident that in Pakistan, feminism as a political standpoint is still an enigma for people in academia. In the late 1960s and early 70s, Pakistani civil society witnessed feminist activism in the country through the Women’s Liberation Movement. The late 80s and early 1990s saw the introduction of women and gender studies in higher education institutions. Although the movement has been part of cultural values and norms for the last three to four decades, the ‘F.....m’ word has been taboo, in general for both men and women. Even women working full-time outside their homes are very careful about its usage. Despite their social and economic freedom, they mostly prefer not to be associated with research or academic work that includes feminism or is conducted by a feminist researcher for

sociocultural reasons. Their male counterparts feel threatened by the word and are not encouraging. However, irrespective of these instances, feminism has filtered into the existing research in different forms. Feminism, as I understand, can be termed as anything from a piece of writing to a movement, or a motion which aims at improving the lives of women, which is the aim of this research.

Feminism in the West is better defined as a movement that first started in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and was aimed at the equality of men and women in political, social and economic spheres (Gamble 2001). The feminists' standpoint was that women were not treated as equals in society and men were favoured politically, socially and economically through the structures of the social order. I will not go into the details of all the three waves, as I will be using feminism more as a methodological framework rather than as a political stance (see Chapter 3). However, it is important to refer to the first two waves, as they are relevant to the present cultural, social and economic structure and environment of Pakistan. The first wave of feminism, which started in the 1800s and ended in the 1930s, was concerned broadly with ensuring equal political and legal rights between men and women (Wollstonecraft 1792; Mitchell and Oakley 1989; Freedman 2001). The second wave of feminism, which began in the late 1960s, was a continuation of the struggles that had started in the first wave, but this time it emphasised cultural and social equality between men and women and focused on the specific needs of women. These movements were worldwide, but some of the developing regions of the world criticised them as Western ideas. However, some feminists in Asian and African countries took up the ideas and moulded them according to their own situations. The third wave of feminism was a resurgence of feminist activism by young women who wanted to distinguish themselves from post-feminists, the aim of which was to improve economic and gender inequality for women. Some developing countries have their own feminist writers who are very critical of Western feminism because it portrays the women of developing countries as ignorant, poor and uneducated in complete contrast to women in the West, who are portrayed as more in control of themselves and their lives. Feminist writers such as Spivak, Minh-ha and Mohanty in India have tried to dispel this image by talking about strategies to counter inequalities (Kurian 2001)

As a professional in higher education, I am aware of the Pakistani phenomenon of feminism, i.e. the attitude towards feminists and feminism and avoiding being labelled a feminist while

collecting data for my study, as it was bound to create a bias. For example, in this research women with a more conventional background might not have felt comfortable responding to questions around their lives and families if it was an overtly feminist interviewer asking question. However, I acknowledge that it was my readings around feminism and the feminist standpoint that led me to locate my research questions. It made me decide that I wanted to explore the lives of women professors who are successfully placed in the public sector universities of Pakistan. I wanted to understand what it was that helped them to be where they are and to document their experiences for the benefit of other young women in higher education in the region. I was driven by the need to locate a way or a method to hear the voices of these women professors. Therefore, to obtain more in-depth data and to have a better understanding of the lives of these women professors, I used a feminist perspective as a methodology (Shaheed & Mumtaz 1996). In the following paragraphs, I present the relevant literature on the feminist perspective.

## **Feminist Perspective**

There is a difference between methods and methodology. Method is a general approach to research such as an empirical or scientific approach, whereas a methodology is often referred to as a 'process of knowledge production'.

A feminist methodology is one set of approaches to the problems of producing justifiable knowledge of gender relations.

(Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002: 10).

As mentioned earlier, the purpose of the research was to build knowledge through interviewing female professors in order to gain a better understanding of the issues, especially gender relations, and also for other new entrants in the field to observe and learn. In research, it is important to recognise one's own position from an ontological and epistemological perspective. One also has to identify the issues of validity, power and ethics. Nevertheless, interestingly, some writers argue that there is no particular 'ontological or epistemological difference' specifically feminist in nature (Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002: 16). I also understand after reading the literature that there is no particular research technique that can be specifically feminist (Maynard and Purvis 1994). The critique is that, although women

researchers have researched women's lives and made women's voices heard, and experiences have been narrated through in-depth, qualitative interviews, the same data can also be collected through other approaches. However, I used a feminist perspective for this study, as I had the opportunity to understand the issue from a feminist perspective, which emphasises the significance of 'listening to', 'recording' and 'understanding' the narration and the interpretation given by the interviewee, each of which, in this case, is female (Maynard and Purvis 1994). A feminist perspective helped in understanding the research findings as women's ways of seeing things or seeking to change power relations. Maynard and Purvis (1994) explain their stance on feminism and its methodologies by suggesting:

At its heart was the tenet that feminist research must begin with an open-ended exploration of women's experiences, since only from the vantage point is it possible to see how their world is organised... (p.12)

The same can be seen in this study, as the feminist perspective gave me the space to research women's experiences and the world in which they exist. The nature of this thesis is feminist and interpretive as opposed to positivist, as it is an attempt to understand the subjective world of the human experiences they chose to relate to me. Maynard (2000) argues about the debate on feminist methods and research, critiquing the method used in the times when quantitative research was seen as masculine, and qualitative research was focused more on 'subjective experiences' (p.90). She further argues that women's experiences were invisible at the time of the second wave of feminism, so there was a need to bring them forward, which was not possible through quantitative research. Pakistan, as mentioned earlier, is still largely going through the second wave in terms of feminism's and feminist practices, and, as a result, quantitative methods such as surveys and questionnaires are still more popular and considered authentic compared to qualitative methods. There is, in fact, very little documented qualitative material about women in higher education available in Pakistan.

I categorised my research question and thesis as generally feminist for two reasons: one was my own interest in doing research around women's issues with the aim of developing a description that has an element of locale and is for the benefit of Pakistani women. Secondly, as part of the process I shall be exploring existing patriarchal values and norms in the Pakistani society and their effects on women's lives, which is the habitat of my interviewees.



Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002) point out that feminists ‘defy the patriarchal truth’, which states that ‘women are naturally inferior to men’ (p.16). My professional position affords me a unique opportunity for empathising with the understanding (*verstehen*) of my subjects of inquiry through this approach (Crotty 1998). I explored the tensions between knowledge and power in the context of my position as a higher education practitioner.

As mentioned earlier, there is a gap in South Asian literature as far as qualitative research on female academics is concerned. Feminist perspectives, inevitably, become an integral part of the study, as it is about women’s life stories and is captured by a woman researcher.

## **Patriarchy**

The word ‘patriarchy’ is defined as a ‘social system in which men dominate’ (Encarta Online Dictionary, 2009). Weber (1947) uses patriarchy as a concept when referring to a structure of government in which men controlled societies as heads of family. It is true, though, that the meaning of patriarchy has developed since Weber. In 1970, Millett referred to ‘patriarchy’ originating in Greek as the rule of father. In 1976, Rich wrote about patriarchy as:

The power of the fathers; a familial-social, ideological, political system in which men- by force, direct pressure, or through ritual, tradition, law, and language, customs, etiquette, education and the division of labour, determine what part women shall not play, and in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male. (p.57)

In the context of patriarchy and its theories, I understand that the literature is vast. However, I have focused on the aspect most pertinent to my study and which helps understand the social structures and values of Pakistani society. Walby (1990) states that patriarchy can take different forms, but the primary element is that it is ‘a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women’ (p.20). It is important to understand the theory of patriarchy ‘to capture the depth, pervasiveness and interconnectedness of different aspects of women’s subordination’ (p.20).

The same is expressed by Hodgson-Wright (2001), who explains the word ‘patriarchal’ as:

The term patriarchal refers to power relations in which women’s interests are subordinated to the interests of men. These power relations take on many forms, from the sexual division of labour and social organisation of procreation



to the internalized norms of femininity by which we live. Patriarchal power rests on social meaning given to biological sexual difference (p.3).

The idea can be traced back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, when women were expected to be obedient and chaste and if they tried to voice their opinion, they were seen as rebels to patriarchy. Childbearing was one of the major functions of wives in the same century. Patriarchy in the West is seen as a system which breeds power, supremacy, hierarchy and competition (Mies 1980; Lerne, 1986). Tong (1989) also argues that patriarchy oppresses women and is a system that cannot be reformed but needs to be eliminated from its roots. However, the task is formidable inasmuch that the authority of fathers is difficult to identify, because something as basic as language is coloured by it and mothers' care is required to act in a way that transfers to children all the 'patriarchal values' (Rich 1976: 1). It is difficult to define patriarchy, although feminists agree that 'men's patriarchal power over women is the basic power relationship amongst human beings' (Bhopal 1997: 49). I think the patriarchal framework is essential to my argument that most women – when they reach a senior position – have a story to recount, which informs how they made it to the top in an established scenario whereby 'men hold power' and women are deprived of this power (Lerner 1986: ), so it is essential to understand how these women have bypassed the patriarchal powerbases and managed to achieve success.

There are different areas of patriarchy. Those related to this research were identified by Walby (1990: 3) – they are not only legal and political structures, but also social and cultural institutions. However, these social relations, although abstract in nature, are important to recognise in the context of this study, as the life stories encompass the sociocultural norms, values and roles in the lives of the interviewees. Walby (1990) further elaborates that at a less abstract level, patriarchy exists in six structures: 'the patriarchal mode of production, relations in paid work, relations in state, male violence, relations in sexuality and cultural institutions' (p.20). There is a causal effect between each element. The two structures deeply embedded in the data I collected are, firstly, patriarchal production relations in the household, which are more focused on housewives in the West but in case of Pakistan act as the key factor generally associated with women in society. The second is within the economic level, i.e. paid work where women are excluded from good jobs and better positions. As mentioned earlier, it is difficult to ignore relations with the state, which has a patriarchal bias existing in its systems. The relations of cultural institutions influence education, religion and the media as

well, as they constitute a significant part of the argument. Goldthrope (1983) argues that a woman's position is identified by the status of the man with whom she lives, which may be the husband or the father. Acker (2004) criticises this argument on the basis that many women live alone or are single parents for several reasons such as ill husbands, or non-working couples who live off welfare and are below the poverty line.

Western theories do not always fit Asian women's experiences, because although they offer some useful frameworks, they cannot explain the complexities of their lives. As there is not a great deal of Asian literature in this area, this thesis is one attempt to bring together Western feminist theory and Asian women's lives in order to develop relevant new theories. According to Agarwal (1989), Asian women's experiences are diverse; they vary by class, ethnicity, caste, culture and religion. Countries such as China, Malaysia, Iran and India have patterns of patriarchy that further emphasise the fact that it is important to have in-depth interviews around life events (internal and external factors influencing life) and life patterns, and hear life stories to understand the reasons for the progress and success in the careers of women in the Pakistani higher education sector.

## **Patriarchy and Pakistan**

The patriarchal context of Pakistani society is a deep-rooted gender ideology consisting of a public male breadwinner (provider) and a private female caregiver (Rustagi 2004; Zubair 2006; Lee 1995). Keeping Pakistan's sociocultural scenario and women's positions in mind, patriarchy appears to be an appropriate theoretical construct to frame the life stories of senior women in Pakistani universities (Zubair 2006; Lee 1995). There are diverse views on patriarchy in Pakistan; Hai (2003), for instance, reiterates that although patriarchy is a system that privileges some women and places undue burdens upon some men, it cannot be ignored that:

Men of all ranks and races under patriarchy can certainly be empowered but also burdened by the unshared responsibilities of being sole breadwinners and decision makers in a system that certainly gives them power but that also allows no recourse for assistance, no safety values, setting impossible standards and imposing pressures. (p.157)

Furthermore, the following paragraphs will refer to the three strands which emerge significantly in the context of patriarchy and Pakistan and can be associated strongly with Walby's six structures around the production relations of household, sexuality, paid work and cultural institutions.

## **Women and Family's Social Position**

The social position in many patriarchal societies is different for men and women. For men it is linked to the 'means of production' (Lerner 1986: 215), as their assets make them superior or subordinate to other men. For women, generally, access to class is through men who are either husbands or fathers, and they are considered strong if either of their men is strong. However, Lerner (1986) clearly argues that a women's improvement is relative and those who have more economic independence have a better chance of placing themselves in a better social position. Nonetheless, she also says that the system of patriarchy only functions because women cooperate through 'gender indoctrination, educational deprivation [and] denial to access knowledge' (p.217).

The social position and status of the interviewees in the present study are revealed in the qualitative interviews and referred to in several instances in the thematic chapters. As mentioned earlier in the Introduction chapter, social class was not the primary focus of my research, which is why I did not ask any direct questions around this area. However, during the course of the interviews the issue of social status and class frequently arose, so I shall therefore present the self-perceived class within these interviewees. I described the social class structure in Pakistan in the Introduction chapter and tried to highlight how it differs from the concept of social class in the United Kingdom.

## **Women and Marriage**

As mentioned earlier, women in Pakistan endure family constraints that obstruct them from pursuing work outside home. There is a definite conflict between family and career, as women are perceived as individuals whose first responsibility is to provide care for their children, while work takes a secondary position in the scenario (Greyvenstein 2000). It is the same conflict that leads to the scarcity of women in senior positions in universities across the globe (Heward 1996; Ledwith and Manfredi 2000), one main reason for which is their perceived role with respect to the family. Related research in developed countries also points towards the familial and household responsibilities of women. Women are expected to keep their careers on the backburner and give priority to family matters, especially married women; this

is confirmed by other research findings (Burke and Nelson 2002; Noraini 2002; Schuck and Liddle 2004), In South Asian settings, married women typically live with their in-laws and are expected to provide care and support for their husbands' parents in their old age. Married sons are, therefore, a virtual necessity in developing countries with no state pension or welfare support for frail older people. Conversely, daughters are lost to their family of origin in these cultures.

## **Women and Work**

Different societies have different ideas about women, their positions in society and their places in the family. Most women who decide to work outside the home face the possibility of conflict with their family, especially the head of the family, which in most of the cases will be a father or husband, who assures them that their interests are taken care of by them (Agarwal 2005). In patriarchal societies, it is very difficult to bring women into the workforce because they are expected to be homemakers, carers and nurturers, which are still considered the primary roles of women, irrespective of the societal norms values and structures that vary from region to region (Maume 2006). However, there exists the notion that as women themselves have challenged patriarchy through education, they are involved in areas that are not seen as traditional areas for jobs (Walby 1985). Furthermore, although this concept may be three decades old, it is still valid for practices and structures in Pakistan. Their paths are filled with many obstacles, most of which they hardly recognise, and they have to overcome the domination of men in the academy. Therefore, the need to socialise women through their communities and families emerges as a strong strategy for countering the issue of the scarcity of women in senior positions in universities. The basic argument is that women remain outsiders in the academy.

## **Universities and Patriarchy**

Morely (1999) argues that 'feminism is flourishing in the academy because of patriarchy'. In Pakistani academies, however, it is observed that there is little awareness of the issue amongst female faculty members and staff. As Pakistan is a patriarchal society, the roots of the system are embedded deeply in a framework of male domination. Women's studies in Asian countries accept that 'patriarchy is the core concept for creating feminist knowledge' (Ilo

2005). As an active higher education professional myself, I felt the need to explore and understand the dynamics of the phenomenon – I wanted to understand how women in academia cope with patriarchy and to see how they manage it on their journey.

### **Women Working in Higher Education**

Literature is available about Australian, Indonesian, Canadian, Greek, British and Israeli women academics (Nina 1998; Gillett-Karam 2001; Morley 2005; Marginson 2006; Madsen 2007). It focuses on how women in senior leadership positions reached their senior academic and administrative positions and how their childhoods, marital and other social experiences played a significant role, either in their progression or as an obstacle (David 1998).

The narrative of one Greek female academic in a research study quoted by Morley (2005: 411-429) states that tier progress, promotions and opportunities are not openly barred. Nevertheless, the institutions do not create an environment that is conducive for their female teachers and as a result they tend to lag behind and are sifted out from the mainstream. The issue of lack of confidence amongst women is entangled with society and its structural setup, which leads ultimately to subordination. Coleman's (2003) work on women in the leadership positions of school principals and deputy heads, with a focus on gender and roles, argues that subordinate women in the labour market and the family can easily follow the same path in an academy as well. Dagg and Thompsom (1998), two decades ago, observed that for years women were not hired as professors in Canadian universities. The number declined because some were unable to complete qualifications, while some chose family and motherhood.

Statistics in 2003 revealed that 9% of universities in the UK had women vice-chancellors (Knights and Richards 2003); however that figure increased to almost 12% in 2007 (Singh 2008). The percentage of women in leadership or management roles ranges from 36% in Germany and Australia to 46% in the United States (ILO 2004), whereas the percentage of women in senior management positions is 5% in Germany and 15% in Australia (Gardiner and Tiggemann 1999). Switzer (2006) indicated that, according to the American Council on Education, the percentage of women university presidents increased from 9.5% to 21.1% in the 15 years from 1986 to 2001. However, 70% of these women presidents headed schools with 3,000 or fewer students in religious or women's colleges and two-year

(further/vocational education) institutions; thus, in fact, only 2% of all women presidents headed major research universities (Wenniger and Conroy 2001).

These studies are relevant to my exploration, because the situation is more or less comparable with Pakistan today where women trail far behind men for the reasons mentioned above and face discriminatory treatment at work. Patriarchy, along with a feminist perspective, appeared to be an appropriate theoretical construct to frame the life stories of the interviewees in the present study. The data about the lives of these women and their career progressions will emerge as an illustration of how to achieve equity under patriarchy in the following chapters.

### **Women in leadership in Pakistani Higher Education**

The patriarchal context of Pakistani society has led to low investment in women's human capital and, hence, limited their chances of competing for resources in the public arena in relation to men.

Pakistan, subsequently, has the lowest participation of women in the labour force and employment, being 29% and 14%, respectively, among South Asian countries (Mahbub ul Haq Human Development Centre [MHDC] 2004). According to ILO (2006), Pakistani women's share of professional jobs is only 25.6%, with a meagre 8.7% concentrated in leadership positions.

The higher education scenario for Pakistan also mirrors these realities. Data for public sector universities shows just five women Vice-Chancellors (VCs) compared to 49 male VCs; four female Registrars compared to 50 male Registrars; five female controllers of examinations against a total of 49 male controllers of examinations; and three female treasurers against a total of 51 male treasurers. Private sector universities present a bleaker picture, with just one woman VC compared to 46 male VCs; one female Registrar compared to 46 male Registrars; one female controller of examinations against a total of 46 male controllers of examinations; and one female treasurer against a total of 46 male treasurers (HEC 2006). This scenario corroborates the findings of Faulconer (1995), who concluded that:



The representation of women in the management of higher education is not proportionate to their presence in the workplace or in the classroom (p. 18).

There are barriers to careers, which are defined as ‘events or conditions, either within the person or in his or her environment, that make career progress difficult’ (Swanson and Woitke 1997: 446).

However, patriarchy is inherent in Pakistan itself, specifically in higher education in Pakistan. I was able to locate and interview a group of women who were successful professionally and able to maintain leadership positions in their organisations. I was intrigued to know how they managed this success. Therefore, I now reiterate my research question to display its relevance to the theoretical framework: How do some women successfully manage patriarchy in their lives to pursue work outside their homes and reach senior positions?

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have presented the broad theoretical framework of the study to give a summary of the structure of the thesis and to explain how my research questions were developed and explored. In this context, it is interesting that the themes emerging from the data reported here are in line with such diverse views and issues of concern such as male support in life and parental support in childhood and education. The data collected through interviews also identifies other issues as significant aspects. However, there are some more references to specific literature with the emerging themes, which are presented in the thematic data chapters where the data is analysed. The literature review related to the methodological perspective is reviewed in the next chapter.

# Chapter 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

## Introduction

In the following sections I discuss my research design, focusing on the qualitative nature of the research. I then describe the concept of the life story as used for this study. I continue to talk specifically about semi-structured interviews, the interview process, the sample, access and selection, and the process of transcription and coding. As an insider researcher in the Pakistani higher education, I also use my personal journal, which was helpful in interpreting the nuances that arose during the interviews. I have added a section at the end of this chapter about my *reflections in the research process*. In this section I specifically recount the physical and emotional journey I made during the whole process, which was completely unanticipated; when I started my doctoral journey as an international student, I could not foresee that my research would affect me so deeply.

## Settings for the research

This research is an attempt to explore something close to my heart. Throughout my doctoral programme, gender was of prime importance, principally because of my work at a women's university and my interest in qualitative in-depth research from a feminist perspective. I shall attempt to present the whole process of my research here systematically, with certain restraints.

I proposed that I would carry out life story interviews, where I would interview female vice-chancellors, deans and professors from public sector universities in the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Initially, I thought it would not be a difficult task, but I work in Pakistan and am part of the culture, so it was not an easy activity. I had to be very careful while explaining to my prospective interviewees what I was doing, as professional communities in close-knit societies are not very keen on sharing their private lives. I had to take extra care regarding my initial access to these women because of their seniority, status and position, on which I elaborate later in this chapter. I was also careful not to use my own status and position in academia to gain access. I approached them as a doctoral researcher and

not as a university Registrar, which, in the power dynamics of Pakistani academic culture, made me less threatening or powerful.

I used semi-structured interviews to interview my sample, so this chapter also includes a discussion about my choice and method of data collection.

## Research Design

I have an eclectic approach – a combination of feminism and interpretation – and did not subscribe to any specific method or methodology. My aim was to reach some logical answers to my research question (Crotty 2003), while the rationale for using this approach emerged from the research work I carried out earlier in which I explored the lives of women graduates and young professionals in Pakistan (Rab 2007). Other educational researchers in developing countries, especially Pakistan, are often inclined towards the ‘quantitative and scientific’ paradigm because of their limited research training and opportunities. However, I think that in cultures that value oral traditions and where kinship and relationships are of pre-eminent importance, a qualitative approach is more appropriate because ‘human behaviour is shaped in our context and events cannot be understood adequately if isolated from their contexts’ (Sherman and Webb 1990: 5). Cohen and Manion (1994) suggest a distinction between positivist and interpretive paradigms:

The normative paradigm (or model) contains two major orienting ideas: firstly human behaviour is essentially rule governed; and secondly, that it should be investigated by methods of natural science. The interpretive paradigm in contrast to its normative models is characterized by a concern for the individual. Where normative studies are positivist, all theories constructed within the context of interpretive paradigm tend to be anti-positivist

(1994: 36).

This study is an effort to understand other human minds and to ‘understand form within’, (ibid: 36) in order to generate ideas exploring subjective human experiences. Therefore, by definition, the very nature of this study is interpretive as opposed to positivistic.

## Feminist Perspective

I have used a feminist research design as my methodology for data collection and analysis.

As my research is also an effort to understand gendered social relations, the feminist perspective was one of the most obvious choices available. Although I knew that 'feminist methodology is not distinguished by female researchers studying women (Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002), I also know that the same literature states that a feminist perspective provides an opportunity for people to express their experiences of living lives that are greatly influenced by gender.

During my time as a doctoral researcher, I resisted being labelled a feminist because the connotation attached to this descriptor was not very positive in Pakistan. However, the reservations could not hold my research interest back. I wanted to explore women and higher education, as this was the area of my personal and professional interest. I wanted to highlight the non-visibility and absence of women from forums where their input is needed to make life easier for younger women who are just starting their careers in the same arenas. Subsequently, the research has a feminist perspective, as it is about women's lives and their perceptions of these lives and their significant events. Harding (1987) states that research conducted from a feminist perspective is slightly different, as women interviewers listen carefully to how other women recite their stories. The objective of my research is to communicate these narratives and the analysis of these voices to young women entering the academia so that a visible change is made, not only in numbers but also within the system.

The other significant aspect is the role of patriarchy and its significance in women's lives. Harding (1987) states that 'women of all classes are subject to patriarchal power in that they perform household labour' (ibid: 123), which was also voiced by some of my interviewees. In the light of the thematic interpretations, it is possible that women in a patriarchal society may or may not perceive patriarchy, but I will be making sense out of these narratives. Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002) further expand the same:

In connecting theory, experience and judgement, the knowing feminist should be accountable for the sense she makes of her own and other people's accounts and how her judgements are made (p.270).

It is important to have an understanding of the feminist perspective, which emphasises the significance of 'listening to', 'recording' and 'understanding' the narration and exposé given by the women themselves (Maynard 1994: 12). I also refer to a feminist perspective and the

suitability of this method for collecting data. Maynard (1994) argues when she refers to the debate about methodologies of feminist research:

... the use of qualitative methods, which focus more on the subjective experiences and meanings of those being researched, was regarded as more appropriate to the kinds of knowledge that feminists wished to make available, as well as being more in keeping with politics of doing research as a feminist. Semi structured or unstructured interviewing has been the research technique most often associated with this stance....

(p. 11).

Thus, the feminist perspective will analyse the research question as a woman's way of seeing things and a sense of power relations between the sexes. Maynard (1994) continues her stance on feminism and its methodologies by suggesting:

At its heart was the tenet that feminist research must begin with an open-ended exploration of women's experiences, since only from the vantage point is it possible to see how their world is organised...

(p.12).

## **Qualitative Research**

My aim was to listen to and analyse the experiences recounted through life stories. The tool I used was the qualitative interview, which is an extension of ordinary conversations but with important distinctions as the interviewers are more interested in understanding the knowledge and insights of the interviewees.

## **Life Stories**

A story is a valuable and essential form of knowing, a system of meaning making to learn what is unique to some and universal to other and how both are part of a dynamic interactive whole

(Atkinson 1998: 22).

The rationale for using life stories for data collection demands explanation. This technique helps us to unfold ourselves, not only helping us to understand our feelings about our experiences, but also the meaning of those feelings. It corroborates and supports our

experiences collectively and elucidates our interactions with those around us (Atkinson 1998; Atkinson 2002).

While choosing this type of interview, one obvious choice was to use Seidman's (2006) phenomenological method of interviewing, which requires the researchers to carry out three interviews around life, work and interpretations of the subject. However, while I was developing my research proposal, and as I identified my sample, I realised that women in senior academic positions would find it difficult to sit through three sessions of an hour-and-a-half due to time and other restraints. I knew from my own experience that I would be extremely lucky to get one appointment for the interview from these busy professors, and that, subsequently, the completion rate would be low if I had to ask for three interviews with each of them.

Another aspect was the use of my own voice as a practitioner and a woman. As I was not planning to interview any other people related to these professors, I knew that to validate and affirm their stories my own professional exposure and experience was of importance. I wanted flowing conversations and interviewee-focused narratives, so the other possible technique was to explore the pattern of life story, narratives or biographies (Hatch and Wisniewsk, 1995). I did not want to use a life history method, as oral histories are focused on a historical event or period and an individual's memory about these. Life stories, on the other hand, are about an individual's life and its course of events (Candida Smith 2002). I decided to use life stories, as this is an accepted technique used in qualitative research. Atkinson (2002) suggests that a 'life story interview' (p. 123) is one of the better techniques for gathering in-depth data about an individual's life. Chamberlayne, Bornat and Wengraf (2000) discuss the ways in which individuals emphasise the value of knowledge developed from personal narratives, and how these stories construct their lives with all their limitations and conjectures.

I understand that this approach is often criticised as subjective, but it does offer an exclusive voice and knowledge to the storyteller. The objective in using a life story narrative was to focus on the influences, diverse experiences, unique situations and lessons of life, and to analyse these in the light of my own experience and understanding of the higher education scenario.

I knew after carrying out my literature search in the area that the data I would collect from these interviews would be unique, because no such study on women professors had ever been conducted in Pakistan before. There is one paper, presented in a conference, on the use of the life history technique for research in Pakistan (Halai 2008). I researched women academics using the life story interview technique and found that only one similar study has been conducted recently in Hong Kong (Lam 2006), which is closer to the region in the context of similarities in the values and cultures of the two countries.

### **Sample Selection and Bias**

I was fully aware of the possibility of subjectivity and bias in qualitative research. When I started thinking about my sample selection, I wanted to be objective and did not want to choose as per my personal likes and ease of access. My real interest is in explanation and perception, so I needed a 'greater depth rather than breadth'. In order to avoid sample bias I chose to identify my sample through a systematic process. I made my first step by limiting myself only to female vice-chancellors, deans or professors, who are heads of the departments in the public sector (government-funded) universities. I accessed the basic statistics available from the Higher Education Commission, Pakistan. There are 59 public sector universities and Degree-Awarding Institutions (DAI) in Pakistan. Private sector universities were excluded because each one of them has different criteria for appointments and promotion, and the service structure is not uniform like public sector universities. I was aware of the size of the sample issue because of my Institution Focused Study (IFS) research experience. Seidman (2006) states that choosing a number for a sample is difficult as:

Enough is not possible as it varies in each study and each research but the practical exigencies of time, money and other resources also play a role especially in doctoral research (p. 55).

I decided to locate my sample from these 18 universities and DAIs located in the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad. These institutions offered a good mix of general, technical, science and women's universities.

There were 19 female and 101 male professors in eighteen public sector (government-funded) universities and DAIs in Rawalpindi and Islamabad (HEC 2006). Zubair (2006) writes that



women have easier access than to education in relatively modern/central cities like Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Karachi and Lahore than elsewhere. Interestingly, however, twelve out of these eighteen universities in Rawalpindi and Islamabad did not have one single female professor, and one university had a female expatriate as a full-time professor. This number also includes Women's University's three professors; by design, the university is required to have women as full-time professors. Therefore, the claim that higher education may be accessible to women in these cities may be over optimistic, as we see women still poorly represented at senior levels in the universities in these two major cities.

## **Sample**

Initially, I had proposed to interview vice-chancellors, deans and professors from the 19 universities in the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad. The number of women I identified in my research proposal was 19, Twelve of the 19 public sector universities and Degree-Awarding Institutions (DAIs) did not have any woman in senior positions. However, the reviewers of my thesis proposal thought that 19 was a large number for the size of study I needed to do, so we agreed to a number between 12 and 15 women.

When I commenced my research, I realised that three of the women from the identified sample were away on sabbatical and long leave, and two of them had retired. This took my sample down to 14 women for the main study and one for the pilot. One woman professor showed an inclination towards being part of the research, but upon receiving the introductory letter sent her regrets and did not give an interview. Below is a table, which gives some demographic and other details of the achieved sample:

*Table 1 Details of the Sample*

Serial. No	Pseudonym	Designation	PhD Institution / or Self funded	Marital Status	Approx age @ Marriage	Children	Husband's Education/ Profession
1.	Prof Quartz	VC/Dean- English	* AB /F*	M	Before 30	One (1F)	PhD / Uni Acad
2.	Prof Lapis	VC/Dean- H Eco	AB / SF*	M	After 30	Two (1M/1F)	PhD / Uni Acad
3.	Prof Ruby	Prof/Chair Education	AB / SF	M	Before 30	Three (3F)	PhD / Uni Acad
4.	Prof Andalusite	Prof Chemistry	AB / F	M	After 30	Two (2F)	Tech Diploma /Foreman
5.	Prof Azurite	Prof Biology	AB / F	M	After 30	Three (2F/1M)	Foreign Graduate Banker
6.	Prof Amethyst	Prof/Chair Economics	AB / SF	M	After 30	One (1F)	PhD / Foreign NGO
7.	Prof Jade	Prof Biology	AB / F	M	After 30	One (1F)	PhD / Univ Acad
8.	Prof Tanzanite	Prof Physics	AB / SF – Partial ORS	M	Before 30 (18)	Two (2F)	PhD / Univ Acad
9.	Prof Agate	VC/Dean Chemistry	AB / F	M/W	After 30	0	Graduate / Businessman
10.	Prof Aquamarine	Prof/Chair Botany	AB / F	M	After 30	NA	Graduate / Businessman
11.	Prof Zircon	VC /Dean	AB / F	M	After 30 (36)	0	PhD / Univ Acad
12.	Prof Sapphire	VC/Dean English	USA / F	S	NA	NA	NA
13.	Prof Mystic Topaz	VC/Dean French	AB / F	M/W	After 30 (36)	Two (2F)	PhD / Govt Officer
14.	Prof Moonstone	VC/Dean Economics	AB / F	M	Before 30	Three	Graduate / Businessman
15.	Prof Spinal	VC/Dean Economics	AB / F	S	NA	NA	NA

\*AB – Abroad \*SF-Self Funded

\*F-Funded \*M- Married W\* Widow

## **Accessing the Sample**

Access is a significant aspect in the context of Pakistan, which is a close-knit patriarchal society (Lee 1995). I had assumed that most of my interviewees would be strangers, despite the fact that I myself worked in a university in Rawalpindi. The reason for this assumption was that I had not worked in any other Pakistani university and my career in higher education was only spread over 14 years. Apart from the three professors from my university, there were at least five professors who knew me in my personal and professional capacity. I had decided that, initially, to have a more objective approach to accessing the sample, I would introduce myself as a doctoral researcher. Subsequently, I made a brief introductory phone call, introduced myself and asked for a meeting. Most of the time (especially with vice-chancellors and deans), I ended up talking to their male personal assistants. These men are the gatekeepers in universities, because in a patriarchal society power lies with men. By comparison, women only make inroads into the male-dominated systems if they are placed in some formal position of power. In a situation where my request for an interview was likely to be turned down, I admitted to being the Registrar, which was my passport to access in 60% of the cases. However, some of the professors who were HoDs and deans were very practical and accessible directly by phone and email. I wore my researcher's hat with them and they were happy to facilitate me, even as a stranger. Despite my systematic process to access, in 70% of the cases I had to make multiple phone calls; there were one or two postponements of agreed appointments and a long waiting time before the interviews started. Some of this can be associated with the cultural environment of the country where a professional attitude, especially in public sector universities, is a comparatively new phenomenon. I have addressed this aspect in detail in the subsections on power dynamics and process. Some can be attributed to the busyness of the senior people and the nature of their workload.

Almost all of the interviewees asked me to write a brief email to them, explaining what I was doing. I then sent them a formal introductory email (Appendix A), which described my research area and referred to the issues of anonymity and confidentiality (Seidman 2006).

There are two main reasons for having a formal introduction – one is to standardise the process of interviewing, while the second was due to my own professional position, as some people might find it difficult to talk to me because they worked in universities that were competing with the university where I worked.

## **Semi-structured Interviews**

As I wanted to record life stories, the most common method for obtaining in-depth data is semi-structured interviewing. Cohen and Manion (1994) identify a number of advantages of such interviews – they allow deep data collection, follow-up questions can be asked and the interviewees can further clarify ambiguities if necessary. I wanted to learn about individual experiences and opinions and about the way the respondents' lives had progressed over a period of time; semi-structured interviews were a good option because they are based on 'predetermined questions', but the order could be modified depending on my perception of what seemed most appropriate. Robson (2002) also supports the same position, stating that the wording of the question can be changed according to the appropriateness of the interview. Another rationale for using this type of interview is that it involved senior academic women. They may not have been able to find enough time to fill in a questionnaire with as much interest and focus, or even if they did the information collected would not have the same depth as the data collected through a semi-structured life story interview.

### ***Location of Interview***

The location for conducting interviews was decided in my introductory email. Although initially in the proposal I had suggested that I would try to have a brief meeting with the interviewee first and then arrange for the location for the interview, keeping in view the issue of availability and accessibility I also asked for their preference in the email. I understood that from a methodological perspective it is more feasible to conduct interviews at the place of the interviewees' choice (Seidman 2006), but I wanted to resist the option of interviewing interviewees in their offices. The vice chancellor (VC), deans and heads of department (HoDs) usually have an open-door policy, especially for internal faculty and staff. The result of such a policy is that most of the time it is difficult to spend more than 30 minutes on an activity without interruption. Interestingly, 13 women out of 15 preferred to be interviewed at

their offices. Of the two women I interviewed in their homes, one was living independently and the other had an independent setup, and on that day her husband was out of the city.

Some of the other women did not understand the level of privacy required for the interview, so as a result they had other tasks going on in their office at the time of their interview, which, in one case, even included the presence of her husband who was a retired academic himself. In this instance, I asked her to change the venue, as it was very distracting for me as an interviewer, which she did after the first 15 minutes. The telephone rang in some instances, but, generally, the new venue was a quieter environment. This may be attributed to the institutional culture of the respondent.

## **Time of Interview**

This was a significant aspect, as my interviews were approximately 90 minutes or longer in duration so most of the women had to allocate time. Ideally, I wanted to conduct the interviews in November, 2008 but that time coincided with Ramadan – the month of fasting – so I had to make my appointments accordingly. This delayed the original schedule, and then some women said they would only be available after the semester had ended, so I had to wait until the beginning of January, 2009 to interview them.

Four women changed the time and date of the interview, and even after these changes they were at least 45 minutes late for their appointments. However, most of them were punctual. In Pakistani culture, where people are generally relaxed about official activities like meetings and keeping appointments, the issue of managing time is not usually of prime importance. However, in the professional setup, individuals are careful about appointments, dates and meetings. However, the abovementioned issue of keeping appointments was reflective of the local culture and the attitude of the population.

Eight of the fifteen interviewees wanted to be interviewed in the late afternoon or evening when their classes and laboratory work were finished for the day. The remaining interviewees were happy to be interviewed during the daytime and none of them wanted to be interviewed on a weekend. This was another issue for me, because I had to take time off work for all of

these appointments, and it was worse on days when the appointment had been made at short notice or postponed without prior notice. I had previously informed the interviewees that the interviews were likely to take 90-100 minutes, and this was the case for all of the interviews except one, which lasted for 230 minutes. I tried to curtail that particular interview, but the respondent wanted to give me minute details of her life story, so I could not close it and the interview just continued.

### *Interview Schedule*

My interview schedule (Appendix B) was developed after I read some of the biographical works edited and published by women professors in the UK and the USA (Gillet-Karam 2001; Switzer 2006). I wanted the narratives to flow in the interviews, but at the same time I wanted to keep the focus of my research question in order to identify and understand aspects that were helpful in their career progression and success in higher education. I had a set of questions with some prompts and probes (Robson 2002) and had developed my interview schedule around three major areas – childhood and schooling, which included family background, relationships, marital status (single, married or separated), circle of friends and neighbours; their work/profession and career; and lastly any other factor affecting their career paths. I wanted them to signpost the key factors in their journeys to their present position.

As my initial questions were around their early childhood and why they chose careers in higher education, these were followed up by a set of questions around any critical events that may have affected their progress, as I wanted them to reflect on any other aspect that they perceived as influencing their professional life. I also asked questions around change in outlook about their careers both on a personal and a professional level over the years (25-28 years). My closing question was about changes in careers if the opportunity arose. The same narratives and findings are presented in the thematic interpretations of the data.

Some of the interviews offered up most unexpected outcomes, which was a benefit of the semi-structured interview schedule. For example, a professor shared very intimate details about her marital life, as she thought this was significantly affecting her personal and professional life, although I had not asked any direct questions about the area of physical and emotional relationships.

## **Pilot Interview**

I conducted a pilot interview in order to check the validity of my interview schedule. Initially, before developing my formal proposal, I talked to one of my colleagues in the Ed.D. programme – a senior administrator (dean) in a private sector university in Pakistan. The discussion with her was very useful in locating my research area and helped me in developing the research questions. I chose someone I had known personally and professionally for a long time. I explained to her that I was doing a life story interview with her and that it was a pilot study for the main study, so I would expect her to give her observations on the process. I also asked her to highlight the questions that she thought inappropriate for senior women.

I had an almost two-hour interview with her and my initial apprehension of being too familiar as a disadvantage was discarded. Interestingly, my interviewee was very comfortable talking about her life in detail with me. I understand that this situation puts the researcher in danger of a bias, but I was aware of it, which was very helpful for me.

The professor's feedback regarding some changes in the interview schedule was the use of one during the interview. She felt that if my main questions were giving me the information I was looking for, then I should not ask all the questions to complete the interview; rather, I should have a checklist (attached as Annex C) that I should keep as a key, mark the areas covered in the interview, and then proceed accordingly.

She said the whole experience was refreshing for her, as she said that during all these years she never had the opportunity to think of her achievements as unique successes. She said this reminiscence was significant in enhancing her self-image and appreciating her own success. The feedback about the sequence of questions and about probing was of great importance for all further interviews in the study. I understand that this interview cannot be termed strictly as a pilot. However, in this instance, it contributed to the research process, so I can probably refer to it as an outcome of the research.

I made the above-identified changes to my interview schedule, including probes and prompts, after the pilot interview. The exercise also gave me confidence to talk to senior women about their personal lives, for example, by asking questions about their parents, marriage and so on.



## ***Transcription***

As mentioned earlier on page 48 (Chapter 3 Introduction section), I proposed that I would transcribe the interviews. I remembered my previous experience of transcription for my Institution Focused Study (IFS), where I had experienced issues of poor voice quality, conversion to digital voice patterns and so on (Rab 2007). I was also aware of the amount of time that transcription consumes (Bryman 2001). Therefore, I invested in a sophisticated and expensive digital voice recorder to record the interviews, which helped in the creation of comparatively better transcriptions. Additionally, in the light of experience, I allocated more time for the process of transcription, as it is a tedious and time-consuming activity. The length of the interview was also a key factor in planning my timeline for the process. I audio taped the interviews and transcribed them verbatim for a better understanding of the data. I then used NVivo software to manage the data generated through my interviews. Professional transcribers initially transcribed the interviews, but the nature and context of the interviews required tedious editing on my part, so in this process it was very helpful to have a computer compatible voice recorder via which I could hear the interviews repeatedly with the help of some transcription software I downloaded from one a website that supports voice transcriptions. It was expected that the transcription of each 60-90-minute interview would be spread over 14-18 pages of A-4 size, but then some of my interviews were much longer, and I ended up with an interview that had almost 43 pages and approximately 30,000 words. However, as I had already used the technique in my IFS research and the results were positive and helpful in understanding and analysing the data, I was better organised in this instance (Rab 2007).

## ***Language of Interview and Translation***

The choice of language was another significant issue, as I did not want people to feel uncomfortable about the level of intimacy, but at the same time I wanted them to be relaxed. I came across the issue of language during my IFS research (Rab 2007). Interestingly, the people in my IFS were given the option to communicate in the language of their choice, English or Urdu or both, but almost all of them communicated in English. I wanted to keep the option flexible for this study as well, because I wanted my interviewees to have the

freedom to talk without thinking about what language they were using. This time I interviewed more mature women and they were at a stage where their position was the evidence of their successful work. They did not focus on the language so much and were bilingual in some instances. However, this time, because of my earlier experience, I also used Urdu in my questions, with prompted them change language if they felt the need or wanted to. I translated any non-English conversations myself and did not perceive any great difference in expression.

### **Coding / Data Reduction with NVivo**

The next stage in the process was to analyse the data collected. I kept the transcription process and the analyses simultaneous:

The suggested general approaches to qualitative data analysis emphasise the importance of ongoing analysis during data collection (Robson 2002: 384)

Robson (2002) also outlines some basic rules for analysis inasmuch that it should be done as soon as data is transcribed. The other important thing is to thematise the data and maintain a journal so that the process in which the themes take the shape of a concept and finally produce a coherent picture is well recorded. For this research this was possible with NVivo software, as it allows the researcher to organise the data systematically. Its commands are helpful for researchers to manage large amounts of textual data that can be developed into academic ideas (Gibbs, 2002). NVivo helps in coding and generating reports, which saves time compared to manual colour coding (Rab 2007). Additionally, the researcher can query the data easily in less time and generate reports though it (Richards 1999; Gibbs 2002).

The coding of the study interviews left me with numerous themes. Later in this chapter, I will expand on the issue of making choices about what I wanted to include and what I had to leave out. However, despite the data management with NVivo (data management software), I was still overwhelmed by its sheer quantity; because I had a whole set of patterns regarding family life, marriage, children, promotions, publications, doctorates, post doctorates, and so on. I therefore needed to reduce the number of codes and collapse them into themes. I again used

NVivo for that process (Ramzanoglu and Holland 2002). Initially, I had approximately 100 codes, but through the process of merging I created ten trees out of them. Trees are groups that have nodes as its 'children' in NVivo software. These ten trees were further collapsed into the three thematic chapters of my thesis, where each main theme has sub-themes. One of the best things about NVivo is the flexibility of merging, separating and collapsing the codes with one command. I could also generate initial reports, which were later helpful in identifying and locating the quotes from the interviews. Details of some of NVivo's tree nodes are given in Appendix E.

Initially, I coded the transcripts in a general way, but after the first three or four interviews some patterns began to emerge. For example, all of my interviewees spoke about the support they had received from their parents or how helpful and understanding their husbands were in their lives. Consequently, chronological life events were thus coded under the headings, for example, of 'Childhood', 'Parents', 'Home Environment', 'Personal Relationships' and 'Schooling'. I then collapsed these headings into trees, which covered, 'Family of Origin', 'Marriage' and so on. This was followed by 'Educational Opportunities', 'School', 'Colleges', 'Universities' and 'Subject Choices' along with 'Teachers', 'Mentors' and 'Supervisors', to name but a few. Subsequently, I used 'Jobs', 'Choices in Career', 'Workplace Environment', 'Promotions', 'Post-Doctorates' and others, and then grouped them under 'Family', 'Education' and 'Professional Journeys' respectively in order of their recurrence. However, by this time it was very clear that I could not possibly discuss all of the data in the thesis, as it was quite extensive. I thus chose to highlight indicators which gave me some suggestions about how and why these women reached their senior positions.

## **Personal Journal Contribution**

My previous experience of maintaining a personal journal was initiated on the advice of my supervisor before I started my IFS. It was very helpful in the research process of the thesis. These were long interviews, so I needed to sum them up after the interview for my own clarity and understanding. I used the notes to add my own perspective on the professional setup at public sector universities, where everyday conversations led to me to think like an insider researcher. For example, I can quote briefly some of the significant episodes I recorded. The political situation of the country was not stable; there was a state of emergency declared in the

country in November 2007 – one month after I started my interviews. In addition, two exiled politicians, one of whom was a woman and ex-prime minister, Benazir Bhutto, had returned to the country as an initiative to revive the democratic process. Within a month, she was shot and killed during a political rally. These incidents had some effect on the later interviews, as I was to interview a few more women after this incident.

*I don't know how it will affect my interviewees. Will they refrain from making any comments or will they voice their concerns?  
(31/12/07)*

I recorded doubts in my journal, which were later confirmed as one of my interviewees, who was an anthropology professor and worked in a politically volatile university, regretfully withdrew. Therefore, that interview did not take place. The only other two women who were interviewed after this event probably consented to be interviewed because their institution did not have political parties' activities in their departments. I have also recorded some instances where I felt very insecure travelling to meet these women because of the national situation in Pakistan. I had to arrange for a driver to transport me rather than driving myself to these universities, as the security situation was unstable.

## **Ethical Considerations**

As a qualitative researcher, I understand that I have to be ethical to 'create trustworthy (valid) outcomes' (Briggs and Coleman 2007: 114). I followed all the formal ethical procedures while doing the study.

### **Formal Procedure**

I completed my ethics prior to my thesis proposal review and submitted it to the School office. I read the British Educational Research Association guidelines as well, which I found very useful while I was working on my IFS, especially with reference to issues pertaining to confidentiality and anonymity (Rab 2007). I was aware that my own professional position could be both a help and a hindrance for me. Most of the women in my sample took little notice of my position, as they were senior to me in age, so were forthcoming in their views

and opinions. However, there was a slim chance that they might think of me as a colleague from an exploratory academic research. As mentioned earlier, Pakistan is a close society where people exist in interactive communities of extended families, so I had to assure my interviewees that I would try to disguise their identity so that there would be no harmful effect on their current personal and professional positions.

### **Consent of Interviewee**

I took informed consent from the replies to the introduction email I sent to all interviewees. I had experienced in the IFS that if I was only interviewing my colleagues it was a different rapport. However, some of the women I was interviewing for the first time needed some level of formality to begin with so that they could see me as someone who was careful about the process of research. I could not have a preliminary meeting with them, but my phone calls and emails were made formally. Afterwards, when I went to meet and interview them, we achieved effective communication. I have a strong feeling that some of them even went to the extent of checking out my credentials and institutional reputation before I went to see them (gathering information about me from my workplace colleagues who were known in personal capacities). I had asked the interviewees of my IFS if they were interested in reading the transcripts, but they showed their confidence in me and indicated no inclination to read the transcripts (Rab 2007). I repeated this process with the current, but they only showed an inclination and interest in sharing the outcomes of the study.

### **Confidentiality and Anonymity**

As mentioned earlier, I had tried to maintain anonymity in my IFS. It was very difficult to hide the name of the university in the present study, as it is a unique institution in Pakistan (the first women's university). However, for this thesis, if I hide the geographical location of these universities, then I will be able to anonymise the identity of my interviewees. Keeping in view the nature of the interviews and data, I expected that none of my interviewees should know about the identity of any other, so I tried to devise a mechanism to give them all a pseudonym. As such, I named them all after precious stones, for example *Jade*, *Amethyst* and *Tanzanite*. Another issue was that of the professional and social interaction of these women in

the same position, and whether they would be interviewed or not. I had the same issue with some of the interviewees in my IFS, who did ask if particular colleagues were also being interviewed, but I managed to evade the issue (Rab 2007). As mentioned earlier, Pakistan is a close-knit society, so I had to assure my interviewees that I would disguise their identity so that there would be no harmful effect on their current personal and professional positions. The same issue is recognised as an issue in Western literature as well (Blackmore and Sachs 2007).

A feminist research approach does not allow the researcher complete detachment from the interviewee. I perceived that I would have a rapport with my interviewees, and they would be sharing some very intimate details of their lives with me and giving me the power to judge and analyse, so the real issue for me was to have complete confidentiality. Therefore, the sense of mutual trust and faith was of prime importance in the process of the research. I trusted that these women would tell the story of their lives as honestly as possible, and in return they expected me to analyse their perceptions in a way that did justice to their thoughts and narratives.

## **Validity and Generalisability**

Validity is defined as something that is ‘accurate, correct or true’ (Robson 2002: 170). I was aware of the issues of validity and generalisability from the beginning for two reasons. Firstly, my methodology was qualitative and I was exploring the perceptions of the interviewees, i.e. whatever my interviewees decided to share was valid for me. Secondly, the size of my sample was an issue because there were 15 women. Although they may represent many parts of the country, their situation could not be generalised, and thus the findings would not be applicable to the whole country. I took note of this point and have not made any generalised claims about my findings. I appreciate that these 15 life stories will have many similarities, but, at the same time, they cannot be representative of all women professors in the country. This research is the first of its kind and should be read as an exploratory research.

## **Power Dynamics**

The issue of power in the context of women's positions in the family and tension with their positions at work in a patriarchal society are issues that emerge from the research, which I believe was another interesting dimension. Initially, I was worried that these senior women would not be keen on sharing their personal and professional issues for two reasons – I was a complete stranger to them and I had a professional identity and was based in another competing institution. At the same time, there were two things that supported me. Firstly, I had fewer years working in a university and, although I had a senior position as Registrar, I was still not seen as being on the same level as deans or senior professors. Secondly, they were all women and were sharing this information with another woman, which is supportive of the feminist perspective women's narrative interpreted from a woman's perspective. I expected these dynamics to affect my interviews, but they went well and in some cases there was an unexpected openness that was exciting for me as a researcher. I do feel that I developed a bond with all of my interviewees, who shared with me a great deal of information about the good moments and bad moments of life through their narratives.

## **Limitations of the Methodology**

Like any other research study, there were some limitations in this study. The moment a researcher decides to carry out a piece of qualitative research, she puts herself in a position where she is concerned with the elements of subjectivity and biases. My study was even more difficult, as I had decided to explore the lives of these women through their own personal narratives. I accepted the narratives to be true rather than false, as I did not want to be judgmental about their personal accounts. My own position as a colleague in higher education, and my understanding of the background, micro-politics, national politics and all other social factors affecting these women enabled me to interpret their perceptions. If I were undertaking a bigger study, I probably would have included a second layer of questions for data collection in order to corroborate their stories. I would have gone back to some of these women and asked them some more questions, and I expect that they too would have given more critical answers as they became aware of many things in their personal and professional



lives while I interviewed them (as mentioned in the section on the pilot interview). I think this limitation could become an advantage if I am able to initiate a follow-up study at a later stage.

## **Reflections on the Process of the Research**

This particular section is a reflective section, which was added to this chapter for two reasons, the first of which was that I want it to be recorded so that it can be disseminated to other aspiring researchers who undertake this type of interviewing. I also wanted to share this with my readers because I feel the process is incomplete if the physical and emotional details of the researcher are not shared, especially if there is a difference of culture. There are several examples of researchers experiencing emotional stress and pressure while interviewing women on sensitive issues (Klein 1989; Thompson 1990; Leonard 2001; Denzin and Lincoln 2005).

### **Physical Strain**

When any researcher plans a research study, many different factors must be taken into consideration such as the viability of the research – is the research possible or of importance? While developing the proposal there were a certain amount of anticipated issues and some unanticipated. This section highlights the unanticipated pressures I experienced as an international doctoral researcher.

When I decided to start this research, I knew I was pressed for time, as my thesis proposal was approved in mid-year and I had not started with my pilot until November because of the pressures of full-time work. The physical stress of travelling between Pakistan and the UK was another significant factor that I faced as an international student. The issues of enhanced security after the July 7, 2007 bombings in the UK for immigration, visas and so on added to the stress of shuttling between Islamabad International and Heathrow airports. In the last two years, the major fluctuation in the currency exchange market has multiplied the financial pressure, which pushed me to work full-time to make ends meet. I was completely stressed out for six months, and in order to complete writing up I had to take time off from work and be in the UK with the added burden of a reduced salary from my workplace in Pakistan and a

higher cost of living in London. The physical pressure of completing the work was accompanied by emotional stress as well, which is elaborated on in the following paragraphs.

### **Emotional Stress**

I was excited by the intellectual journey I had to make to complete my thesis, but I was not at all aware of the emotional journey that I was to take in the process. I had passed through long phases of my father's illness over the last two years, but I had my family to share that with me. In this particular research, though, I was alone. I was interviewing women who I expected to talk with about their lives, workplace and so on, but I ended up with women crying about instances in their lives, sharing their unhappiness about the system and also voicing extreme unhappiness with the way things were in their personal and professional lives. I, in return, could not sit down and talk about it with anyone else because I feared that my colleagues would be recognised. On several occasions, I cried myself, especially in one instance where one of the women said that because of her position and enhanced salary, she was for the first time experiencing respect from her husband, a foreign graduate himself. While writing, I still feel the pain and emotion attached to that confession. I felt like an insider who knew exactly how hard it was to make that confession without making a villain out of her husband. The emotional aspect of qualitative research has been highlighted by other scholars (Coffey and Atkinson 1996; Meloy 2002), but it does not stand out as other issues, for example ethics or reliability, which is something that needs further noting and new researchers need to be made aware of.

I feel that women committing to doctorate work need constant emotional support, but when you undertake qualitative research, it is even more difficult because there are very few opportunities for shedding the emotionally stressful experience of the interviews.

### **Making Sense of the Data Linking With My Life**

The emergence of the themes was linked closely with my own life story, my reading and the data from the interviews.

As I wrote in the first chapter, I have lived with and seen evidence of the 'glass ceiling' that has limited the lives of the academic women around me. This led me to develop the research

questions. My reading gave me a theoretical background to my questions and helped me to develop a suitable methodology based on the literature around carrying out feminist research. I chose to use semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions, which brought me undoubtedly long and in-depth narratives, but which were initially difficult to manage. My use of NVivo demanded that I should develop codes. My return to the literature then, coupled with my data and my own experience, helped me to decide on these codes. This was thus an iterative process. At this point, the key theoretical frameworks of feminism and patriarchy really began to fit and to reconfirm the direction of the data analysis. I chose the most commonly recurring themes, which then became my thematic chapters. I also had a 45,000-word limit. Unfortunately, therefore, I have not been able to address such themes as physical relations with their husbands and their effects on the careers of the two interviewees who spoke freely on this subject; although this was clearly important to these women, the others did not raise the matter with me, and as I had decided that only common themes would find a place in my thesis, I could not use it. In the same way, I could not do justice to the success of siblings, the educational level and social status of husbands, specific cultural issues about unmarried women, and birth order.

The dilemma of what to keep in and what to leave out has a complete story behind it. For a part-time student, it is a bigger dilemma because you are away from colleagues and other students and your only link with the doctoral programme is your supervisor, who, in all fairness, wants you to be an independent researcher and to make your own choices in the process.

When I started processing the data in the forms of transcripts, almost a month after the interviews, I was very excited to read and understand what had seemed very rich data while I was recording. It was only after the first couple of interviews that I realised the words seemed different on the page. I went on with the process, but after going through two to three interviews I stopped and reverted to the voice recordings because each one of them had similarities and disparities. There were patterns, but there was uniqueness in each story as well. Some, I sense, were glossing over the chronology of their life, while some were referring to their philosophy on life. The more I listened, the more entangled I became in the web of data, which at times seemed limitless. I therefore started writing down the significant points of each interview. I reflected on my writing. I thought the interviews produced

beautiful narratives, but were they saying something that was I hoping to hear? I continued to listen to them, but after seven interviews I was not satisfied. As an insider in higher education of Pakistan, I knew a little more about the area than a novice researcher. This disappointment, that the richness I had sensed in my interviews had not been translated into my transcripts, weighed heavily on me. I realised that most of these women were mature, in control of their emotions and, to some extent, in control of the interview as well. They shared things that they wanted to share, but then some went beyond and were overwhelmed with emotion. For example, on the issue of promotions, most women (10 out of 12) claimed that they were given promotions in the due course of time.

However, at different points they also referred to departmental micro-politics. The other example was when they said that in four out of five cases, they were the first female dean, professor or HoD in their university, but at the same time they also said that they were perceived to be of less significance because men were fewer in number. However, I still observed them very frequently in our daily working. It would be fair to say that my exposure to the international academic environment made me more reflective and aware of these issues. Another example that was a surprise was that most of the women had not thought about their career seriously, and there was no planning involved – it had all happened by chance. This has been seen in some other countries like Hong Kong (Lam 2006), and I observed it was connected with the ethos of patriarchy and the male-dominant culture of Pakistan, which, again, most of them did not mention in their conversations, but I, being part of the system, nonetheless analysed it.

I decided that even though it was late in March 2009 the only way I could manage this data was to analyse some primary issues, which were part of my basic framework of patriarchy, and to focus on them from a feminist perspective. Nevertheless, any other significant points would be used either for some further exploration or later for publication. I confess that in the process of developing the themes, I kept my basic focus in mind around the point that this would be the first study of its kind in Pakistan. Therefore, I wanted these women to be role models for women academics. I needed to bring out those aspects of their journey that were relevant and helpful for young professional women to progress in their careers. I developed three core into themes; however, when these themes were divided into data chapters, I had to develop two chapters on family, family of origin and family of marriage, as family emerged

as the strongest theme. The remaining themes were analysed in the other two data chapters on Education and the Professional Journey.

## **Conclusion**

In the above chapter I set out the methodology. I employed qualitative life stories from a feminist perspective in the study, as I wanted to collect in-depth data. The feminist perspective was used to hear the voices of the unheard, i.e. women professors in this instance. In the following four chapters, I will be talking about my findings in the context of key areas identified in the sections above.

## Chapter 4: FAMILY OF ORIGIN

### Introduction

The effects and influence of the family of origin emerged as a significant theme in understanding the theory of patriarchy and its position in the lives of the women professors I interviewed. The strands are spread around the family – father and mother’s role in the lives of these women, father and mother’s education and its impact, birth order, and the number of siblings, their education and careers. Apart from these points, the data in this chapter also refers to the emotion of pride, which these women experienced and expressed in the context of their family lives in their parental homes, where they boast about how conscious their uneducated mothers were about their education and the efforts they made to admit them to good schools and so on.

In the context of this theme, the argument I have developed is that women in their life journeys have different phases, each of which has a significant aspect or an individual who affects their life. Most of the married women experienced support from their husbands, fathers-in-law and male colleagues, which is discussed in detail in the next chapter on ‘Marriage’. It became clear to me that career choice was most influenced by the family of origin.

### Support, Advice and Choices

All of the women I interviewed told me about the support they received from their parents while they were growing up and even later in life. In this section, I also highlight the advice given in the area of education including the type of school, the choice of subjects and later careers; these were the key aspects mentioned by the interviewees. Equally, we see a significant presence and support from other women like mothers and other females in their lives, which facilitated their success.

As Pakistan is a patriarchal society, it is not surprising to see all the women identifying the significance of their fathers’ support in their lives. However, they do not undervalue their

mothers' support, although some of these women expected or anticipated this support from their mothers. Some Western literature refers to father and son relationships, and mother and daughter relationships (Gordon 1984; Jampolsky 1996; Morgan 2002; Li and Kerpelman 2007; Garner and Clough 2008) and the role parents play in their children's education in early life and later career. A number of research findings show a 'parent-daughter connectedness', where the daughters are willing to change their choice of careers so that they fit parental views (Li and Kerpelman 2007).

As for support, the published literature on support networks for women in general is based on the framework of 'welfare' in the Western world, but Pakistan is not a welfare state; rather, it has a strong family support system of relatives and domestic help (servants). There is extended family like aunts and uncles who are helpful. In most cases, women in Pakistan rarely come across issues common to countries that have low support for female employees within the institutions of family and work (Stier, Lewin-Epstein and Braun 2001; Lam 2006). Concepts of support networks and support systems for working women exist throughout the world (Lam 2006). Nuclear and extended families are generally considered support networks, but then there are examples of supervisors/mentors, friends, colleagues and, in some cases, nannies. My interviewees also experienced these kinds of support and depended on them in order to reach their goals (Polnick 2004).

In the context of my chosen overall framework of patriarchy, the first strand under the theme of 'Family' that emerges from the data is the strong sense of parental support that these women experienced in their lives. They all expressed a sense of being cared for and loved as a girl child, and they spoke about the supportive environment their parents provided when they were growing up. The literature in Pakistan supports the notion that home is the place where gender stereotyping begins, which is in the family unit. The girls and boys are raised to be men and women, and so it is the family amongst other units where action is required to effect any change in societal customs and traditions (Qureshi and Rarierya 2007).

Walkerdine, Luccy and Melody (2001) write that middle class parents in the United Kingdom do not focus on owning a house compared to acquiring education, because they and their daughters do not see 'ownership and money as something which will improve their class' (p. 38). I heard the same notion from most of my interviewees, who talked about their parents



moving from village to city; parents not investing in building or buying houses, but rather sending their children – including those I interviewed – to schools that had better standards and quality of education.

Ninety-five per cent of the interviewees claimed that their mother/father were enlightened and emancipated about educating girls. For example, the mother, even when she herself was not well educated, wanted her daughter to break the cycle of disadvantage that she herself had experienced, and the means to this end was the education of her children, especially her girls.

This is extremely relevant in a Pakistani context, where only 25% of women, compared with 49% of men, have completed primary education (FBS 2000). In urban Punjab, across all socioeconomic strata, female literacy is only around two-thirds of that for men. For uneducated girls, 31% of both the father and mother ‘did not agree’ with the child attending school compared with 7% of parents of uneducated boys (FBS 2000). This neglect of girls extends into later life (Qadir 2005).

The period my informants spent in their parental homes provided an example of the support and guidance they received, which they thought significant in developing the patterns in their lives. It ranged, for example, from the number of siblings to the absence of male siblings, to migration from one country or city to another, to not making it to medical school, to tussles with parents about choices of subjects and careers, and so on. In this section, I present some of the significant events from the stories of the interviewees. I have tried to present those that I found significantly linked with their career success, as well as from a parental support perspective. Others, who talked about their situation when they were growing up, referred to it as significant and raised similar issues. For example, Professor Zircon told me about an event she termed as a turning point in her life. It was when her father had an accident and was critically injured and out of job for quite a few months. She said that for the first time she became aware of how casual she was about her studies, and then she became a serious, hard-working student.

In Pakistan, there are two specific phases in both men and women’s lives when there is a strong possibility of confronting parents – first when making a choice of subjects leading up

to a career, and secondly when deciding to get married. It was observed how these women took up their study subjects based on parental advice, which later become their careers.

Lavine (1982) and Brooks (2004) demonstrate how this phenomenon of parental influence on the choice of subjects for young girls and their choice of careers is seen elsewhere in the world. In the context of Pakistan, this is further influenced by social norms and values, where certain careers are considered respectable and some not very respectable (Hamouda 2003).

Professor Moonstone, Professor Mystic Topaz, Professor Amethyst and Professor Sapphire shared their experiences about choice and advice around their careers and education, and said that their male relatives, especially their fathers, were supportive and, in some instances, assertive on the issue. For example, Professor Mystic Topaz, who initially in her interview said that she was born 20 years after her parents' marriage and was a much-wanted daughter, made the following comment on the same issue of choice:

The problem was my father. He said that I had to do M.A. in French and I said, 'No, I do not want to do Master's in French – I want to do it in English'. He said no. Then I said, 'Okay, I will do it as I do not want to lose my scholarship (for the Master's)'. I protested and cried and yelled and everything, but he said do an M.A. in French.

He father's rationale was that there would be thousands of graduates in English and it would be difficult to get a job; he wanted her to do a job and be independent. Now looking back, she did not perceive this as negative, but certainly significant, as it gave direction to her course of life. She accepts that she had better opportunities in terms of work and education (discussed in Chapters 6 and 7). This is a subjective experience, which was internalised positively. However, if she had remained unhappy with the decision, perhaps the road to success might not have been as smooth as she had experienced.

The choices that revolve around career moves or choices of subjects seem to be critical and often contingent upon parental approval. Research on influences on young adults' career aspirations consistently indicates that parents and peers are the most important influences (Creamer and Laughlin 2005; Kotrlik and Harrison 1989, Russel and Saebel 1997; Tacker, Barber and Eccles 2001). Virtually all of the women repeatedly framed their lives in the

period when these critical choices were made. They focused on how the decisions were made, the input from their parents and how they responded to it and, in turn, how it actually influenced their career making choices. As a young woman in Pakistani society, I experienced the same and could relate to the stories. I wanted to do a degree in International Relations and my father convinced me that doing a Master's in English Literature was not only intellectually more stimulating and enlightening, but more marketable if I ever needed to work. Therefore, I could relate to their experience and understand how they faced more or less the same issues in their own journeys towards success.

Some other interviewees reminisced about their childhoods as a period that contributed positively to their personality and their life later at work. These women professors, through their stories, told me about their experiences as young girls who received a greater level of care, support, guidance and advice as compared to some of the other girls growing up in their own extended families. For example, the women whose parents had moved from rural to urban areas still had cousins who did not have access to education. This is supported in a recent study in Pakistan that examined gender disadvantage as a life course phenomenon and found a significant association between the level of well-being in later stages of life and a lack of care which young girls experience in their lives (Qadir 2005). The interviewees, however, saw their homes as places that were 'rich and rewarding' (Professor Sapphire 2007), as they did not perceive any kind of overt gender disadvantage. The literature also indicates that there is a relation between career progress and secure childhood. Ketterson (1997) demonstrates that secure parent-child relationships are linked closely with career decision-making and positive career self-efficacy beliefs. This leads us to conclude that fruitful formative years may have had a lasting effect on the lives of these women as adults and their comfortable relationships may have helped them in taking the necessary steps important in exploring new roles (Hall 1996; Way 1996; Altman 1997).

Deacon (1998), in her experience as a university administrator, states that when she left university as a student in the 1970s she 'had no consciousness that women were disadvantaged' (p. 192) because she was never aware of experiencing disadvantage as a girl either at home or in school, which was coeducation in most cases. Similarly, we see that the overarching perception of these women is that they were born into caring families that provided them with opportunities to pursue their education; nonetheless, it also means that

there was possibly a gender disadvantage, but the women could not perceive it as they were not conscious of its presence. This again supports our argument that a positive home environment that encourages women's education and guides the choices of subjects to be studied is an influential step towards career progression. However, both of the points support our argument that the positive family support is helpful.

## **Mother's Supportive Role**

My mother was one of the prettiest women and most the emancipated woman that I have ever seen. She had only five years of schooling, and then she wanted to study further. My first memory of this emancipated woman is a very clean person going around...

(Professor Zircon 2007)

Most of the women said that mothers provided emotional and personal support in the early years of their lives, which they perceived as a significant aspect of their life. They also emphasised that, despite the handicap of not being highly educated like the fathers, mothers were still very influential in the lives of their daughters. However, in only two cases, I observed that the interviewees acknowledged the low level of communication they had with their mothers in comparison to their fathers. However, this was not of great significance, as they shared that their mothers were visibly more helpful to their daughters in their later lives.

Amongst the fifteen mothers of the interviewees, only two worked outside the house, while the remaining thirteen were housewives. One mother was a medical doctor and the second working mother was a school headteacher. Two out of the thirteen 'housewife' mothers went to school for ten years and another three for five years or less. The remaining eight mothers only knew how to read the Quran in Arabic, but could not understand the meaning of the words in Arabic. They were unable to read Urdu fluently, but could sign their names if needed. I found it very interesting that all of the women, irrespective of their mothers' education and social status, told me again and again that their mothers were 'visionary', 'emancipated', 'progressive', etc. I think most women shared this information about their mothers' educational/literacy level because they wanted to make the point that their mothers had played a significant role in introducing their daughters to the concept of education, despite their own disadvantages. The same point is significantly supportive of my argument that in a patriarchal setup women experience disadvantage, but the same becomes strength as

it is used for supporting their daughters. Three professors vocalised their appreciation of this support by quoting instances of their mothers' vision and commitment towards their daughters' education. For example, Professor Quartz's narrative was reflective of the same philosophy:

My mother had completed her schooling but never went to college. But she got, I think, very enlightened in her ways... and (was) able to deal with a lot of situations in life.

She talked about her mother's support through this comment, which made it easier to understand what they felt vis-à-vis her mother's role. The role of the mothers in the formative years of these women was also seen as important. Mothers are largely responsible for the upbringing of the children in all cultures. The literature states that most mothers are concerned with the need 'to provide their children with the skills to negotiate their own life choices' (David et al. 1996: 212). In Pakistani culture, specifically, mothers are the carers and nurturers and fathers are the providers. All the women indicated that their mothers, through their upbringing and visionary training, gave them the skills to manage many life issues.

It can be said that in these narratives a great deal depends on the participants' own perception and internalisation of their circumstances. It was evident from their comments that even if they had thought about these issues, they had not voiced them before this interview. With the exception of one or two professors, the rest were not familiar with formal theories or practices of reflection as a process (Schon 1991) in their professional lives. However, being part of a close family environment, it was imperative for them to be reflective in their familial roles. The process of internalisation and subjective experience is important for each individual, irrespective of their familiarity or non-familiarity with the theory of the reflective practitioner (Schon 1991). Some women talked about issues contextualised in a reflection in life. For example, one of the interviewees, whose mother was not very well educated and did not work outside home, chose to call her a 'house manager' instead of a housewife, which is the common terminology used in Pakistan for women who stay at home. Another example was the way some of them described their early childhood education, especially attending an Urdu medium government school.

None of them perceived it as something negative or weak, as is the case today in Pakistan where children going to an Urdu medium school think it is a social disadvantage, as it hinders their progress in the English language. These women considered attending an Urdu medium school as a strong foundation of their academic career in times (era) when studying in an English medium school was a status symbol in the country. (The idea of English/Urdu medium schools is elaborated on page 105-106). For example, Professor Aquamarine expressed the same perceptions about her mother and her role in a professor's early life, and presented a rationale for going to an Urdu medium school:

Since I had gone to an Urdu medium school and was placed in the Railway Girls High School because that was close to our house, it was easy for us to go there. My mother could watch us going to school and coming back. You know, in our society it is very important for the female to be taken care of.

There were a couple of interesting instances not related directly with the support mechanism in the patriarchal setup, but the professors perceived them as actions that helped in their development as stronger females in a male-dominated society. For example, Professor Lapis came from a very large family, but her mother was supportive of her daughters pursuing education. The professor felt that she was allowed by her parents to dress up and enjoy the same rough, boisterous life as her brothers as an adolescent teenage. She got a lot of exposure to life through her brothers, as she spent her childhood playing street cricket and hockey. This example reiterates our earlier argument that the skills to exist in a male-dominated society/workplace were given to them as children.

Some professors also recognised the extra burden their mothers had to carry on their behalf in terms of housework, especially in the joint family system in a patriarchal setup where women are expected to work in the house. In this system, there is a joint kitchen and the preparation and serving of food takes place at one time; everybody eats together and female members, except the very elderly, share the housework. In this joint effort, however, there are moments where help is extended to members of the family, for example, older members looking after the children. One of the professors again recognised the issue and appreciated the efforts made by her mother to save her from the workload of housework so that she could spend more time on her education. Professor Spinel told me:



It was my mother; we were in the joint family system; it was like we never did any housework. We had servants and all that, but my mother took the entire burden for her daughters so that their (our) study should not be affected. She used to take all the responsibilities, being in a joint family system.

This quote is also supportive of the phenomenon reported in Western literature where daughters claim that it was mothers' jobs to do the house chores and look after the children and they never thought beyond that (Deacon 1998).

Western literature emphasises the significance of the role of mothers engaged in and knowledgeable about their daughters' lives (Morley and Walsh 1996). This is particularly true in Pakistan, where mothers are responsible for bringing up their children, especially daughters who are expected to stay indoors and help their mothers with housework.

My findings reflect that mothers' support experienced by the interviewees was both emotional and pragmatic. For example, Professor Lapis, whose mother did not go to school, wanted her daughters to be well educated. For the choice of subject and career of Professor Lapis, she consulted some families in another city who had daughters that were pursuing higher education and, subsequently, she travelled to meet the family and take their advice. The purpose of this exercise, as perceived and explained by Professor Lapis, was to get more information from this family, to help her decide what career she should opt for. Professor Lapis recognised the efforts made by her mother as enlightened and emancipated, a view shared by many of the other participants.

Such activities and the home environment allowed all the women interviewees' the mental and emotional freedom to develop aspirations. This support was not contingent upon mothers' educational achievements. Instead, it was more to do with the desire of the mother to either break the cycle of the lack of education that she herself had experienced in her life, or to repeat the cycle of encouraging the daughter towards higher education that the mother had herself experienced. These women, while reminiscing about their childhood and their relationships with their mothers, repeatedly described a fulfilling and satisfying relationship with their mothers, regardless of their mothers' social standing or educational achievement.



One tends to remember what one wants to remember, so the fact that the interviewees described good memories could mean that those were primary memories retained over the years, or it may also mean that their responses were based on social desirability. I will discuss this point further in the concluding chapter on subjectivity and the validity of data. Nevertheless, the reflection, perception and internalisation process of thought is important here as well.

There is also evidence of more concrete support from mothers after marriage. For example, Professor Moonstone had three children when she won a scholarship to carry out her Ph.D. Her mother and her younger sister were already babysitting for her frequently, but then her parents agreed that her mother would go with her for a year to support her while she settled in the USA:

I do not know; somehow, she (my mother) was very courageous and gracious. She said it is my career and if I wanted to take my children she decided to come along and my father supported that; otherwise, maybe I would not have been able to do it.

All the instances mentioned above in this section focus on mothers' support, which is apparently more concrete in terms of physically helping and guiding daughters as compared to fathers' support, which is more inclined to help through supportive conversations and financial help. This also reflects the general norm of a society where women are more financially dependent on their husbands, but are better at helping with housework and childcare, which they do or have done in the past as well.

## **Fathers' Education and Role**

All of the interviewees reported that their fathers had been to school. Eight out of fifteen fathers had graduated with a degree, two with engineering degrees. Five had completed some years of education. Thirteen fathers were in salaried jobs and two had their own business. Therefore, largely, it was a homogenous group in terms of family income.

This theme is interesting in the context of the patriarchal society of Pakistan – their fathers were involved in guiding them to take up higher studies. In terms of financial support from

their fathers, three women said that their fathers gave them financial support for their PhDs. One of the interviewees said that when her husband was doing his PhD she asked her parents for partial financial support, which they gave so that she could avail herself of the opportunity to do her degree with her husband. Professor Amethyst told me:

It was my father who was very clear that without any gender bias he was going to support both me and my brother at a US graduate institution.

Therefore, my interviewees' comments do not correspond with general opinion and practice that still exist in Pakistan (Qadir et al. 2005) about giving preference to boys' education, and they also show that the success of these women was facilitated by such events in their lives.

Professor Amethyst told me about the support she received from her father, even after her marriage. She said:

My father helped, and even though he belonged to a generation which could not effectively participate in childcare and home management, he always stood behind me and with me in terms of supporting my professional aspirations and struggles.

These women were lucky compared to the general practice of society, where males can be the head of the family but they do not support their married daughters. The support these women received from their parents was not taken away once they were married. As explained earlier in the Introduction chapter, one reason why daughters are undervalued is the financial cost of marriage incurred by her family (Miller 1998). Social pressures about their daughters' education and jobs from their extended family and social circle compound these effects further.

Fathers, as reported by the interviewees, covered the basic financial support – as the breadwinners in all 15 cases were the fathers of the interviewees – and they paid for all major financial expenses such as education and other necessities of life. The decision-making in any basic family unit lies with the head of the family, which, in most of the cases in Pakistan, are

fathers. In this study, all the interviewees reported that their fathers were the head of the family. As a result, it was their decision to support their daughters' needs to pursue higher education and undertake doctorates. The narratives in no way undermined the support they received from their mothers, but, at the same time, they recognised and appreciated their fathers' roles in their progress in resisting extended family pressures not to send daughters to universities and foreign countries. It is important to appreciate this support in the context of our basic argument that fathers do come across as significant persons who influence the lives and choices of these women.

## Siblings

On average, the women I spoke to had five to six siblings. In fact, the range varied between none and nine. Only one respondent was an only child. One did not have any sisters, and one did not have any brothers. The remaining 13 were from big families. Nine out of the 15 were the eldest children amongst their siblings. The number of eldest daughters was also nine. We know that birth order influences the attitude of the family (Qadir 2005), and although this is beyond the scope of this study, it was a salient aspect that emerged. However, in the present study, birth order is seen as affecting outlooks and attitudes towards the lives of the participants. Apart from the nine women who said they were the eldest child in the family, one more professor claimed that she was responsible for her younger siblings, even though she had an older sister. This phenomenon can be linked to another societal norm whereby although the eldest child is a daughter, she is respected and given due care and attention irrespective of the gender.

Professor Aquamarine emphasised that although her parents were the first generation to migrate from a village to the city, they were open minded, especially her father, who was supportive of his daughters' education and never made an issue of not having a son:

We are four sisters and we have no brother and I think all the credit goes to my parents, specifically my father, because he was very much interested in educating his daughters...

Again, birth order and not having a male sibling might have turned out to be a reason for strong parental support. Male preference is deeply embedded in Pakistani culture (Fikree and Pasha 2004) inasmuch that boys carry the family name, they can continue the family trade and they are expected to provide for their parents in old age. As we see in the sample of this study, female children were given equal support, which is not a general norm in Pakistani society.

## **Conclusion**

This study shows how fathers influenced the formative years of these women in making subject choices and in selecting careers for their daughters. The mothers were not only significantly important in their early years, but also provided child support for their daughters once they had children in order to facilitate their careers. This chapter considers the aspects of family of origin that I believe are important in understanding the reasons for the interviewees' success. Keeping in view the size of the study, I limited myself to the role of fathers and mothers. I decided to highlight only those aspects common and most frequently talked about, as it is important to appreciate that it is an exploratory study. However, I would like to mention that there were other family figures such as grandparents, aunts and /or siblings who I have not discussed in detail. Similarly, the issue of birth order and its effect on the interviewees' lives or their decision-making were not discussed in detail, although some of the interviewees talked about it in detail – about being the eldest or youngest amongst their siblings. The effect of parental death, particularly a mother's early death and its effects, could also not be explored in the present study. Issues around migration arose, but were not examined as a separate theme; rather, they were referred to as issues of parental support where it affected the lives of the women.

# Chapter 5: MARRIAGE

## Introduction

This chapter examines marriage and the families that these women had through marriage. This was the second significant strand in the themes which emerged, but was different from family of origin. All 13 married women voiced their opinion about the roles that their husbands, children and in-laws played in their lives. In this chapter, I explore how marriage, or its absence, affected the lives of these women professors. I also explore their husbands' roles, the effect on their children's upbringing and education and related topics. These are the areas where, significantly, important events occurred that helped or hindered the interviewees in their professional journeys. I have clustered in-laws as one group, but do not discuss them in detail due to lack of space. However, some of them were identified by the interviewees themselves as significantly important in their journey, so I make a reference to them. I have not discussed the impact of types of household and their effect on the marriages and lives of my interviewees. The types of marriage are significant in understanding the context.

## Marital Status

As mentioned in the first chapter, marriage is a significant phenomenon in the lives of Pakistani men and women. In this research, marriage and its effects were not my focus. However, in the life story of a woman, it is inevitable that some discussion will revolve around marital issues, especially the living and adjustment arrangements in a marriage. I interviewed 15 women professors and 13 of them were married (see Table 1 on page 55). Twelve of the 15 interviewees had a marriage arranged through their parents. However, all 13 of these women were not forced to marry; rather, the consent of the bride was taken in all cases. Out of the 13 married women, two were widows. Two out of the 15 women had single status at the time of the interview. Interestingly, four out of these 13 married women were not living in the same city/country as their husbands, who were away from home because of their jobs, which is not the conventional way of living for a married couple in Pakistan (see the

section on Marriage and Pakistan, Chapter-1). So, apparently, it emerged as an interesting finding that only five women were living a conventional married life and the rest had different living arrangements with their spouses not common in Pakistani society. Two of the women's husbands had to travel extensively and were not present at home for extensive periods.

Professor Tanzanite had an arranged marriage at the age of 17 after she came first in her intermediate examination in engineering subjects. The reason she gave for getting married at this time was that two of her aunts were 'spinsters', and her mother and grandmother were scared that she may have the same fate, as she was the eldest amongst her siblings. Professor Tanzanite said that her early marriage changed the situation for her younger siblings. Hence, the birth order seems to be important, as the eldest child was not given the freedom to study as a single woman compared to others, including her own sibling sister, who completed her professional education before her marriage.

Professor Zircon refers to her father's support on occasions when her brothers were not supporting her marriage because she was marrying out of family and caste. She said:

Luckily, I my father was alive and he never allowed my brothers to say anything. He never allowed any other member of the family, because it was a big thing that I was getting married out of the family, because I am in the entire history of the family the first one who had ever been married outside the family. I mean, that is a kind of caste system.

This is a clear example of how, when a father decides to support his daughter, all other relevant male members of the family are silenced so that his decision prevails. In a patriarchal hierarchy, he has the maximum authority in the family unit.

### **The Social Pressure of Being Single**

Two out of the 15 women in the sample were single. Although this is not a big number, the experiences they shared are significant, and by virtue of doing qualitative feminist research, their experience are important. Professor Spinel, who is not married, talked about the social pressures she experienced while attending family events. She said:

You have to become strong if you are to go to a wedding and the people are of the view that 'Oh! She is not married'. What they do not know is that this lady is not married by her choice.

Professor Spinel said that she resented attending these events, as it put her in the awkward situation of responding to people she did not feel answerable to, and they would question her single status and it made her feel unsociable. She avoided conversations around clothes and fashion, as that is what most of the married non-working women had as a subject of conversation.

Professor Sapphire as the other single respondent, however, had a different stance on the issue. She said that she was not pressurised into marrying anyone, but her family consistently talked about the possibilities. Especially, her mother still hopes for her to marry despite her settled life. She said that she did not get into any argument with her mother on the issue and has no resentment and participates in family events without pressure.

Dr. Mystic Topaz, who was engaged to a man before she went for her PhD, was not very happy with the arrangement her parents made. Nevertheless, being the only child and a daughter, she agreed to the engagement that continued for four years. When she came back from abroad, her father told her that her fiancé had died in a motorcycle accident. Following her return to Pakistan, she faced the challenge of all the social pressures attached to the episode and the stigmatisation that she was exposed to in a foreign culture. As a result, she found it difficult to settle down in an arranged marriage. She told me that despite the stressful experience of the first engagement, which had ended so tragically, she agreed to marry another man after the death of her fiancé because many pressures were exerted on her and her parents. She told me that the initial four to five years of the marriage, which was arranged, were very depressing and gloomy, but ultimately she reconciled with the arrangement. She lived a regular life until the time that her husband became critically ill and passed away.

The following section shows how important it is for women to have husbands in Pakistan and how marriage can help them as a support mechanism in their careers.



## **Husband's Support**

In Pakistan, for a single woman at least, the father has the most authority. For a married woman, the husband influences and / or in some cases controls her decisions. Therefore, his support becomes crucial. Additionally, in most of the situations discussed, a working mother needs support in bringing up children, running the household and fulfilling her familial responsibilities.

Amongst the 13 married women, two were widows and four were living away from their husbands, who were working in other cities. Professor Amethyst's husband was out of the city for more than 60% of the time, as his job required him to travel. Therefore, five women had husbands, but were free from the wifely duties because of their living arrangements. Many women (in this case, all the married women) speak of the crucial support of their husbands, but there was a difference in the level and kind of support as Porat (1985) and Tague and Harris (1988) found. It is evident that, in the case of married women, most of the identified support is expected to come from the husband (Astin and Leland 1991; Hal 1996).

In Pakistan, the home and family care are primarily a woman's responsibility. She does not usually have any support from her husband to share that load. Men have the very clearly defined roles of breadwinner and protector, and are not expected to help women in household chores or to look after the children for any extended periods. Any unpaid help extended to working women by family and friends is appreciated, but in everyday life all such help is usually from women in the family and not from men.

Professor Azurite told me that her parents wanted her to come back to Pakistan during her PhD studies to get married. There were some proposals that they were considering, but she decided to stay and complete her work. Upon her return, her marriage took place. Her husband was jobless at the time of their marriage, whereas she herself was working full-time. She described this situation and told me in her interview:

When he (prospective husband) came from America, he had no job and then my father said 'What should I do? Should I marry her to this man or shall we wait?' Then he asked my sister because she was married before me, but was younger than I was. She

got married before me because I spent some time completing my PhD. They (my parents and sibling) took that decision (to marry me with a qualified, but unemployed man). They asked me and I agreed because I had my job and I could support (myself and my husband) for the time being.

This statement reflects the beginning of a somewhat 'egalitarian' marriage where the financial roles of provider and provided for were reversed for a brief period of one year, just after marriage. It was repeated after 19 years of marriage when Professor Azurite commented on the present situation in terms of her husband and his role – he took retirement from his work nine years ago:

He took early retirement because he had some back problem and also, according to him, he had started his career from very early childhood (the reason was that his father died when he was 14 years old). So, he had to support his family (parents and sibling) and he worked day and night.

The above two quotes show the unusual situation in Professor Azurite's life where she was expected to temporarily support herself and her husband at the beginning of her marriage and later on was again the breadwinner after almost 19 years of marriage. She was responsible for her children's upbringing and for their financial needs. Even in such circumstances, the professor still had very low domestic and emotional expectations from her husband, but completely recognised and appreciated his support throughout her career path. Her lack of confidence was seen in her body language and facial expressions, which pointed towards low self-esteem. Her perception about herself did not reflect any element of pride, which a professional usually gains through success. However, amongst the sample she was one of the first tenured professors, which was a big achievement. She talked about her husband's supportive role and said:

... but he is also very cooperative, because whenever I go abroad, like for the postdoctoral fellowship I went on for year, like that, and then he looked after my children and all the children were very young.

Although I am not generalising the situation, it is important to highlight that in her case the mere presence of a man in her life is the symbol of support, and in this case it was not financial support only. Later in the interview, Professor Azurite stated that as a result of her new and enhanced contract for teaching in the same university (as a result of HE reforms), her

husband had started respecting her more and also tried to help her in daily chores. She said that it had been extremely difficult for her to balance work and home in the initial years of marriage when her children were growing up, but she coped and was under stress during that period. Professor Tanzanite was supported by her husband during her further education. She completed her graduate education after her marriage at the age of 17, and she attributed her progress to her supportive husband.

Professor Quartz told me about the emotional support her husband gave her when he took time off from his work to travel with her to the United Kingdom to take care of their daughter:

I think I have to say that for my husband. He stood by me each time I needed and he provided that support whenever I needed it. And again, I did not have to ask him for it. I went to do my Master's in the UK, so he took time off to look after our child; he supported me by being there from the beginning.

It is also important to understand that Professor Quartz's husband was himself a university academic, who appreciated the need and significance of enhancement in academic achievement and supported his wife to take on further research degrees. Several issues emerge as key questions from this study, and are mentioned in the last chapter as possibilities for future research. The only perspective I heard is that of the wives, who chose to share, so it cannot be confirmed if men saw things in the same way.

Professor Moonstone had a similar experience. She had the opportunity to do her PhD after she was married and had three children. She went to the USA to do her PhD because her parents and her husband, who is a businessperson, were willing to support her in terms of childcare. None of the women in her husband's family had ever pursued a career or higher education before. Professor Moonstone said in her interview that initially she was not sure if he would let her work after marriage, but she faced no resistance to her working in a research institution. However, the decision to do the PhD with three children was the important decision, and she clearly stated that it would not have been possible without her husband's support, even though he voiced his concerns of sacrificing time for her a couple of times and she recognised it:

I spent two years in thesis... so my husband, he came back when I passed my comprehensive. Then he spent another six months [doing the same]. So he came thrice while I was doing my thesis. He would come visit us, stay with us for a couple of months and he would leave somebody behind to look after his business. But he now (after 20 years) cites that his work and his business suffered a lot because of this. It was a sort of very rare support that a woman gets from her husband. He told me that I did not need to do it [the PhD], but I wanted to do it because I thought I could.

The above illustration from Professor Moonstone's interview is an example of the perceptions women have of the nature and significance of their husband's support. Professor Moonstone was aware of the fact that her husband was not an academic; he was a businessperson who, in her view, wanted to support his wife's efforts and help her with the children. However, at the same time, there was a conflict in her response, as she said in few instances that her children were very independent and looked after themselves well and she was, to some extent, thankful to her husband, but he complained as well. This again was an interesting perspective that she shared, because she was one of the five women who were living full-time with their husbands. In addition, the conflict in her perceptions was quite visible, which made it difficult to analyse and conclude. However, it would be fair to say that she felt the need to recognise the support of her husband, irrespective of his criticism.

Professor Ruby is one of the four women who did their PhD after their marriage. She had a unique situation compared to other women inasmuch that she took her PhD with her husband at the same time in the same university. She acknowledges the support of her husband and says:

I think if it was anybody else (other than my husband) I think that I might have been (still) there ('B', parental hometown); it was only because my husband is very supportive or progressive (that I did my PhD with him abroad and I am teaching in a university).

Her perception regarding her situation is that as she was brought up in 'B', there was no reason that she should have a career anywhere else. However, she attributes her progress to her husband's drive to move ahead, and, as a result, she moved with him to a university in the NWFP. Finally, when he got a PhD scholarship, she went with him to do her PhD with his

support and her parents' financial support. Her husband's support is further demonstrated by the fact that he wanted her to be independent and taught her how to drive, and she says that without his presence, '*I might not have survived*' (Prof Ruby 2007)

However, she also spoke about her moments of guilt as a mother and a wife and the support her husband gave her as she worked in a university in Pakistan while he was working in a university in East Asia and looking after the three daughters who lived with him for nine years. I shall discuss this later in this chapter in the section about issues of children.

The nature of support which directly concerns helping with children has also been described by other women, especially on Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst (DAAD), German academic exchange scholarships, and on Fulbright scholarships to USA. They were required to go through the revisit programmes, which were like refresher courses to update their research techniques and skills after the completion of their PhD degree through a fellowship programme. Professor Jade refers to the support and understanding of her husband, who was also an academic at the same university. She told me:

He has been very much supportive in this regard and also he understood what research is and how much time and dedication is required for the research work. He had a PhD from Wales so before we got married, he was already a PhD. If he was not a researcher, then it might have been difficult, and then you have to stay late and as I said I went for a revisit programme in 1987 and at that time we were married and we had a daughter and she was only 6 weeks old. I had applied a year earlier (for the post-doc) and one day I got a letter to say that I had been awarded the revisit programme fellowship... so we went together to Germany.

The support Professor Jade received from her husband is different to that of Professor Moonstone, which can be attributed to the difference in the professions of the spouses in the context of this study. However, at the same time it emphasises further the point that there are different types of strengths and helpfulness of husbands in the lives of these women. The patriarchal point is that it is up to the man to decide what he will do – so women can rely on the support offered.

Professor Andulasite mostly spent her married life away from her husband, as he was working abroad. When he moved back to Pakistan, he got a job in a different city and was home on weekends only. She shared that their temperaments were completely different and both husband and wife had very diverse habits, but she was appreciative of his support throughout her career:

So, if you ask about my spouse support, my husband gave extraordinary support throughout this period and even in the job. He is very much interested in my subject, but our fields are completely different...

Professor Andulasite described the support she received from other members of her husband's family, as her husband was not with her most of the time (discussed in this chapter under the section on relatives-in-law). However, she also told me that during the writing-up stage of her PhD, she was going through a bad pregnancy in Germany and her husband took time off from work and helped her in finishing her work.

Professor Amethyst spoke on the subject of support and says that:

Yes, sometimes, I did wish that I had more intellectual space... I must, you know, acknowledge the continued support I got from my husband for pursuing my career. I remember him taking time off and juggling with his schedule so that I could attend special events (a seminar, conference, etc.) that I wanted to, and that obviously meant that sometimes he had to take time off from work. But it was very clear to him that, you know, accommodating his family (in-laws) in terms of facilitating me to pursue my career was very important for him. I did the same all along...

Another point was the interest of the husbands in the professional growth of their wives. One of the interviewees acknowledged that her husband, who is also an academic, appreciated her teaching skills and thought it was important for her to do a PhD. Two more interviewees, whose husbands are also academics, wanted their wives to complete their doctorates. This appears to give credence to the argument that the husbands who were academics and who had done a PhD themselves appreciated the requirement of the profession. They facilitated their wives to achieve their doctorates. However, in two or more instances, husbands who did not have doctorates or academic careers were also recognised by their wives for their support in terms of the time required for research and teaching.



Evidence of a different type of support emerged in the interview data from the women whose husbands work in the same institutions. International literature around this theme shows that it can be both a help and a hindrance if one partner decides to move to another city or university, thus challenging the status of the other partner in terms of employability in the same institution (Wolf-Wendel, Twombly and Rice 2000). However, it works differently in Pakistan. Job mobility – in very rare cases – is dependent on women. There is no published research to support the abovementioned phenomenon in Pakistan, but keeping in view the social norms and practices of a male-dominated society, and given that eight out of 13 of my interviewees were married to other academics, it can be expected that the presence of a male family member, in these cases husbands, is an encouraging factor. It provides a safety net for their wives in academia and supports them in micro-political situations. It is significant to mention here that *micro-political* is not used conceptually; rather, it refers to a situation arising from conflict or bullying in an academic environment.

One of the interviewees, Professor Quartz, who had worked in a distance learning federal university in the capital, took time off to be with her husband in a peripheral university in the province. She later decided to join the university where he worked because it was new and opportunities of work were available. She said that the presence of her husband on campus was a great support for her:

In a way, it was a lot protection. I mean, if I did not have my husband as the academic there, it could have been far more difficult for me to do the kind of interactive teaching (teaching language) that I wanted to do. I was safely married with a family and husband who had a strong personality, and because of that it was a lot of protection in a way. There were a lot of gender issues, you know, but my husband being there, he (head of the department) could not do my character assassination. I think his (her husband's) presence there made a lot of difference and it was a very big protection and shield for me. In that respect, he could not say that I was a loose woman, which is a very common thing for men to say in that kind of atmosphere...

The recognition of her husband as a 'protection and shield', as Professor Quartz called it, from those casting degrading comments on her character was the underlying defence of the patriarchal cultural perspective of overprotective attitudes towards women, particularly from the male perspective and also from the more conservative familial perspective. It is again interesting to note this positive internalisation by the respondent in the process of the



interview; otherwise, the same could be labelled ‘micro-politics of the institution’, and both males and females face this discrimination.

Professor Zircon also expressed the same opinion. She had spent almost three years in a similar university (peripheral) as a single woman and did not perceive any discrimination.

However, it was only after her marriage that she realised that different political parties in the university were using her. Once she was engaged to be married, there was a lot of character assassination because she was no longer affected by the micro-politics of the institution, and being a married woman her affiliations were where her husband’s were. She said that different interest groups printed and circulated misinformation about her:

There used to be pamphlets [printed information brochures] and you can make out that what these pamphlets are all about, but there was never any pamphlet about me earlier, so I become a celebrity after I was engaged. So, anyways, who cares? My husband did not care at all; all kind of (you know) suggestions, which were given to him...

This particular instance shows how the husband helped in handling this situation and that she was comfortable with his outlook. These instances show that the mere presence of a husband could make professional life easier for women in specific situations. These women also refer to the presence of husbands in their lives as a symbol of support and protection, which is commonly visible in patriarchal societies. Six women had husbands who were university academics. Only Professor Quartz and Professor Zircon talked about this point of their husbands’ support, while the other four did not mention the matter. These two women were the only ones working in male-dominated universities in the peripheral cities of Pakistan. The other three women worked in a university in the capital, which is comparatively modern and less conservative. Only one professor’s husband was also working at a peripheral university, but she worked in a central city of Pakistan. This could, therefore, illustrate the strength and overtness of micro-politics in more conservative universities and the extra difficulties women could meet when challenging patriarchy there.

My interviewees, in the context of their husbands' support, also referred to the juggling they had to do and the pressure they felt from their husbands, the resentment they faced and tackled. Professor Aquamarine expressed such feelings in our conversation:

PA: I think sometimes you feel like you are not spending enough time at home the way you are supposed to. Your social life is badly affected, because of your profession. Lots of times you cannot really participate in family affairs also because of the commitments. So, these are the things which you miss and there are problems...

MR: Do you think that affects marital life?

PA: Exactly! Then problems develop.

MR: Your husband covers up for you?

PA: Well, sometimes he does and sometimes not. There are ups and downs in life.

This raises another aspect of how families, particularly husbands, feel about the lack of availability of a 'successful' wife. This is also beyond the scope of the present study and can be clarified in some future work. However, this issue does raise the question of changes in the marital relationship over time, and whether this engenders support or more responsibilities.

It is clear that each professor had her own way of identifying the support she received from her husband. Most of them had very little expectations of their husbands, but nevertheless recognised and appreciated support when it was extended. We cannot generalise from these situations for the benefit of other women working in universities, because few of these professionally successful women live in conventional marriages.

I believe that these women did not celebrate or own their success, as their perceptions demonstrated a lack of recognition of their professional success. I could also see some contradiction in the statements, especially where husbands were concerned. These women did not challenge the patriarchal relationships in their families and homes. However, they also did not take complete credit for their success and tried to present the rather supportive role of their husbands.

## Children

This section shows the presence or absence of children in the lives of these women and its effect on them. The average number of children that the women professors had was three. Three out of the 13 married women did not have children. Three out of ten had only one girl child, while five had no sons (see Table 1). These are again very interesting statistics in the context of Pakistan. Having a large family is a sign of prosperity in any agrarian society. Giving birth to sons is very important in most patriarchal societies, as male members are responsible for protection and earning a livelihood. In the following section, I will refer to the points raised by these women about their own children, and how they affected their careers. Stier, Lewin-Epstein and Braun (2001) write that children's presences, like other family events, are related directly to career patterns in women's lives.

Dr. Amethyst, who has only one daughter, said that she had to look after her when she was young and that there was no other extended family member available at that time to take care of the baby. She explained that the workplace environment was so competitive that any extended break would take her out of the mainstream (Luke 2001), which was a deciding factor in not having more than one child:

I knew that if I took a break, it would be very difficult for me. A break means taking a year or two off, not just maternity leave. It would be very difficult for me to come back and join from where I had left... But one thing was very clear that I would probably not be able to through a repeat of that in terms of having another child, and that has probably been one of the toughest parts of pursuing a continuous career at the university.

A number of studies conclude that women academics, like other professional women, have more chances of remaining childless (Cooney and Uhlenberg 1989) or having fewer children (Cole and Zuckerman 1987; Duxbury, Heslop and Marshall 1993; Caplan 1993). This was another significant finding of this study, as it seemed that some of the women controlled the number of children, which is unusual in a patriarchal setup sometimes, which further strengthens our argument that these are unusual women but may not recognise that they managed to tiptoe around patriarchy by handling issues of the number and gender of children.

Professor Ruby went through an immense phase of emotional guilt as she decided to move back to Pakistan for a better teaching opportunity when her husband was still working in a foreign country. Her husband decided that because of better educational opportunities, the three daughters would live with him. She lived independently in Pakistan for almost nine years. All three of her daughters were young – the eldest was 15, the next 12 and the youngest was only four years old – when she moved to Pakistan to work. Consequently, the youngest was brought up by her father and the two elder daughters in the absence of Professor Ruby. Professor Ruby felt guilty and took all of the blame for her absence from the lives of her daughters, as she felt that her two older daughters had helped her in bringing their younger sibling. There was a feeling of persistent guilt when she thought that her responsibility was taken up by them. She also felt that while she was pursuing her career in Pakistan, the daughters developed a rapport with their father and were both physically and emotionally closer to him in another country. She voiced her emotions by saying:

I said to my husband that I am neither a good wife nor a good mother. I am a loser.

Professor Ruby told me her husband consoled her, but she still felt the burden of being away from the family. She also felt guilty because her eldest daughter was married during that time and the middle daughter decided to stay in a foreign country to complete her education, even when, nine years later, Professor Ruby's husband moved to Pakistan to join her. She also felt that because of her career she had missed the precious years of her youngest daughter. However, she is living with her now, but she is not very well adjusted in Pakistan.

There seems to be a running theme of some dissatisfaction or inadequacy associated with some of these women for not 'being there for their children' or not being able to have a family as they might have desired. The same point was raised earlier in this chapter under the working wife's guilt vis-à-vis her husband, and will be discussed in the last chapter. Most of the women professors, however, mentioned the constant support of their mothers and sisters through childcare. Professor Azurite told me specifically in her interview about the family support for childcare, especially after childbirth:

All my children were very young. Support was also from my parental side because my sister and my mother used to come to look after the children as well.

Professor Quartz also talked about similar guilt when she was doing her doctorate, and then later when she was promoted to the senior positions of professor and then dean:

She (my daughter) was here (in Pakistan) going through her matriculation and I was completing my PhD, and it was her decision that she wanted to come back here, but still, somehow, I was made to feel responsible that she was here and I was there (in the UK)...

This kind of situation was not experienced by the other three women completing their doctorates after their marriage, because two of them did their PhDs with their husbands so that the children were with them, and the third professor took her mother with her to look after her three children. Accordingly, the issues of childcare and managing the house existed in their lives, especially when they were busy working towards their doctoral degree, but were taken care of through family networks.

Professor Quartz refers to this balancing act and how her family expectations and the burden and strain of responsibilities affected her about her daughter's wedding. In Pakistan, the wedding of a daughter is a significant event; mothers go through a heavy phase of emotional and financial burden, and if they are working it occupies a big chunk of time. Although social networks exist, the task of looking after the guests and other matters is the primary responsibility of the mother, who is usually the senior woman of the family along with grandmothers in some cases:

You know, it is difficult to balance it and now it has become even more difficult because as a senior academic professional, I have a lot of responsibilities, which require a lot of time... The family finds it difficult to cope... I have a daughter who was getting married and in between the arrangements for the marriage and attending the conferences within the region (South Asia), I felt shattered and so I did ask for leave for a month because I was not being able to cope with all the different tasks...

As senior women working in powerful positions, these women felt the pressure of work and social structures. I think, irrespective of the fact that Professor Quartz told me that her family

was comparatively ‘modern and broadminded’, that the issues of upbringing and childminding are more or less the same across the social strata. It would not therefore be unfair to conclude that ‘female life course requires an uncertain amount of time off from work to care for children, given that in our society women are still the primary caregivers’ (Armenti 2004 p.66). However, I have not discussed in detail the issue of parenting in the long absence of the husband, which was the case for all of these women except one, where the children were living with father while the mother worked in another country.

## **Relatives-in-Law Support**

In the Introduction chapter, I described a number of different types of family structures existing in Pakistan. My sample had some traditional and some non-traditional households in the context of Pakistani culture. The traditional household is either joint or nuclear, but non-traditional households are slightly different from the norm in Pakistan. For example, Professor Amethyst lived in her independent house, but she and her husband moved in with her father-in-law after the death of her mother-in-law. Similarly, there was one example where a professor lived with her parents-in-law while her husband was working abroad. Professor Spinel and Professor Sapphire were single and living with their parents, which is distinctive in comparison with Western culture, where most adults move out of the parental house even before they start working. The following paragraphs give us further insight into the lives of these women and how they were supported by the extended family of marriage.

I observed that women married to men who were not of the same or higher academic level took support and advice from their fathers and fathers-in-law on issues of education and career later in life. Three of the women referred to the support of their in-laws as a key factor in their career progression. One woman told me about the active role her brother-in-law (sister’s husband) played in initiating her doctoral education and later career.

Such events are unusual, as Pakistan is a conservative country where support from other male members, especially if they are related through marriage, is not usual and, indeed, considered rare. In the norms of a patriarchal Muslim country, support for a single woman comes from her father or brother, and in the case of a married woman, the husband is a member of her support network. Therefore, support from a father-in-law or brother-in-law is unusual.

Professor Amethyst told me about the support she received from her father-in-law after the death of her mother-in-law. She was the only daughter-in-law, so, according to cultural tradition, she was responsible for taking care of her husband's ancestral home after the death of her mother-in-law. However, because of her work commitments, she said that she would not be able to maintain the social lifestyle her in-laws had previously experienced:

I received a lot of support from immediate [husband] and extended family [father-in-law] in terms of not being able to attend social family events many times or turning up late and not being able to host them. I think one of the biggest scarifies that my father-in-law probably has given for my professional career that I know, and even to this day I recognise, is that my mother-in-law and father-in-law were known to be very good hosts and they used to have a lot of dinners and lunches and gatherings of friends – and all that disappeared over time...

The above quote tells us about the guilt she experienced as a result of her career, because she was unable to take on the duties of a good daughter-in-law. Nonetheless, in return, she was supported by her father-in-law, who was not her relative before marriage. As mentioned earlier, Professor Amethyst was living with her husband in the house of her in-laws, and she felt that she was not doing all the chores which her late mother-in-law performed, but was still supported every day by her father-in-law.

Professor Andulasite expressed the strong support she received from her father and father-in-law in particular. Her husband was based out-of-station, and she said that she had all the love and appreciation from her father-in-law, who was the head of the family in the joint family system. She said:

He placed me on a very high pedestal and gave me a lot of affection – he knew the kind of work I was doing was very difficult and sometimes my mother-in-law was negative and he used to pacify her as well.

She referred to him further as an unusual and learned man, and shared a couple of examples that reflected the special bond she shared with him. She shared the most intimate of health problems with him and not with her mother-in-law, because he made her comfortable. Every significant instance that she mentions in her interview is very important in the context of Pakistan and its cultural values and norm:



I was working on my book 'E.....R' with two other co-authors [husband and wife] and sometimes I used to sit and work in the sitting room all night and no one questioned me (because my father-in-law supported me). Sometimes, I would go and work in their [co-authors] home because they had a computer, and I would come back at 2.00am at night and at times at 4.00am in the morning with my two small daughters, and my father-in-law opened the door for me but never said anything. Instead, he would offer to make a cup of tea for me.

Here, it is significant that Professor Andulasite was the only woman who shared with me that she had arranged her marriage herself and that a wide gap existed between her and her husband's formal qualifications. I also cannot overlook the power position that she experienced in the relationship, as her husband's sister was married to Professor Andulasite's brother. In a traditional culture like that seen in Pakistan, in the case of exchange marriages, i.e. one pair of sisters and brothers married to another pair of sisters and brothers, both marital ties remain delicate. It cannot take any emotional strain because it can lead to a break in marital relationships, because any misbehaviour by one male member in such an arrangement can affect the relationship of the other couple. This kind of action leads to a weakening of marital relationships, as the couple's actions are a result of someone else's unhappiness. That said, though, the complexity of their marital relationship was not in any way a hindrance for Professor Andulasite and her husband .

Another example in this respect is that of Professor Tanzanite, who was married before she was 18 and had barely completed high school. Her husband encouraged her to complete her education. While he was working in Turkey, she decided to complete her graduation while living in the joint family system. Her mother-in-law and sister-in-law were supportive and looked after the children. She said that she did not have any time to look after the children and found it very different from her parental home setting, where her mother and grandmother wanted her to focus on her marriage. They thought that her focus on education would spoil her marital relationship with her husband. Consequently, this unexpected support from her in-laws helped her to complete her PhD and subsequently pursue her career.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I explored the dynamics of families of marriage in the case of 13 of the 15 married participants. Some of the salient aspects were the positive role of husbands in the

career progression of these women professors; how husbands facilitated women in their lives as mothers, wives and professionals; how the women dealt with bringing up children; and why they had to consider 'family planning', as the number of children affected their lives as professionals.

The situation of the single women was also interesting and quoted in a couple of instances where they analysed the issue of marriage in their lives. The fact that these women professors had to manage their lives to accommodate their work demands and familial demands, particularly their time with children, resulted in some level of 'mother's guilt' and/or 'working women's guilt'. Another interesting aspect that came out of my findings was the positive perception of the role of in-laws. I have clustered this group of relatives together, as what each of my participants had something to say about their support is unusual in the sociocultural environment of Pakistan. In-laws, ordinarily, are expected to be demanding and supposed to give their full support to the son, so daughters-in-law are on far weaker ground if they require support. Nevertheless, it was not the case with these women.

I have tried to highlight only those aspects common to most of the women and most frequently talked about. There were other issues like managing the kitchen, budget and servants in the joint and nuclear households and the supportive or non-supportive role of the family of marriage. Again, I would like to reiterate that the purpose of the research is to highlight the positive aspects that facilitated these women in their journey, so that they are a source of encouragement for young women working or aspiring to work in the universities.



## **Chapter 6: EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT AND ITS IMPACT**

### **Introduction**

I believe that, in our society, if any girl is going to get a good education, support must come from the parents. The father is the head of the state (home) and his decision is the final decision. Therefore, if anybody actually makes it, it has to be with support; otherwise, it is not possible.

(Professor Aquamarine 2007)

Education is a protective factor that works against ‘downward mobility’ (Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody 2001: 25). As experienced in other cultures, we see parents working hard to attain a class position through their children; they want their children to have better educational opportunities and subsequently better work options, which ultimately lead to a better social status. In the UK, it was common in the 1980s for working class parents to prioritise education as central to the determination of social class (Walkerdine Lucey and Melody 2001). In this context, there appear to be some similarities between what has been seen elsewhere in the world and the women interviewees in Pakistan, especially the one whose families migrated from a village to settle in the city to provide better opportunities for their children and for future generations. They made a conscious choice to leave behind their village status and fertile land, to proceed to cities where they had better choices. Pakistan’s overall literacy rate is low, but for women the percentage is particularly poor. Education, and especially primary education, is compulsory but not free or easily accessible to children. The reason for this low percentage is the lack of infrastructure and financial resources. I have also mentioned that girls suffer from different forms of disadvantages, one of the most significant of which is a lack of educational opportunities. If a family has limited resources, then boys are encouraged to go to school rather than girls. In addition, if the family lives in a rural

community, then the girls are expected to help their mothers with housework and help the family in the fields while the eldest daughter is required to look after her younger siblings to give her mother time to do other household work.

In this context, the stories of these women reflect clearly that easy access to education was an important factor. Five women told me that their parents had moved from villages to cities or bigger towns so that their children could have access to education. The others, who were already residing in cities with their families, said that their parents made special efforts to provide them with good schooling. The following paragraphs further develop the key argument of this thesis that, despite a non-conducive environment for reduction, especially women's education in the country culturally, these women made their way successfully through schools and colleges, and later universities, in their lives, which significantly constituted a strong foundation for later professional development.

## **School and College Education**

School education and the detailed interpretation of why these professors attended certain institutions are analysed in this section. Seven of them went to Urdu medium government schools and eight told me that their parents found English medium schools for them so that they could have a better start in life.

In both cases, the stories were related as positive experiences. In the case of Urdu medium schools, the participants took pride in the fact that they had studied in these schools and did not feel disadvantaged in their later lives. Conversely, those who went to English medium schools thought that this experience had helped them in their educational journey, although in the late 1960s and early 1970s missionary schools were offering English medium education in Pakistan and the medium of instruction was the indicator of the school and social standards. In other works, a school that had Urdu as the medium of instruction was not considered to have a very high standard. It was also considered a status symbol to study in an English medium school. Further, and to substantiate my argument that their early education was the first significant step in their lives, I have analysed what school and college education meant for them. The period of school and college education was presented as one phase by most of the women and presented in the same way in the chapter.

Professor Quartz, Professor Sapphire and Professor Amethyst expressed their views about educational opportunities and how the institutions influenced them. They mentioned the names of schools and other institutions – that still have a good reputation in Pakistan for quality education – which at that time meant convent schools, missionary schools and some other prestigious colleges.

The mere list of the schools was an indicator for someone like me who has been part of the educational system for the last three decades, either as a student or as educationist, that all this meant quality education and a training full of values such as moral courage, professional honesty and personal integrity. Their own interpretation was that school education, co-curricular activities and other related social activities had an influence on their personal and professional growth. However, this cannot be termed as critical in developing their interest in a subject-specific career. Nevertheless, professor Amethyst did state that it instilled values and perspectives for later life as a professional. In a similar study conducted by Lam (2006), the lives of the women academics in a university in Hong Kong are explored, and it is observed that the early years of education are a significant time in the life of these women, but do not have any critical effect on their careers at later stages in life. Two women professors in my study, who both went to Urdu medium schools, made a brief reference to female teachers who had impressed them, and one of them referred to her desire to follow in the footsteps of her teachers in her career. They all talked about the issue of school choice – whether their parents chose an English medium school or an Urdu medium – which became important in the context mentioned in the Introduction chapter and in their experiences, which are reflective of their happy memories about school life. The point they all tried to highlight was that the family invested money in their education, and good educational institutions led to positive academic achievement. For example, Professor Aquamarine described her school days as ‘interesting’ and a ‘golden time’ of her life, as she was encouraged to participate in all kinds of academic and co-curricular activities in school by her parents, especially her father.

As mentioned earlier, the interpretation of memories reflects how and what we choose to retain in our minds. Prof. Zircon’s narrative was about her experience at the school in her paternal village, where she received not only formal education, but also training in being responsible and creative. She compared the professional integrity of the teachers at a girls’

school in the 1960s to the present state of schools, where she thinks resources are not used to the maximum:

There was never a day when the teacher was not there or the PT (physical training) was not there or the discipline was not there. So, those four years were very productive for me.

The other significant point discussed by 11 out of the 15 interviewees was about their mothers' lack of formal education beyond the primary level, together with their insistence on a good education for their children, especially their daughters. As suggested by Mckie, Bowlby and Gregory (1999), women tend to challenge patriarchy through education. Perhaps the mothers of the interviewees were unconsciously trying to break the cycle of gender disadvantage and shake the value system of patriarchal society by insisting on their daughters' education. Professor Lapis, Professor Zircon, Professor Quartz and Professor Sapphire talked about their mothers' role in identifying one of the significant issues of good schooling.

Most of the women spoke about their college education as uneventful, except for Professor Tanzanite, who was married and had her first child when she completed her graduation. Despite the fact that she secured a first position in her examinations, she was unable to continue with her Master's. This is discussed in Chapter 5 on the subject of family of marriage. Professor Tanzanite did not resist the decisions taken by her family of origin, but was able to complete her education later with the help of her family of marriage. In her story, she had a very sanguine perspective of her education after marriage.

## **Career and Subject Choice**

The choices of subject and career, as mentioned earlier in the section on the father's support in Chapter 5, is one phenomenon that emerges as a supportive point in the context of patriarchal practices. In Pakistan, as in some other traditional / conventional countries and cultures, certain careers are viewed as suitable and respectable for women because of the status and prestige attached to them, the most appropriate of which are teaching and medicine. The reason for their appropriateness is multilayered – a women's primary role is that of caregiver in the household and it is expected that she is available for the job whenever required. So, subsequently, women become teachers, which requires a specific number of

hours and paid vacations. In addition, teaching is considered a noble profession in Islam and is respected regardless of any social issues. Medical practice in this or any other culture is viewed as a well-paid profession, so women may not have the same working hours, but are well paid and again respected as professionals. In addition, the issue of women being marketable for marriage is another important phenomenon. This is further supported by the pursuit of a medical profession, because men want their wives to work. The result is that most of the women end up in either of the two professions.

In the light of these approved careers, nine out of the 15 women had PhDs in the social sciences and humanities, and the remaining six had PhDs in natural sciences. These statistics further support the argument that the women who took up social science subjects were supported by their parents to pursue careers in areas unusual for women to take up in those days (about thirty years ago), especially if they wanted to pursue a career or attain a PhD. This, subsequently, meant that these women had an edge over other women in choosing specific subjects for their educational degree. Most of the women in Pakistan who become teachers put medicine as their first preference, so teaching kept them in touch with their subject of interest (biology or biochemistry).

Apart from parental support, other life events affected their journeys. For example, Professor Agate and Professor Andulasite wanted to be medical doctors, but they fell ill and did not qualify for medical school admission. Professor Agate said that her present senior position was only possible because she had chosen a relevant field of medial research. Four more professors also claimed the same, that they wanted to be medical doctors, but could not achieve the required merit and went into their present field's profession. Interestingly, only one out of six women in natural sciences was of the view that she would change her field if she had the opportunity, and would take up medical education. The remaining interviewees wanted to stay in their present field of study.

A point that needs to be highlighted is that all of my interviewees accepted that they had made the choice of universities for their Master's degrees – in most of the cases – in consultation with their fathers and other elders. However, the close proximity of the institution was not an issue, and five out of the 15 women professors went to universities in bigger cities. The other



professors also said that they were very comfortable in the university environment and did not experience any disadvantage because of their personal or family background.

## **Research Degree Education and Work Experience: Before and During Study Abroad**

Overseas exposure and experience emerged as a very strong strand in the research. All the interviewees saw it as a significant aspect, which supported the argument that it had a major role to play in the journey to success. All interviewees, except one, worked for their doctoral degrees outside Pakistan – in the USA, UK, Germany, France and Malaysia. Some also had had the opportunity to do their Master's degrees abroad. Professor Agate, who did her PhD in Pakistan, has an extensive experience of 10-12 years working in research and academia in the USA and The Netherlands. All of them identified their overseas experience as a great opportunity to study and work in a competitive academic and research environment, and it was, therefore, a significant phase in their educational journey. They spoke about their work experience in foreign countries as a learning experience that had long-lasting effects on their lives. It is widely held that study abroad contributes to students' development of intercultural sensitivity (Jenkins and Skelly 2004). Some studies state that overseas experience is the first time that students actually indulge in active and reflective learning; they become more global in their thinking and they learn to be self-sufficient (Pusch 1996).

Another important phenomenon attached to a research degree abroad was funding. Professor Amethyst, Professor Ruby and Professor Tanzanite began their PhD studies abroad by funding themselves. However, later they managed to get funding from their respective universities. None of the interviewees, self-funded or otherwise, complained about the financial costs of the programme, which shows that either they were generously funded by a funding agency or they had personal resources to support themselves while they were overseas. Their attitude was that they had to do the degree abroad, as there was no other option available for them, especially if they wanted to have a career in academia. It is important to mention here that in the 1980s the indigenous PhD programme did not have a good standard compared to international programmes.

Professor Amethyst had the opportunity to do her PhD in the USA with her brother, who was studying computer sciences there. She says that:

It was my father who was very clear that without any gender bias he was going to support both me and my brother at a US graduate institution.

Professor Azurite was awarded a Commonwealth Scholarship for her PhD, and then was associated with the University of Glasgow, UK, for the completion of her PhD programme. She was not married at that time and was keen on taking up the opportunity and the scholarship. She was supported by her teachers and went to do her PhD with her father's consent. She told me that it was this overseas educational experience that led to her development as an academic in later years.

Most of these women worked on their doctorates in the late 1970s, and only had conventional means of communication with their prospective universities and supervisors. In some cases, the candidates were identified for admission by foreign professors, for example, Professor Andulasite, who says that she had an offer from the University of Stanford, but she went to Germany to do her PhD because her senior female colleague at the university where she was working was an alumnus of a German university. In addition, the colleague's ex-supervisor was keen to have Professor Andulasite as his supervisee in Germany, and he said: "no, no, don't send her there (Stanford), just send her to me and I will supervise her PhD" (Dr Andulasite). This further explains that, despite limited resources and conventional means of information, these young women were ready to take up the opportunities that were available to them.

Professor Lapis had a unique but difficult experience in terms of her admission inasmuch that her decision to undertake a PhD stemmed from an accident in which her niece died and she was badly burnt. Her family was deeply concerned and she told me that going back to Pakistan was not a real option, as her marriage prospects were declining because of the visible burn scars (about which she was unwilling to answer questions). She had a difficult time locating a university for herself despite the fact that she had strong financial support from her expatriate brother, who sponsored her research degree education. She spoke about her process

of admission to a UK university in detail, and I concluded that as she was determined to find a way to be independent and self-sufficient in life, she managed to get admission to the university in the UK. It is commendable that these women in the pre-computer, internet and cyber age managed to arrange these opportunities abroad and avail themselves fully of them.

Professor Zircon refused the first offer of a scholarship, thinking that as she was married she would not be able to go as her husband already had a PhD. She said that she changed her mind after seeing the disappointment on her parents' faces and receiving encouragement from her husband. She said she was quite lucky that she got the funding, as she had initially turned down the offer.

Professor Moonstone, who married into a very conventional business family, had three children when she was given the opportunity to do a PhD, and she thinks that it was the most significant point of her life:

I got PhD fellowship from UNDP, which I think was a turning point in my life. But it was a very, very difficult decision for me because with three young children, what could I do? I wanted to avail that opportunity, but I did not want to do it at the cost of my family, so I discussed it with my parents and I discussed it with my in-laws, my husband, especially, and I was very indecisive.

Professor Moonstone was finally convinced by another female professional, who told her that very few women got the opportunity of doing a fully funded PhD abroad. Despite issues related to care and responsibility for their family, these women were still inspired to take up the challenge of doing a PhD and taking up work in competitive environments.

Professor Aquamarine refers to her PhD experience as a unique exposure and experience, as her scholarship included representing the country and culture of Pakistan in the host country:

I was getting the fellowship from the American Association of University Organization, because they had a very good programme. They invite you to different places to speak about your country and, specifically, the status of

women in your country, so I got the opportunity to go to different places and talk about that, which was very inspiring...

Professor Aquamarine was one of those women who said that as a child she was encouraged by her parents to take part in co-curricular activities such as sports and debates, and she thought that the positive experience facilitated her (as mentioned in the quote above) to grow into a progressive professional and academic.

When Professor Mystic Topaz initially went to France to do a teacher training diploma in French, she managed to get her scholarship converted to a PhD programme. She referred to her enriching experience of working in France as a translator, which gave her experience of working in a foreign country and also gave her exposure to real life in France:

I had the scholarship for something like four years and after that they stopped giving me the scholarship for three years. Then, because I had financial problems, by chance somebody told me that the Pakistani Embassy in Paris needed a translator in French and they were employing locals. So, I went there, I applied and they agreed to give me the job of a translator for three years. I worked in the Pakistani Embassy in Paris.

Professor Ruby was doing a self-funded PhD in Malaysia and had her husband and children with her. She described the period of her PhD as very challenging:

I was doing my PhD with the children and husband. I collapsed. I was hospitalised. I went to emergency and there I stayed for 15 days, and I was supposed to defend my proposal.

Each of these different, yet similar, stories reflects the fact that these women attached importance to having a research degree or a doctorate for furtherance in their careers. This was demonstrated especially in the situations where the women were undecided about doing the degree. Professor Zircon and Professor Moonstone said that they were emotionally pressurised by their families to take up the opportunity of doing a degree abroad. The remaining 12 professors had similar experiences to share in their stories. I did not ask any

direct questions regarding PhD studies or their work abroad, because I thought that it would be subjective on my part to assume that their overseas education had significantly facilitated them in their professional journey. However, interestingly, unlike the graduate and post-graduate education that I have not mentioned in detail, the research degree was a key part of most of the narratives, and all of them termed it as an important aspect of their lives that facilitated their careers in later life.

As for the overseas work experience they gained while they were studying, this had less of a linear connection with present careers; three professors only mentioned this specifically. Professor Mystic Topaz had some work experience in France while she was doing her PhD, whereas Dr. Agate, who did her PhD in Pakistan, talked about her post-PhD work experience abroad in the Netherlands, where her husband was also working. She told me that her post-doctorate was a great opportunity for her to develop. She also worked in the USA and planned new techniques so that she could work in Pakistan on these new ideas. Similarly, Professor Lapis decided to stay in the UK to gain some work experience after her PhD, and she worked for a year with OXFAM; she said that she gained very good experience and felt confident about initiating a career.

A recent study in the USA, conducted by International Education of Students (IES) – in which they researched international students who had studied in US universities from 1950 to 1999 – showed that studying abroad is a defining moment in a young person's life and affects career paths and worldviews and promotes self-confidence.

It can be deduced from these narratives and life stories that it was the exposure and experiences – as mentioned on page 111, where I describe Professor Ruby's experience and the experience of other professors – that gave these interviewees an edge over other women who did not have an opportunity to experience similar situations. It was also their hard work that led to their success, which, in some of the cases, was not recognised by the interviewees themselves. This lack of recognition is discussed in the chapter on the theme of professional journeys.

## **Significant Others – Mentors, Supervisors, Colleagues and Role Models**

One thing not mentioned many times in the interviews was the presence and roles of supervisors, mentors and other role models. Only a small number of women recognised and appreciated these figures in their lives, and they were themselves there for others. Some of them did not even mention the need or requirement of such persons in their lives. The following section tells us about the presence of some of these figures in their academic lives and how they influenced the interviewees' journeys, subsequently leading to the argument of how important it is for women to have such role models and figures in professional life.

The lack of women as role models in senior positions is a common phenomenon in many countries (Lam 2006). Spurling (1990) supports the view that if there were senior women colleagues as mentors, there would be a positive effect on the young females entering the career. All the professors shared that their career progression had not been an easy journey and that they had their share of difficulties, but they were aware of the fact that they did not have many role models or mentors from whom they could take advice. The path they took was not well trodden and they had to face a fair amount of hardships. However, almost all of them recognised the significance of the role models in their lives and some of them talked about their absence as well.

Professor Lapis stated that while she was a young girl, a young female tutor would come to her home to teach her other siblings. The tutor was much revered by her mother and, therefore, impressed Professor Lapis. She was a young, independent, unmarried, well-educated girl pursuing an independent career in the early 1960s, in a traditionally conventional country like Pakistan. This particular story by Professor Lapis emphasises the presence of a role model in her own early life. Similarly, Professor Azurite, who completed her postgraduate education in Dhaka, Bangladesh, told me about the presence of her Bengali professor in the University of Dhaka, where she studied and later started her teaching career; how he took her under his wing and guided her in making choices for her future career. When her father showed reluctance to send her to the UK on scholarship, he took responsibility, and she felt that it had all happened because her Bengali professor was a man who took responsibility and gave assurance to her conservative father. This shows how the young

women lived in the patriarchal setup and recognised that without the support of their mentors and role models they would not have made it.

Professor Agate's experience in this context is worth mentioning, as she had a female mentor-cum-postdoctoral supervisor. She remembers the support she received from her whilst doing her research work in the USA. Later, when she resigned from her post in Pakistan and started her work in the Netherlands, the same woman was supportive and continued to give sustained support to Professor Agate throughout her research career. When Professor Agate lost her husband, the same supervisor-cum-mentor suggested that she could locate to work in the USA for Professor Agate after her retirement. Such tireless support, which few of these women received from their supervisors or mentors, left an indelible mark on their lives, and they recognised the contribution and role of such support on their personal and professional journeys.

## **Conclusion**

Higher education, in most of the cases, was a turning point in the lives of these women, not just from an academic perspective, but also from the sociocultural exposure all of them claimed to have experienced while doing their PhDs in foreign countries and later working as post-doctorate researchers and in other non-linear forms of employment. As quoted in some other studies on 'study abroad experiences', it is notable that most of the students with study abroad experience acquire skills that not only affect their career path, but also ignite an interest in the career direction pursued after the experience (Dwyers and Peters 2000).

The data in this chapter is also an insight into how significant it was for some to have role models and mentors in their lives, which is another aspect of this research, as I want the lives of these women to be seen as role models in higher education institutions by young academics in the universities of Pakistan and other women in developing countries.

To conclude this thematic chapter, I have supported my argument by highlighting that education has played a significant role in the lives of these women. Although their school education may not be directly linked with their achievements in later life, it had an impact.



The next chapter about professional journeys brings to light another significant reason as to how these women made their journey at work to the top, what they perceived as support and if there were any challenges in this phase.

# Chapter 7: PROFESSIONAL JOURNEYS

## Introduction

This thematic chapter focuses on career journeys and their roles in the success of the women professors I interviewed. It is important to understand that the word ‘professional’ is used in this chapter in its basic lexical meaning, i.e. belonging to a profession. I have tried to analyse their perceptions and narratives with the help of their life stories. The same notion of career progression is also referred to in the literature as women’s life stories that are considered enriching and helpful in development and progress in professional lives (Taylor and Concradie 1997).

The sample selected for this study was made up entirely of full-time women professors with the administrative positions of vice-chancellor, dean or head of department. The literature supports that gender is of significance in careers (Madsen 2007). As mentioned earlier, Pakistan is a traditional and patriarchal country, where women are not encouraged to be professionals and usually devote only a part of their time for work. The vital part is for the family and their care; therefore, if they take up careers, it is usually a dual career, i.e. family and workplace. The same point is argued by Walby (1990). From observation as a professional, who has been associated with education for the last 14 years directly and for the last 30 years indirectly (belonging to a family of academics), it emerges very clearly that women in Pakistan choose teaching as a career so that they can have more flexibility vis-à-vis working hours. Their children have more or less the same hours in schools, so they can take care of their children and spend more time with them. In addition, vacations are at the same time, so there is no requirement to take leave to care for children. However, the situation of work in higher education is different inasmuch that, apart from teaching, one is required to engage in research and publications initially, and then administration is added on as one progresses higher. Therefore, the time may be more flexible, but the hours of work are longer.

Length of service in higher education as a whole and seniority in one institution is of significance. The longer one works in a university, the greater the chances are of reaching a senior position (White 2003; Hojgaard 2002). Eleven out of the 15 women I interviewed started their professional journeys in a university as either a research associate or a lecturer. Only four out of the 15 women started their career in research institutions, and out of these four, two remained in the same institution while it was upgraded from a research institution to a university, while the other two moved to a university at a later stage in their career (as associate professors). In the late 1970s, and the early 1980s in Pakistan, there was a large influx of overseas scholarships, which was a big incentive for young entry-level lecturers to take up university teaching as a career. It is significant that 11 out of the 15 women went to do their PhDs after they joined their first employment. In this chapter, I have tried to weave in their feelings of pride and humility regarding their career success and their thoughts about what facilitated them in achieving what they have up to this point. In the following sections, I present different aspects of their professional journeys that I think are significant in understanding how they were successful in their careers.

## **Career Plans, Aspiration and Opportunities**

The 15 women I interviewed all claimed that they had no career plan in mind when they started their first jobs. Hennig and Jardim (1977) believe that most women think of their career as 'personal growth, as self-fulfilment, as satisfaction, as making a contribution to others, as doing what one wants to do (p.14). The sample seemed to agree – for example, their primary choice of study did not affect their final choice of career. Four of them wanted to be medical doctors and two wanted to be engineers in the beginning. One of them wanted to be an English teacher in a school and another wanted to be a civil servant. Only one thought that she might become a university academic, because a teacher of her own impressed her, but that was when she was doing a Master's degree at university. The remaining six interviewees were not thinking about a career when they were studying, and so it was only later when opportunities came up that they entered the field of teaching. Eight out of 15 were offered a teaching or research associate job in the universities in which they completed their Master's degrees. Five more women professors started their career as university academics. Three started their career as researchers in research institutions. This outline of the professional

journey is in line with the basic argument that a linear career increases the chances of reaching senior positions in the workplace.

There are a couple of instances that I would like to share, as they are reflective of the career aspirations of these women. I show what they had to experience in the patriarchal structure of society. For example, Professor Spinel, who stated that she aspired to be a university teacher and was working as the vice-chancellor of a university at the time of the interviews, told me how stereotypical images were imposed on her as a young girl, yet she held on to her desire of becoming a teacher:

I had never thought I will be working, because everyone (friends and family), even my school teachers, used to say you will get married when you will do matriculation (Year 10); you are not going to do anything, why are you working hard? So I was not expected to work as a professional.

Today, Professor Spinel is a very competitive and well-published researcher. She is a social scientist who has been offered lucrative jobs in other universities in Pakistan. However, she was very humble about her success; she had recently taken up the VC's position, but had not started using her appointed office, as I discovered when I visited her for the interview. I had to use prompts in my interview so that she would elaborate on her achievements in the workplace. She is the second woman to become the vice-chancellor of her university, which was upgraded from a research institute three years previously. Professor Spinel's description of her professional journey was very simple – she had worked in the same institution for over 30 years and had been an active researcher throughout her career. She had supervised M. Phil. and PhD. Students during her service and did not experience any gender discrimination in a male-dominated organisation. Professor Spinel attributed this to her unthreatening and collegial nature, for which her colleagues and peers respected her expertise and knowledge. Keeping her experience and other references in mind, it can be said that perhaps a humble attitude can be a facilitator of success in a patriarchal society.

A woman is in a better position to climb the ladder of success if she has a non-confrontational attitude in the workplace. Amongst the strategies of survival that the interviewees shared with me, this attitude emerged as a common way of dealing with situations in the workplace. I

think her narrative can be compared to many other women working in higher education, who do not aspire to be deans or vice-chancellor, but continue to teach and research in the universities. Like many female academics in the world, they will not go forward if there is an opportunity for promotion (Madsen 2007).

Professor Amethyst referred to her choice of career and workplace as a challenge. She met her prospective husband in the USA where she was doing her self-funded PhD, and, at that time, she was not sure if she was going to stay in the USA to work after completing her PhD or move back to Pakistan. Unlike some other interviewees, she did not start her career in Pakistan before going to the USA for higher studies. She told me her initial thoughts about work:

My prospective husband was very committed to the idea of coming back and serving in Pakistan and I also wanted to come back, even though it was not very clear in my mind... Maybe if left on my own I would have stayed back (in USA) and worked, and then maybe I would not have come back, so it was a deciding factor.

The abovementioned examples are reflective of the mindset these young women had about careers and jobs when they were completing their education. For example, Professor Amethyst was not sure what career path she would take up, as she had not started a job before going to the USA. In the end, the deciding factor was not primarily her interest in academia, but rather her husband's decision to come back to work in Pakistan. As a consequence, she started her career in a university because that was the best option available for a PhD. Most of the interviewees had not thought of following a career, and even those who entered into a career were not aiming for a senior post. The other women also had similar experiences to tell regarding the initial phase of their work, although later in life all of these women became more focused on their careers. So, in short, one can deduce that almost all of my interviewees were not ambitiously working towards a senior position and accepted it when the opportunity was there.

## **Workplace Environment, Support and Resistance**

The workplace environment was an issue talked about in detail by most of the women. As mentioned earlier, eight of the women started their first jobs in the departments where they had studied as students. Therefore, the issues of adjustment in terms of institutional culture were less for them. This issue is again reflective of two aspects – one is the element of closeness in Pakistani society, and second is when a student becomes a colleague, senior colleagues see them as non-threatening in the first few years. I have experienced this personally as a professional, as I started my career in the institution where I was a former student. However, all of the women told me about some instances of support and resistance in the departments where they worked. This study was not focused on the location of issues related to regional, cultural and political discrimination, so such issues were thus raised in terms of institutional culture. For example, Professor Agate moved from Karachi to Islamabad with her teacher/supervisor because they were working on a research project, and he changed his job and managed to take his research project with him. She found it very difficult to adjust, as she was Urdu-speaking and most of the people working around her in the university were from the Punjab. As a result, she experienced some discrimination from her colleagues. The same difficulty was experienced by Professor Azurite, who told me that she had problems in the department because her parents had migrated from Bangladesh to Pakistan and she experienced some racial discrimination because she spoke Urdu and her Chairman spoke Punjabi:

I was the only outsider. I had not studied there. Most of the things which I faced were because I was Urdu-speaking and came from Bangladesh... The other problems which hindered me to achieve this position or keep pace with the professional and domestic life were the politics in the department and racial problems. For example, when I was married I was told openly by the Chairman in that department (Biology) at that time that I was Urdu-speaking belonging to Karachi, so I should go back to Karachi or somewhere... I was deprived of my lecturer's salary totally at times, and so I survived on projects (research), something like that... I was very much frustrated because they were not giving me students to supervise for M.Phil or PhD research.

However, Professor Azurite talked about her strategy to tackle these issues. She said that she worked towards acquiring international grants and individual research funding to work on her

research. Her research work and international publications attracted the students and they came to her for research work and supervision. She was successful in bypassing the micro-political regional issues and strains of the department through this strategy, and, when interviewed, she had an independent, fully-equipped lab in the department where she pursued her research interests. As for other kinds of discriminatory behaviour, she was able to overcome that by maintaining her professional identity and establishing herself as a researcher of international repute. She thought that, largely, she managed to avoid or bypass local socio-cultural politics.

Other forms of difficulties were identified, one of which was the lack of teachers with doctorates in social sciences. Professor Amethyst was the first female professor in her subject area in the university where she had worked for 25 years. When she started teaching, there were no social science teachers in her department and she was overburdened with teaching:

I used to see that other female professors did not seem to be confronted with the enormity of the challenge that I felt, what I was going through, especially in the natural science department. It was somehow, maybe, of the sheer number and the size of the faculty in the natural science departments that they were able to manage.

It is easier to appreciate her point in the context of Pakistan, where the focus of capacity building, training and development was mainly on natural sciences in the late 1970s and early 1980s. There were two apparent reasons for the imbalance – firstly, most of the women who were entering university education were interested in studying science subjects, as their first choice was science (medical or engineering). Secondly, most of the women taking up social sciences as post-graduates were not encouraged by their families to pursue PhDs. In addition, there were more scholarships available for the natural sciences compared to humanities or social sciences. For instance, DAAD, ORS and other agencies were funding Pakistani students for PhDs in natural sciences. Professor Amethyst's strategy to overcome this issue was to create an environment of support when she became the head of department. She was the only woman to speak about one of her more successful strategies, which was to work with her male colleagues in such a way that they did not feel they were working with a woman. She perceived it to be a very successful strategy because people, especially men, had to hear what she had to say. She explained:



Once you are screened out and not taken seriously just because you are asserting yourself as a female, then the subject content of whatever you are trying to state also gets wasted.

She passed this strategy on to her junior female colleagues and students, saying:

...you know, try to become one with your male colleagues. They are also struggling in many ways and, sometimes, it is just masculinity that keeps them away from sharing what they are going through and even acknowledging to themselves that they might be having, you know, problems coping with the demands of their career.

The workplace environment and the support women received from their teaching department were immense, although at a later stage two of the women complained about the non-cooperative attitude of their male colleagues. Nevertheless, most of them attributed this to the person or to masculinity as such and not to institutional culture or practice.

## **Resistance and Challenges**

In Pakistani society, the lack of women's networks and non-familiarity with female styles of leadership and management strategies results in situations in which women try to fit in. For example, Professor Amethyst, who was the first female head of department in her university, said that she had to fit in to the existing system of management despite the limitations. Similarly, few women in senior positions tackle patriarchy strategically in the work environment. The literature also supports the idea of fitting in (Bagilhole 2007). Bagilhole (2007) suggests that where women show a commitment to the male model of professionalism, it means no extra support for other women when they need it. However, in my research, no such evidence was explicitly recorded where the interviewees experienced resistance from female peers. Nevertheless, I cannot ignore the idea of women's lack of support for other women professionals in the department.

Despite the fact that my interviewees did not talk about it, I think the issue is of significance, as it is present in some situations. I entered higher education as a professional and experienced the scarcity of mentoring, because the senior and powerful women that I encountered did not offer such help to me on professional issues, so, subsequently, I had to struggle on my own to deal with these issues. One important reason for not voicing this matter could be that all of the

women I interviewed were in a senior position in their workplace and did not have female peers.

There were, however, certainly issues of victimisation and resistance by male peers and colleagues described by some of the professors. For example, Professor Ruby, who was working as a full professor and acting dean in a university in Islamabad, had reservations about the way she was treated by her then present male chairperson. The same person worked with her previously in another university, which she left to get away from the stresses of the workplace. However, he applied for a job in the same university as Professor Ruby. They both joined the new job together. She talked about her experience as very uncomfortable, challenging and a hindrance in moving ahead:

He gave me a very tough time, so I used to cry a lot. He then became the Chairman here at this university and it was him who wrote my first Annual Confidential Report (ACR); he wrote it negatively... He had a very bad attitude, and keeping that attitude in mind, I refused to become Dean.

This comment and other such comments from the interviewees led me to understand that these women did experience challenging situations in their workplaces. Nevertheless, they faced the resistance and found solutions to these challenges by gathering support from other colleagues, including male colleagues.

## **Support in the Workplace**

Most of the young women were managed and supported by male heads of department at the beginning of their careers. Some of the women even gave examples when this support was taken away and how that changed the work scenario for them. This could be an additional form of patriarchal support, second to that received from family members. For example, Professor Quartz told me that when she joined the new university in southern Punjab she was supported by the then dean who was known to her family. The support was further enhanced when the same person became vice-chancellor. However, once she returned after her PhD, the new head of department was very difficult and created problems for women:

The chairman was a conservative person who wanted to exclude women from any departmental decision-making in every aspect. He could not stand women working. He thought that respectable

women should not be working. Then, the other thing that he would do was whenever the students had to be taken out (of the city), which was usual that the students would go on a study tour or a picnic, he would always give the duty to the women.

Then we have the example of Professor Spinel, who joined a male-dominated research institution. In the interview, she quoted the positive strategy of her first male boss and how he made his junior colleagues comfortable in the work environment. She told me that:

Dr. K was my first boss here and it was not that I always had to go to his office. He used to come to my office; he would come and sit with us, have a cup of tea and talk to us and he used to make fun of everything, so that relaxed [me] even as a junior member of staff.

There are also examples of collegiality and support quoted by some of the women professors. For instance, Professor Mystic Topaz, who lost her husband after a long illness, also referred to the support her department and the (male) director gave her while her husband was ill:

We had to go very frequently to the hospital, so the department really helped me in that by being very, very cooperative with me. The director was very cooperative and I was allowed to go anytime without applying for leave. I used to come in the morning and had to change the timetable so I would come in the morning, take the classes and then go back and because I had to stay a week with him, and so I kept working.

However, this kind of support was only available at entry level, and there is hardly any sustained or formal mentoring at later stages to support the careers of women as they progress to higher levels. Spurling (1990) and Ledwith and Manfredi (2000) write that, although women are encouraged by men in the initial phases of their careers as they reach 'equal levels, ambition and competition for positions of real institutional power eventually attract male antagonism'. The same is also described in the section on mentoring and role models, where women mentors feel threatened by their progressing mentees and find it difficult to let go of them.

Professor Amethyst referred to one of her female colleagues in the context of support at work. They both had childcare issues and shared this struggle to establish a two-room daycare centre in her university in Islamabad. She told me that:

I had my only daughter at the age of 31 and it was a struggle to (you know) raise her and keep working in the sense that there was no childcare facility on the campus; I did find support in another faculty member at the biology department, who was also married to a professor in the department, and she and I lobbied and got two rooms at the back of the medical centre to start the one and only childcare centre.

The mutual support that these women gathered from each other – and all other help extended to these women by their heads of the departments and other male colleagues – was a constant source of support and facilitated these women's careers.

## **Seniority and Promotion**

Seniority in terms of working for a number of years emerged as a significant factor in the career progression of these professors. Seven of the women had worked for 25-30 years in only one institution, during which time their entire career had developed. Six women had worked in two institutions of research and higher education for more than a decade in each. One woman worked in three universities and she had more than eight years in each institution. However, except in two cases, there were no career breaks or any change to seniority because of a change of job. Thus, seniority and length of service emerged as a strong sub-theme where eight out of the 15 Professors referred to it, tried to relate it to their career progression and said that a system was in place that helped in their promotions. The remaining seven professors also said that they did not face any major difficulty as far as their promotion was concerned, but they did have difficult times where they felt the discrimination.

I asked my interviewees specifically if they were promoted on time – as promotion is a strong indicator of progress and success – or if they had faced difficulties. The responses were diverse. Some told me that there were published criteria for promotion, and if they fulfilled the criteria, then they were promoted, while others said that there were some delays in their promotions, but they did not voice any complaint. This attitude can be attributed to the fact that as these women had no career plans, they had lower expectations of their promotion and, consequently, were not perturbed by delays on the part of senior leadership.

Professor Moonstone, who worked in a research institution which was later upgraded to university status, was very clear about the promotion process, which, in this case, was 'publish or perish'. She said that she managed to do that and was promoted when it was due to her. She explained the system:

There is a rule for promotion in this organisation. You are recognised and, I think, evaluated on the basis of your research work and the number of papers you write. It is a requirement, so I just did that. I would just keep continuing and I produced my research articles – all were published, and then I had to go to conferences. Those who did not were not promoted. You have a meeting once a year; your work is evaluated, and if you qualify, you move from one grade to the next. You have to produce two papers every year and got promotions (on time).

Professor Amethyst, who was in a very competitive work environment because there were not many social science teachers with PhDs in the early 80s in Pakistan, talked about her promotions as routine:

I was promoted from assistant professor to associate professor at the department, and then from associate to full professor. After being appointed as full professor, I was appointed chairperson of the department in January this year for a term of three years, which is the normal length of the term.

Professor Aquamarine, Professor Agate and Professor Andulasite also told me the same in their interviews, as far as promotions were concerned.

On the whole, the women who took up these additional responsibilities were in a better position to establish themselves in the powerbases of the universities. In Pakistani universities, there are statutory bodies like Syndicate, which is equivalent to a Board of Governors in a UK university. The Academic Council is a body that approves the curricula and syllabi of the university, and an Advanced Research Board is a committee responsible for approving research degrees and other matters pertaining to research conducted by the university, including funding. For example, Professor Jade had experience in terms of her professional position. She was willing to accept additional administrative responsibilities and was made a member of many committees and academic boards. The list of her active participation on different bodies of her own institutions and other universities' is long. Some

were as a member of her own institution's Academic Council, Advanced Studies and Research Board, Housing Allotment Committee, Library Committee, Scholarships Committee and then also being a member of several other committees and associations in other universities and organisations. It is not surprising that she was holding the position of Dean of Sciences in a well-known mixed university that boasts a large number of male professors in sciences.

A similar case was that of the tenured professorship. Amongst the 15 professors I interviewed, only one at the time of the interviews had achieved the status of 'tenured professor', and she, Professor Azurite, narrated her list of achievements as follows:

To my credit, I have published 50 papers, of which 27 are in international journals and the rest in national journals... I have completed 55 M.Phils and 10 PhDs... I have completed several research projects at both national and international levels.

The abovementioned list of assignments and awards was difficult to achieve, because in the early 1980s, few research facilities were available and conducting research according to international standards was not an easy task. Especially, if you were a woman in a male-dominated academic department such as physics or chemistry, you would have very little opportunity to be the principal investigator of a research project, or to be a thesis supervisor. Nonetheless, these women not only conducted research, but also had it published in journals of international repute through their PhD supervisors and international collaborators. They also managed to supervise doctoral students, as the students opted for them as their supervisor and, subsequently, graduated successfully. I think these achievements in a male-dominated academy in Pakistan are commendable.

Women like Professor Azurite have established independent research laboratories from international grants and evaded the confrontation and resistance they face from their male colleagues. Men still occupy most of the senior positions in most public sector organisations; they are the gatekeepers and the rules of their game are not always clear (GoP 2007). Women's exclusion persists and their networking and collaboration with male power holders continues to be comparatively weak. As Brooks (1997) suggests:

Such exclusion is part of the way men in both academic and organisational positions of power establish patterns of control in the maintenance of power (p.38).

Academic careers require the support of colleagues and peers, which will only happen when more women are at the top or are occupying the gatekeepers' positions. For this to occur, women have to work actively to become part of the strategic policy planning in universities (Bagilhole 2007). It is quite clear that unless women are included, the negative cycle for disadvantage and discrimination will continue to exist. Professor Aquamarine told me about her re-entry into the workplace after completing her PhD, and it is a good example of negotiating for promotion, seldom seen in issues pertaining to women's careers. She told me that when she rejoined her university, there was no vacant post for assistant professor. According to the rules, she was eligible for that promotion, as she had completed her PhD. Interestingly, another research institute in the same university had a vacant post, so she was asked by the director of this other institution to apply. She said that she was quite sure that her head of department would not want to let go of a trained researcher (Professor Aquamarine is a biochemist), but still she applied. She thought that the application made the head of her department think that either he should take some steps to improve the situation or he would lose her to another department. Therefore, he created the ad hoc post of assistant professor after discussions with the vice-chancellor, and he retained her in his department. Professor Aquamarine confessed that she did not think she would have moved to the other department, but she still applied and it resulted positively for her.

## **Post-Doctorate and International Work Experience after PhD<sup>2</sup>**

The women who had experience of working abroad immediately after completing their PhDs stated that this experience not only prepared them for their academic careers, but also had a positive effect on their personal lives, because it was helpful in developing certain qualities. Professor Lapis, as explained earlier, completed her PhD from the University of Reading, but later had several opportunities to work with international organisations:

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<sup>2</sup>These are different from the work abroad during doctoral study as mentioned in Chapter 6 on educational achievement where one is a student.



(I) got a lot of opportunities to travel. I went to Australia... for two years and on a WHO consultancy I went to Cairo... They (WHO) simply asked the ministry to identify a person who could work on nutrition and diet, and they needed that person. They (my employers) called me directly. It felt so good.

Professor Azurite said that she was able to take advantage of opportunities because of her husband's cooperation and support, as he' allowed' her to go:

I did three postdoctoral fellowships. One was awarded as an Alexander von Humboldt Fellowship... I did my post-doctorate in transfusiology and hormonal physiology at the University of Hamburg... I went to the USA on a Fulbright Postdoctoral fellowship... I did my postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Illinois in 1998-1999, and then I did my third postdoctoral at the University of Calgary, Canada... Besides that, I have had many visiting fellowships in Germany and Australia as well as in the UK. I have participated in 25 international workshops and presented my papers in Australia, Japan, Malaysia and many other places.

All the interviewees cited the opportunity to study and, in some cases, work abroad as key factors in their achievement. It helped them in understanding advanced methods of research in natural sciences and social sciences and facilitated them in pursuing a career in academia. It is also important to understand that most of the women were from traditional backgrounds and appreciated any form of support in their career from their husbands.

## **Conclusion**

In summary, it appears that, unlike men, very few of these women professors actually planned a career (David and Cooper 1992; Loumansky, Goodman and Jackson 2007). For some of them, it was a mission or a task that they had to perform because they were in the field, and for others it just happened and they went along with the flow. Life events seemed to be responsible for moulding their careers and influencing their progress in academia (White, Cox and Cooper 1992; Acker and David 1994; Coleman 1996).

The emerging protective and risk factors in these women's career paths need to be explored in greater detail in another study, in order to elicit the nuances of the impacts that have surfaced in the present study, for example a non-confrontational attitude as a strategy to progress

without creating ripples in the workplace. Another example of a senior professor advising her junior colleagues about ways to move ahead is indicative of many instances that can be explored further. Interestingly, all the women had developed their own strategies of survival that resulted in success for them. Unfortunately, none of the women professors was boastful about their accomplishments or successes. However, most of them felt enthusiastic and proud to talk about their research and published work, and about their students, especially research students, who were successful in practical life. It seems to me that it was only during the interviews that these women began to see themselves as symbols of success; even as potential role models for their students, as some kind of icons, which other junior female colleagues were desirous to follow in their careers. This further reiterates the fact that the absence of role models from their own careers did not make them think that they were icons of success in academia. Perhaps, there is a definite need to present the stories of successful women in order to encourage and guide young female faculty members to pursue future careers in higher education and management. Possibly another way of looking at it is that these women developed their own ways and strategies to work round patriarchy and accomplished great things without drawing much attention or being threatening.

## Chapter 8: CONCLUSION

In this last chapter, I review the themes and sum up how they have substantiated my argument that women working in universities need support at both home and in the workplace to move ahead in their career. Non-threatening and unassuming women have a better chance of a smooth ride on the professional journey they make in a male-dominated workplace setting. I also discuss and analyse the methods used for this research study and try to identify the limitations. I also highlight the contribution this study will make to the existing knowledge in the field of higher education. The objective of this chapter is to determine whether the research aim and questions at both the broad and micro levels have been answered. Some unexpected findings also need to be mentioned.

For the ease of the reader, I have tried to structure this chapter in a way that the discussion on emerging themes come first, followed by comments on the methodology. The third section then reiterates how this thesis will contribute to the existing knowledge locally and globally. This includes a consideration of the issues around career, marriage, balancing family and work, mother's guilt and so on that came to light during the research, but were not the focus of this study and need further research. I have reproduced the research question before the commentary, so that it remains in focus while reading the conclusive discussion in this chapter.

### **Research Question**

How did the women manage patriarchy in their lives to reach the senior positions in their profession?

## Reflections on the Themes

### Family

As mentioned earlier, family is the most significant theme that emerged as instrumental in the women's lives. As a woman from an educated family, I always experienced immense support from my parents. Being a single woman further complemented the situation, as I had freedom from marital responsibilities. Therefore, the absence of a husband and presence of a supportive father helped my journey in the workplace. Similarly, my interviewees were all from traditional family backgrounds where they had the opportunity to move ahead in life and in their careers. They were not only morally encouraged, but also facilitated financially by their families. None of the women experienced any financial problems while living in their parents' houses. It can be deduced that the women in my sample moved ahead without having to make critical choices in areas such as access to education or health. As quoted by Professor Amethyst, money was made available by her father, so that she and her brother could be sent abroad to pursue higher education.

None of the women in their perception had to deal with gender discrimination at the familial level, because amongst their siblings they were given equal or better opportunities for education. From a feminist perspective, it is evident that a woman's career choice and career achievements are only possible with the support of her immediate or the extended family in Pakistani society (Lee 1995). This perspective corroborates with the findings of the present study and supports the argument that women need a strong support mechanism for continuation in their job. For example, family support was a major contributing factor in the success of the interviewees' lives in the workplace. Their parents, especially their fathers, emerged as a significant source of social and economic support for these women; for some, their mothers played a significant role too in providing a positive sociocultural environment for their daughters. I have experienced this in my own home, where grandmothers are reliable and readily available child carers for their grandchildren, especially if the daughters are working. It can be concluded that women belonging to this kind of social class and having these types of experience and opportunity in urban areas have a better chance of stepping into higher education and later into a career, as opposed to the underprivileged class living with uneducated parents or in a rural area. I accept that, like so many other researches, the scope of

this study was not all encompassing due to lack of time and resources. Therefore, much of the comparative assessment is deduced from the perceptions shared.

In the present study, two key aspects that emerged as significant were not taken into account initially, but they became clear after I had collected the data. These issues are the interviewees' perceptions about their families of origin – about their siblings and extended family that were not discussed in detail. Similarly, information regarding birth order was taken from the interviewees as part of the research, but was not taken into account in the data analysis, and therefore its effect could not be examined. The loss of a parent at any stage is significant; for example, one of the interviewees lost both her parents while she was doing her PhD. She told me that it had an adverse effect on her life as she carried the emotional strain. However, I did not go into the detail on this particular aspect, as that was not the focus of my research and I understood that more explorations were required.

As for the 'family of marriage', the role of husbands in the lives of the 13 married interviewees was significant, which interestingly pointed again towards the underlying patriarchal values and structure of Pakistani society. These perceptions about a husband's supportive role in their lives were supplemented by an equally supportive role of the fathers-in-law, which was identified in at least three narratives. It is important to mention here that while discussing the issue of the husbands' support, some questions arose. For example, is it primarily emancipated and /or educated men supportive of their wives who enable women to become professors, or is it the wife's financial and / or academic success that urges them to support? Are there any other dynamics/ factors that influence the behaviour of the husbands? Had we been able to examine the issue from another perspective like their husbands or colleagues or parents we would have corroborated the perceptions shared by these women. These questions raise the need for some further research in the area. Two instances are worth mentioning, which respond these questions to some extent. For example, one of the professors highlighted the fact that she experienced more respect from her husband after she received the status of tenured professor, which enhanced her salary. Similarly, one professor who had expressed that she was intellectually better than her husband was of the view that he respected her for that in her life, and she was placed on a high pedestal by her in-laws.

The effect of children, their number and sex emerged as a key factor that almost all of the married women highlighted as instrumental in their journey. Keeping in view the average number of children these women had, it can be deduced that they perceived a smaller number of children as a facilitative factor for their professional lives. I would like to mention here again that the generation they belonged to had at least four as the average number of children, and some families had five or six for want of a male child. Some of them further reiterated the experiences and feelings regarding their guilt about their children, which is commonly known as mother's guilt or working women's guilt and is related to an inability to give due time and care to children while they are growing up. However, they did share that they were conscious of their responsibilities as mothers and tried their best to balance home and work. For example, they juggled with teaching timetables, had their husbands' support for post-docs and so on to give a balanced life to their children. Two women emphasised that because of their professional commitment, they decided not to have more than one child, but later felt guilty because their child missed the company of siblings while growing up. However, they also mentioned the successful academic careers of their respective children, which reflected that they had been able to overcome this guilt by the mere fact that they were able to provide better opportunities and quality time for their children. Again, there is no evidence from the children or the husbands regarding this guilt. For a better understanding of the phenomenon, the family perspective can be investigated further. In addition, as I did not explore the education or professions of the children of these women, I was unable to record the effect of successful working mothers on the later lives of their children.

## **Education**

The findings of the study did not present a direct link between school education and achievements later in professional life. For example, all of the interviewees went to different types of schools in terms of medium of instruction, both English and Urdu, and they highlighted the strengths of both systems accordingly. The literature shows that school education does make a difference in the lives of individuals. However, as I was interested in exploring reasons for success, most of them referred to it but did not term it a landmark or big achievement. Apart from this, the other significant factor was the PhD degree in the initial years of the career. All but one professor had a PhD from a foreign university. The mere fact

that 99% of them had the opportunity to travel to a foreign country to take up studies for 3-5 years as PhD scholars was surely instrumental in giving them an edge over their non-PhD colleagues. The findings also indicated that the 'study abroad experience' helped these women professors in acquiring teaching and research skills, which had the knock-on effect of assisting them in the development of their careers later as academics. It also encouraged some of them, initially at least, to focus on a career that was academic, i.e. working in a university or a research centre based on their qualifications, exposure and experiences. I can only say that as I was not interested in the chronological events and was privy only to the information these women decided to share with me, there is still room for more exploration in locating cause and effect in terms of education and career success.

## **Professional Journey**

The emerging theme of 'professional journey' elucidates some lack of career planning on the part of the interviewees. Some recounted it as a mission or task that they were led into by familial demands, responsibilities and /or life events. However, all the women pursued their career consistently and persistently. The fact that they stayed in the public sector education system for more than 25 years seemed to aid them in acquiring their highly successful positions. This perhaps also indicates a level of diligence and persistence on their part within the given environment.

It has been shown in previous studies in the West that women, apart from working harder than men, also need to be extremely dedicated to their work, sometimes at the expense of self and family to reach the pinnacle of success. The recognition of (self) success in their present positions as vice-chancellors and deans, as mentioned earlier, was not observed amongst the interviewees. However, they spoke with pride about academic achievements such as published work and successful students, but thinking of themselves as role models or trailblazers was not evident. As the interviews progressed, I noticed that in their flow of conversation they were inclined to make connections between their academic achievement and their present position of success. This needs to be explored at a deeper level to better understand the phenomenon of success, as perceived by them, within the social constraints of being a woman in a male-dominated environment. Conversely, it was disheartening to observe



that they did not see themselves as successful professionally. This can mean that they have not escaped patriarchy as they apologised, diminished their achievements, feel guilty and/ or may, to some extent, deny that they have done any thing special. On a positive note, it can be seen as a strategy to manage their careers in a way that they continue to live in their culture and families and to work in their respective universities. Further research is again required to assess whether their strategy is empowering or disempowering for them as professionals. It is an important finding that academic success in this case does not threaten patriarchy and is thus allowed. However, professional success or achievement, if claimed by these women, may become threatening to patriarchal structures and norms. Therefore, women can only be successful in a way that is non-threatening. Perhaps these women professors have learnt to manage patriarchy in their workplace by being quite and non-threatening.

## **Unexpected Findings**

In the present study, the findings indicated that the women were not greatly aware of their success – it was clear that some of them had little perception of their level of success. Some identified themselves as informal mentors, but only one identified herself as a role model, which was a significant finding about self-image. Role models and mentors consistently play vital roles in the growth of a researcher or an academician. In Pakistan, to the best of my knowledge, there is not a single study that has examined the role of mentors and role models in the life of Pakistani women academics. However, there are publications by Pakistani researchers that emphasise the significant role of mentoring in the lives of academics (Qadir 2006). In the present study, some mentioned the influence of mentors in their lives. When asked about their own roles as mentors and role models, only one recognised the formal concept of mentoring, and the remaining 14 interviewees did not perceive this aspect as important.

## **Reflections on the Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical frameworks used in this study were patriarchy and feminism, and the strands of both were seen in the interview data. When I started this study I was aware of the setting of the country, which was primarily male-dominated, conservative and resultantly patriarchal. As for feminism, as mentioned in the literature review chapter, it was a phenomenon that I

had not initially wanted to explore, but which became imperative as a result of the emerging data. The study has helped me to understand feminism and Pakistan. I hope that the dissemination process will allow a subtle amount of feminism to emerge, at least in the institutional setup, keeping in mind that it is not perceived as something positive in Pakistan. Most of the successful women in my sample did not make a direct reference to feminism for the reasons given in Chapter 2. It became clear to me, though, that feminism is closely interlinked with patriarchy. Feminism complements research done in a patriarchal set up. Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002) point out that feminists 'defy the patriarchal truth'. The narratives as recorded in the thematic chapters also reflect the different ways of negotiating patriarchy by these women. For example, their accounts show how they managed situations in terms of their higher education and jobs where their fathers' power was managed by mothers.

As mentioned in the literature review of the thesis, patriarchy and its structures (Walby 1990) are deeply embedded in societies, and Pakistani society is no different. The idea of household production related to the dynamics of the family and other cultural institutions is a strong strand that relates to my findings. Another significant aspect which emerges from the patriarchal concept explained by Lerner (1986) and Hodgson-Wright (2001) is that individual men in their position of dominance can choose whether or not the women in their lives can work. My data supports this point that a father, husband or father-in-law can support the women in their families to become more independent. As seen in the analysis in the thematic chapter, it is reconfirmed that men's support in the lives of these women plays an important role. It can be concluded that patriarchal structures are managed by these women working in universities in a way that facilitates their progress in professional life. The number of women present in senior positions in universities elsewhere compares closely with Pakistan's higher education scenario. Within the general themes are included finer dimensions that interplay to elicit individual, familial and social responses with the identification of these dimensions. The theoretical approach, if applied appropriately, will further enhance a better understanding of the underpinnings of this research (socio-familial) and offer solutions to deal with them in a way more amenable to women's professional self-perceptions.

## **Reflections on the Methodology**

This study is not only the first of its kind in this area in Pakistan, but it is also a pioneering attempt to plan, develop and carry out in-depth qualitative research – a research method that is uncommon in Pakistan. In Pakistan, as professionals working in academia we are still not very confident about conducting a qualitative research that has narratives / life stories as its main source of data, which is evident in the scarcity of published qualitative research. However, it is worth mentioning that the whole experience of interviewing these dynamic women professors was satisfying, not only as researcher, but also as woman working in higher education. The general understanding about qualitative research, as in any other country, is that it is subjective and person-oriented, whereas quantitative work is more authentic because it uses scientific methods and has definite results in numbers to prove or disprove a hypothesis. However, in Pakistani culture, as mentioned earlier, the mere phenomenon of storytelling and narrative supports the idea and is more successful in terms of gathering data, apart from in close communities, where confidentiality and anonymity are also more significant.

I had not anticipated that they would reveal so many details regarding their personal and professional lives. I felt that from a stranger (at least for eleven women) I became a person for them who knew their life story in a way that it had never been shared before. All the women vocalised at the end of their interview that they not only enjoyed the conversations, but they had initiated a thinking process in their own minds regarding their life events and experiences. These women emerged as role models for so many other young women. My own experience, as narrated in the methodology chapter, is quite encouraging for young women thinking about entering the world of qualitative research. In fact, this study has made me believe that this method can be introduced as an accepted academic research methodology in Pakistan, and that it will be a valuable research method for Pakistani researchers. I now teach this methodology to my doctoral classes in Pakistan.

## **Implications of the Study**

The findings of the study imply that family support and personal circumstances were instrumental in the progression of these women in their professional lives. It further elaborates that the phenomena of role models, mentoring, workplace environment and study abroad also contributed in a major way. It also reiterates how important family support and male support in general are in a patriarchal society. However, these findings have broader implications for universities in general and can be incorporated further in the educational and social policies of Pakistan.

## **Implications for the Women's University**

The concepts of role models and mentoring are two activities that can be introduced in a university setup. At present, no role model programme is available in higher education in Pakistan. Similarly, a mentoring programme is also not formally functional in the universities. My findings reflect that the introduction of a formalised programme of mentoring on the lines of the Athena Development Project at Sheffield Hallam University (WiTEC,1999) can be introduced to improve not only the numbers of women in the field, but also the workplace environment with ongoing support for women where mentors are allocated specifically for women's professional and personal development.

## **Implications on the Educational & Social Policy of Pakistan**

The educational policy of the country can benefit from introducing programmes like study and work abroad. Study abroad emerged as a strong strand for nurturing change in these women's lives. Generally, young women in a male-dominated society do not have the freedom of movement, and the concept of travelling un-chaperoned is not very popular. In a patriarchal set up, it is mostly men who decide what the woman of the household will do in terms of education and work. However, if a woman secures a scholarship, it is considered prestigious and the family feels honoured in sending her away for higher education. Thus, women are able to access education through such programmes. This idea could also be tapped on a larger scale in the higher education sector by starting with student exchange programmes

with faculty scholarships abroad. Special programmes for women to pursue higher education and also to work towards a career in education could be introduced.

Based on these findings, similar suggestions could be extended to the Ministry of Social Welfare and Ministry of Women Development. For instance, daycare facilities should be made available in organisations with large numbers of female employees or where long working hours are required by the women. In some instances, such basic facilities as separate toilets for women on the premises are also a facilitative factor and make the workplace comfortable. At a social policy level, changes need to be brought about by introducing the concepts of gender sensitisation and mainstreaming, including a policy to promote equality and one to prevent harassment.

### **Contribution of the Study to Professional and Academic Knowledge, Locally and Globally**

I anticipate that this study will be a foundation for any future research in the area of successful women in leadership positions in the higher education institutions of Pakistan. It will fill some of the gaps in existing knowledge in the region and give baseline information about the contributing factors for the success of these women. Young women, while planning their career in academia, can use this information. I can also help to develop the recognition that there is a need to plan a career. At present, for women in universities, there are no career plans to follow and few role models available, so I expect that this study will be able to fill that void.

I also expect that this research will contribute to existing knowledge about the issue of the scarcity of women in senior positions in universities, as well as the factors that can improve the situation globally. It also generates knowledge in the field of women and work in a patriarchal society. The distinctive feature is the element of the Pakistani location. I attempted to develop an indigenous lens to observe and understand issues pertaining to the career progression of successful female academicians in Pakistani universities within the country's social norms and structures. However, the same knowledge can be shared with the counterparts of these women in Southern Asian and other countries of the Western world in the form of publications and conference presentations. I anticipate that the findings of this research will help upcoming practitioners in Pakistan, as these life stories will be an

inspiration and motivation for them as professional individuals. In short, it will help young women to 'reinvent' themselves (Rose 1998).

## **Dissemination and Future Research**

The research study was initiated after the approval of the proposal in September 2007, Subsequently, I successfully presented a paper on the initial findings at the Institute of Education, University of London Doctoral School Summer Conference, 2008.

Another paper was presented at an international conference in Madrid, Spain, in November 2008, where I presented my IFS findings. A significant career progression for me was the initiation of an M.Phil degree programme in higher education leadership and management (M.Phil – HELM) at my parent university in Pakistan. As the course leader and adjunct faculty on the course, I have successfully shared the methodological aspects of this research with the students.

Keeping in view one of the primary objectives of this research, which was to fill the gap in existing literature in Pakistan, I plan to publish the findings of this research in monograph or book form and have subsequent publication in peer-reviewed journals.

To conclude, one can say that for women academics the pressures can come either for the home or from the workplace. They have to juggle to maintain a balance and move forward at the same time. Consequently, although homemaking and career progression pull women in separate directions, those fortunate enough to find and maintain the harmony and balance in their inner self and outer world are successful.

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# APPENDIX A

## Introductory Letter (email)

Dear Dr XXXX,

AoA

With reference to our telephonic conversation today, I am writing to you to confirm December 11, 2007 at 4.30 pm for meeting and interviewing for my doctoral research.

I would like to give you a brief introduction to my research which I am conducting as a part of my doctoral studies, which I am pursuing at Institute of Education, University of London. The proposal of my research has been approved by the academic board and the ethical committee of my School of Education Foundation and Policy Studies, University of London.

In my current research I am exploring the lives of senior women (VC's, Deans, Professors) working in the Universities of Pakistan, with the purpose to see if there is a connection between their life stories (childhood , family , education, personal and professional life) and their career progression in a country like Pakistan. It's a qualitative research and I will be conducting 90-100 minutes face to face interview. The interview as mentioned earlier will be around personal and professional life story of the interviewee.

I understand and appreciate the significance of confidentiality and anonymity and assure you that the information gathered through the interview will only be used for academic purposes.

I look forward to meeting you. I will be grateful if you can confirm. I check my email quite regularly so you can email me or text me on my mobile number given below.

Best regards

Maryam Rab  
Doctoral Student  
EFPS  
Institute of Education,  
University of London  
UK

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Interview Schedule**

#### **Opening Questions**

##### **HOW IT ALL STARTED**

1. I'd like to know about your life ...tell me about your childhood, your family, and education...how you came to be oriented to your field of study?
2. Please describe, in as much detail as possible, the story of your professional experience, giving particular attention to the critical events and challenges you have faced and the way in which these events have influenced your professional and personal development.
3. What in your perception are the factors (family, status, social standing etc) which you think helped you in being where you are today?

##### **CRITICAL EVENTS**

4. Was there any particular personal decision which you would term as turning point in your professional life or it changed your life?
5. Looking back over your professional experience to date, what would you describe as the "unanticipated outcome" of this professional journey? Have you had particular experiences that you hadn't anticipated or expected when you began your work?

##### **CHANGE IN OUTLOOK with MATURITY**

6. Regarding your professional experience, if you think back to the days before you entered into senior position, can you describe what the position of a Dean/Professor represented to you then and what you thought the process would be like?
7. Now that you have progressed to the point you are in your career, in what ways have your views about the position and the process to achieve it changed?
8. What were the issues which hindered or facilitated you in maintaining a balance between personal and professional life?
9. In what ways have you changed and in what ways do you see yourself differently because of your present position?

##### **ANY REGRETS**

10. I would like to know what motivated you to become a university teacher....why you wanted to take up a career in the first place?
11. What would you do differently if you were to start your career again?



# APPENDIX C

## Check list for the Interviews

### Areas to be Covered

- Background
- Parents
- Siblings
- Home environment
- Education (school, college, university)
- Spouse/partner/support group
- Children/extended family
- Work/profession/career
- Any other aspect which interviewee perceive as significant

**Note:** The following question will be asked according to the flow of the conversation which means that if Qs # 1 is answered in detail then Qs # 2, 4 & 5 may not be asked. But if the answer is not in in-depth then all 6 questions will be asked.

## APPENDIX D

Some extracts from the set Coded as Educational Experiences & Achievements from the Transcribed Interviews:

<Documents\Interviews\Dr Amethyst> - § 1 reference coded [0.65% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.65% Coverage

I did my intermediate in science but then I realised that I was not in on cut out to be a medical doctor and my father sort of counselled me and he said , why do you not take up economics and statistics and see how you like it and there was no looking back after that. I love Economics

<Documents\Interviews\Dr Zircon> - § 1 reference coded [1.86% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.86% Coverage

So then after three months I passed all the three subjects 33 marks in chemistry, 34 in physics and 45 in algebra, but during those months the exam was happening in August. Then college began in September and my result was not due till December so I asked my parents to send me to college unlawfully. Along with my sister I always used to go and who checks Cantonment Board colleges so I use to sit in every class.

I studied Chemistry, political science and Urdu advanced because we never had to prepare for the Urdu paper, but Urdu was so very good that we will simply go and we use to feel surprise about the people who prepared for the Urdu. So Urdu advanced that we would not have to prepare and Political science and Economics and Urdu so I use to go with my sister and than in December my result came out and I took admission in that college after three months of the regular admission that was a formidable job and I cannot tell you that there was no door in the city which my father did not knock and he knocked all those doors till he received a reply and I got admission in the college in December regular admission and I was told my roll number was probably 495. I have entered though the back door and now here is I am sitting and have that power to allow the people enter or not enter I will not let them enter if I have the power and you know this is the kind of a thing and my justification is going to be that two wrongs do not make one right this is what so I had already you know taken my those examination without even being enrolled. I was not enrolled. I sat in all those exams. She said I am not going to take you in economics class because I was late admission. This is not my responsibility to take you and no way I said how you can say no to me. I have even taken the examination. She said you have taken the exam. I said I have taken the examination. She said hat okay then let me check your paper and then I will decide if you will be enrolled or not. So she said next day she came to the class and she said to the class I am telling you she is new, she has done her paper well and you left behind and probably she was right, probably of the entire class as far as I know of all those who are in different schools. We were hardly 2 or 3 people who did Master in economics and I am the only one who is one of them so sometimes people say something which do not have anything at that time, but it proves so these were her words that because I score the second highest marks in that class. Anyway I was a kind of welcomed by all the teachers.

<Documents\Interviews\Dr Quartz > - § 2 references coded [1.86% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.10% Coverage

The only difficulty was my father wanted me to have science

Reference 2 - 1.76% Coverage

I wanted English literature and so we compromised after about six weeks of torture for him and for me both of us were in a state of war. I chose to go and attend a few F.Sc (Intermediate) classes and I also

attended a few intermediate arts and humanities classes and then I ultimately compromised that I will take economics which was then he said the next best to Pre-Medical, and I said I wanted English literature so we compromised on that and then I had read two subjects combination. I did my intermediate F.Sc and then I did my bachelors in these two subjects, then again we had a big issue because he wanted me to do Economics and I got selected at the Quaid-e-Azam University, which is again A list university I got their entrance exam, their orientation sessions and my father was happy that finally may be I have seen the light and I was doing what was the viable carrier option as for as he was concerned with but I finally opted for the Master's in English.

Reference 1 - 0.31% Coverage

I am the eldest of my siblings and so it was no option, I mean going to school, going to college, going to university. I mean there were not any questions about it

Reference 2 - 0.04% Coverage

I was the high achiever

<Documents\Interviews\Dr Agate> - § 2 references coded [0.60% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.28% Coverage

I was awarded a Common Wealth Scholarship for PhD and then I associated to University of Glasgow from UK to completion of my PhD programme. In 1980's after my PhD, I was Bangladeshi citizen. I was selected in Bangladesh quota, so I had to return back there. At that time, I was not married.

## **APPENDIX E**

The following page has a sample Tree Nodes as an example. The details are discussed in the Thematic Chapters



