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**Abstract**

**‘Othering is perilous’ the paradox of women career progression in Higher Education of Pakistan: A cross-cultural study**

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**‘Othering is perilous’**

**The paradox of women career progression in Higher Education of Pakistan: A cross-cultural study**

**Abstract**

Purpose-The research presented in this paper is part of a larger study examiningthe career progression dynamics of women in academia in the UK and Pakistan on three contextual levels, i.e. macro (societal), meso (organisational) and micro (individual) levels which are relevant to women’s career dynamics. This paper focuses on the experiences of women academics in Pakistan using the lens of hegemonic masculinity to understand the career dynamics discussed.

Design/methodology/approach- Semi-structured interviews were undertaken with women academics in Pakistani Business Schools. The interviews were recorded for full transcription and this data is supported by field notes and the researcher’s reflective diary. The women interviewed occupied differing levels of seniority, from lecturer to Professor. The transcripts are analysed by using thematic analysis method.

Findings -The findings of the research reveals the impact of macro, meso and micro level influences on women’s academic career progression in Pakistan. Women appear to be under-represented at senior levels within Pakistani business schools. Furthermore, the findings of interviews highlight that hegemonic masculinity operates through Pakistani Universities’ culture, promotion practices, lack of networking opportunities, mentoring and work-life imbalance. Women academics reported a sense of powerlessness and otherness from the dominant culture within Pakistani academia. Despite several cultural differences between UK and Pakistan career constraints at meso level might be similar. Both countries are struggling with issues of gender prejudice (Wilson, 2005; Munir and Sajid, 2010) and ineffective equal opportunities (Bagilhole, 2002) within higher education.

Research implications- This study illustrates the significance of hegemonic masculinities sociological perspective with implications for women's career and experiences in academia. As such efforts to overcome gender inequality in higher education must consider the broader sociological context within which higher education operates.

Originality/value of the paper- This paper adds to our understanding of how societal, organisational and individual factors interact to perpetuate gender inequality in higher education. In addition, women academics in Pakistan are largely absent from the academic literature.

Key words:women, progression; othering; higher education; Pakistan

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