



**A Study of Glass Ceiling: Barrier to Career Advancement for Women in
Higher Education Institutions in Twin Cities of Pakistan**

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Abstract

Although women from teaching and non-teaching staff at the universities have made leaps in terms of advancing toward senior executive positions in higher education institutions. However, career advancement opportunities for women still lag considerably as compared to men in developing countries. In spite of equal opportunities for men and women, the road toward more senior levels is unfortunately blocked for women. Resultantly women still encounter numerous internal and external challenges in reaching top leadership positions.

This study contributes to this scholarly knowledge by adding up women leaders' voices from teaching and non-teaching management post in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) of twin cities (Rawalpindi and Islamabad) of Pakistan. In this study a qualitative approach was used and data was collected through interviews to investigate the barriers faced by women senior academic administrators in universities in moving towards leadership positions. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to describe the "glass ceiling" as a lived experience of women senior level administrators in higher education institutions of Rawalpindi and Islamabad, Pakistan. The study is designed to focus on the experiences that influenced and hindered the success of women in reaching senior level administration positions. The philosophical assumptions underlying this research involve a constructive ontology and an interpretive epistemology with a theoretical perspective.

From the interviews, four themes emerged: **mentoring** and role models are not available for women, **gender discrimination** a barrier to career advancement for women, which results in leaving or losing jobs **stereotyping** demotivates women who want to pursue their career **institutional policies** are always in favor of men and are designed to increase women's participation are not enough.

All participants agreed that women's God-given task is to be a mother and a wife. This belief served as a strong foundation as these women moved up in their careers. They concurred that women had to work harder and showed strong determination to become leaders and for this they had to face gender discrimination, institutional policies, stereotyping and mentoring issues. They opined that Pakistani culture and society also hinders women senior academic administrators' career advancement.