

UNDERSTANDING THE FACTORS INFLUENCING ACADEMIC MOBILITY OF FEMALE SCHOLARS IN PAKISTAN: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF CHALLENGES AND MOTIVATIONS

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ABSTRACT

As academia increasingly embraces internationalization, it is crucial to explore the experiences of female scholars in the context of academic mobility. This research focuses on the intersection of gender and academic mobility, highlighting the unique challenges and opportunities faced by female scholars in Pakistan. The study aims to investigate the factors influencing the internationalization of education and gender discrimination experienced by female academics. The qualitative study includes female scholars from universities in Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Lahore, and Multan. Thirty participants were selected using purposive and snowball sampling techniques, and in-depth interviews were conducted for data collection, which was analyzed thematically. The research revealed that female academics encounter a range of issues while also gaining valuable knowledge and skills in modern education and research. Personal, professional, and economic factors motivate female academics to seek international educational opportunities. Gender discrimination is prevalent in academic mobility, with males often being preferred over females. Female scholars also face challenges related to travel, family responsibilities, and childcare while abroad. Despite these obstacles, they benefit from learning research skills and building relationships with international scholars.

Key Words: Internationalization of Academia, Academic Mobility, Females' experiences, Gender Discriminations, Research Skills

INTRODUCTION

Academic mobility is one of the major factors of globalization. Through globalization, the world is shrinking like a village. The students and academics are moving to foreign countries to gain international exposure of knowledge. The academic mobility is modern educational trend which is motivating the students and researchers to visit foreign countries to seek modern educational trends (Kim, 2013). The academic mobility is developing global education system through engaging the students from the whole world. It has number of benefits i.e., personal growth, learning of research skills, interaction with international researchers and collaboration with international authors. At the same time, education

mobility enhances the chances of securing a job and promotions (Vostal, 2015). The competition is increasing in the job market due to influx of the students' engagements in higher education (Ylijoki, 2013). The third world countries have more chances of association between internationalization of education and jobs. The same is the trend among the developed countries but the academics do not pay more attention to job security because they have more resources and chances of employments (Muller, 2014).

The recent years witnessed huge numbers of the academics migrating to the foreign countries. it has developed a sense of competition among the world

that through academic mobility they are learning more research skills and unveiling new dimensions in their related fields (Collins et al, 2017). The education is being modernized which needs the attention of the policy makers and educationists to frame educational policies in accordance to present age. The knowledge with modern capabilities and needs has attraction. The developed countries like US, UK, France, Australia and Germany are the top destinations of the international students.

These countries have the advanced knowledge due to their focused attention on innovations in all fields. This is why the international academics are attracted to such countries (King & Sondhi, 2018). The internationalization of academia is leading towards the changing global patterns of education. Now the local knowledge is not sufficient to compete the rest of the world. In doing so, you have to make yourself capable of having the same potential and the education is the best way to achieve the required potential. For the same purpose, the academics are encouraged to get education from the specialized professors in prominent universities across the globe (Altbach, 2004).

The existing statistics show that there were approximately 0.8 million students in 1975 who migrated to foreign countries under internationalization of academia. The figure rose to 2 million in 2000 and almost 4.1 million in 2013 (UNESCO, 2016). Currently, there are more than 6 million students studying in the abroad.

This research article examines the globalization of academia, focusing on the internationalization of academia, gender inequalities, and issues faced by women in Pakistan. Women in Pakistan often face discrimination in higher education, as they are considered second-class citizens in a male-dominated society. Access to higher education is limited to females from highly educated and supportive families. Women also encounter intersectional issues throughout their academic journey. This research aims to address the challenges Pakistani women face in educational mobility, exploring the factors motivating women to pursue international academic opportunities and examining gender power dynamics that create unequal opportunities for men and women in international academic mobility.

Literature Review

A study conducted by Wang et al. (2011) discussed the role of government funds on research productivity, findings of the study revealed that 89.87 percent of all research publications published by Chinese researchers in 2009 were funded by government. The existing studies indicate that males have more potential to be mobile (Costas, Camus, & Michalczyk, 2013).

A study conducted by Zheng (2014) stated multi-dynamics of the internationalization of education while highlighting the factors of the academic mobility, it found that economic factors (29%), educational (27%), social (13%), personal (15%), cultural (9%) and political (7%) are found among the international students. The afore-mentioned are key factors motivate the academics for internationalization of education. Out of all these factors, economic, personal and educational are significant determinants of education mobility.

According to Elliott & Urry (2010) and Nikunen (2017) socio-economic privileges affect the academic mobility. Those who are in more power and have high socio-economic status have more chances to visit foreign countries for educational and practical experience purpose. These researches also reported that academic mobility is based on a hierarchal division which again differentiate the males and females (Nikunen, 2017). The masculinity holds all of the key posts and women remain lagged behind. It is not just the matter of education but all of the social and economic fields are occupied by the men. According to majority of the existing studies, men secure more opportunities of academic mobility than the women (Blackmore et al, 2015).

According to Mählck (2013) women's academic mobility fetches manifold problems for them. They cannot deviate themselves from their families and children because they have to take their familial responsibilities side by side. Their gender roles have confined them within their domestic duties but if they don't move for educational purposes, they are lagged behind the males. Hence, the internationalization of education is not equally inclined to both genders.

Although proportion of women in academia is increasing rapidly as compare to their male counterparts, ratio of women in academia is 5.1 while 3.3 for men from 2002-2009 in all sectors. Increasing number depicts a positive change and well-established norm but female researchers are still suffering from issues to reach an authoritative or

decision-making position. Percentage of women professors is 21.8 in Scottish universities while their population in universities is 45 percent (Herald Report, 2015).

During the stay at foreign countries, the scholars build ties with prominent figures of research. They spend time with them and conduct researches with collaboration which is beneficial for future researches. They experienced that specialized researchers are given prestige by the juniors and fresh students because they learn a lot from them (Fernandez-Zubieta et al, 2015).

Fernandez-Zubieta et al (2015) asserted that human society is not static rather it continues to evolve over the period of time. By the same token, the education also evolves with the passage of time which is why the modern education is inclined towards the global knowledge system. Only those countries gain attention of the world that are enriched with modern day of education.

Furthermore, the study conducted by Kayani et al (2015) explored that the Pakistani students gain international exposure in the foreign countries as well. In the local setting of the country, they cannot learn about the international research and educational trends which is gained through internationalization of education. They become like global citizens while living in Europe countries and visit different European countries which provides them a chance to explore the world. By doing the same, they learn about new trends which prove helpful in modernizing the education in local setting of Pakistan (Bashir & Khalid, 2022).

Leemann (2010) studied the dynamics of gender and different structural factors related to extensive periods of abroad labor of Swiss citizens during postdoctoral phase. The study found that birth of child and a stable partnership makes the decision of mobility more complex. Jöns (2011) conducted a study on visiting researchers at German universities to comprehend long term research stays. The findings of the study revealed that usually these stays are circular in nature. These researchers visit their countries of origin after 2 or 3 years but this pattern varies by gender because women academics were underrepresented as visiting researchers specifically in the natural sciences. These gender variations relate to life course of researchers as well (Zafar et al, 2021).

Likewise, França (2016) explored that women have to face intersectionality of the issues about their

decisions of academic mobility. They are not free to choose by themselves rather they have to critically observe all of the associated factors. There are social, cultural, and political barriers for females which don't allow them to go for the foreign countries for educational purposes. In the same perspective, Mirza (2013) highlighted the same issue in the perspective of Pakistan. Accordingly, the females have to face plenty of issues both for the decisions of the academic mobility and while staying at the foreign countries. First of all, they have to take into account all family members about the decisions of the mobility and in supportive families, they get permission for the same. But during their foreign stay, they have to maintain regular contact with their parents, children and life partners which affect their focus of attention on education (De Wit & Altbach, 2020).

Mählck & Felleson (2016) conducted research on the problems of the women during their foreign stay and found that the major issues the females face in the foreign countries are culture, religion, language, food and the communities where they have to live for a particular time. Although, they adjust there with the passage of time but initially they face many such issues. They are not treated like the local setting because nobody cares about you like your family (Mok & Marginson, 2021).

Oliveira & Soares (2016) stated that numerous studies have been conducted on the motives of academic mobility. Through academic mobility, the scholars get chances to grow themselves in educational, personal and research growth. They learn modern education techniques and enhance their knowledge about the respective field (Abbas et al, 2021). They also learn about pertinent techniques to handle the situations in appropriate ways and improve their linguistic skills along with research capabilities. These are some of the prominent reasons that students and faculty members prefer to gain education from foreign countries (Severino et al, 2014).

On one side, internationalization of education is imparting plenty of advantages to the academics. It is upgrading their research, educational and personal expertise. It is engaging them with the international community of researchers through social networking but at the same time, it does not provide equal opportunities to both genders. The females are given lesser academic opportunities than the males (Anka, 2021).

Pell & Winter (2015) states that massification, commodification and privatization in higher education or academia are becoming a challenge to maintain quality in education and research. A number of researchers in higher education have argued that academia in modern economy is just like business of elites and networking professionals. Along networking stay for longer period in different cultures help to understand different working conditions which proved to be helpful in understanding different cultural perspectives.

Phang (2013) highlighted the economic factor of globalization of education. Accordingly, the primary motive of the students and the faculty members behind the academic mobility is to secure more valued positions. The internationalization of education provides more job opportunities and also enhances the chances of promotion for those who are already in service. By the same token, the study conducted by Teichler (2012) pointed out that academic mobility is chiefly triggered by the same motives. Firstly, the students save some amount from the allocated scholarship budget. Secondly, it helps them to secure higher positions especially in academia.

Previous literature illustrates that women are usually stereotypes as less mobile as compare to their male counterparts (Costas, Camus, & Michalczyk, 2013; Nikunen, 2014), because they face a number of obstacles to combine work life with family that affect women over men. Ackers (2004) reported that data shows in 27 countries of EU women hold very limited professorships and tenured positions (European Commission, European Commission,

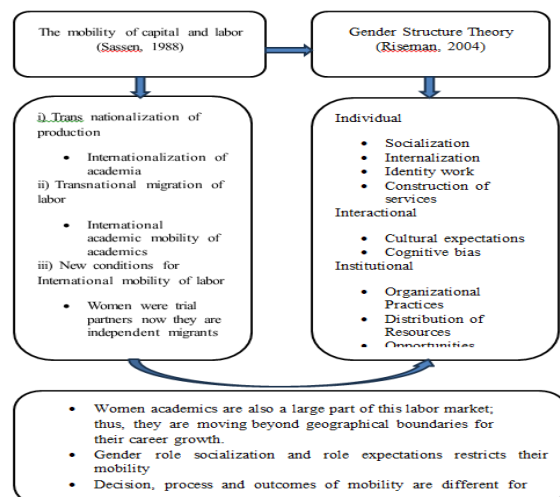
2012). The number of women academic have been doubled from 2002 to 2010 yet their proportion is not satisfactory (Singh & Jamil, 2021).

Previous literature suggests that women occupy a subordinate position in higher education. Studies have also portrayed the problems and barriers women face in the academic labor market, but very limited attention has been paid to geographic mobility. Gender inequalities persist in academic careers (Bailyn, 2003; Winslow & Davis, 2016), and it has been observed that assuming commitments can suppress academic travel (Hopkins et al., 2016; 2019). The similar findings are reported in the case of present study. The majority of the respondents expressed their concerns about gender-based inequalities against women in the terms of academic mobility (Sehar et al, 2021).

Szelényi (2006) explained that globalization of education is prompted by different factors. The prominent factors behind the motivation for academic mobility is economic factor. The academics from across the globe are moving to foreign countries to gain foreign degrees which make chances brighter for job security. After the coming back to native countries, they gain more chances of job promotions.

The literature review suggests that women are not as much productive as the men at their professional work. Similarly, Ogbogu (2010) stated that women are more confined by their gender roles. They have to maintain their family ties with children and partners even they are out of home town. They are lagged behind in research articles and publications than males (Khwaja et al, 2022).

Theoretical Framework



Methodology

This section covers the tools and techniques used in the study. The research followed a qualitative approach to gain a deep understanding of the internationalization of academia among females in Pakistan. The interpretive philosophical paradigm was employed to explore the topic. An exploratory research design was used, focusing on female academics in public and private universities in Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Lahore, and Multan. These cities were selected due to their significance in Punjab province. In-depth interviews were conducted to address all possible dimensions of internationalization of academia and academic mobility. The study included 30 participants chosen

through purposive sampling. Thematic analysis was employed for data analysis to present the findings systematically.

Data Analysis

This section deals with the key findings of the present study. The study is aimed at exploring the different dimensions of internationalization of academia with special focus on the female academics studied in the abroad. The researchers have included three prominent themes to cover the focus of the research.

Theme1: Importance of International Academic Mobility

Internationalization of academia is important to compete the rest of the world. The students and academics prefer to study in abroad to gain extra research skills because in local setting they cannot avail the modern techniques. Despite, every country strives to build a comprehensive education system yet there remain some loopholes which are addressed by the internationalization of academia. The current study is focused in disclosing the importance of internationalization of academia. The participants of the study provided detailed commentary on the importance of the same as one of them told,

I think it is important in many ways. For example, for me when I was applying for this it was a basically a fellowship which was considered as the most prestigious fellowship around the world offered to different countries (P#2).

Another respondent replied a friendly mood, When I completed my PhD, I always aspired to go to USA because having my PhD from Australia we always had this priority for American education as it offers best class of education worldwide. Universities in Australia are much influenced by USA education so I always wanted to go to USA even it was for a very short time period. I had in mind that after completing my PhD I will definitely apply for Fulbright scholarship which I did (P# 5).

The study disclosed that the internationalization of academia fulfills all of the requirements needed in the contemporary setting. The knowledge is varied according to regional

setting. Only that knowledge is privileged which is in accordance to present age. Hence, the academic mobility fulfills the need of modern day's requirements. This study also provided the same picture through the valuable commentary of the participants. One of them said,

I think it is very much important. I have 12 years' experience of working in Pakistan. I have observed that those who don't have exposure or experience of abroad, have entirely different perspective of thinking, vision, understanding and different style of looking at things. They have limited thinking. Like, why won't you come early? Why you are not sitting late? Why you don't have enough papers? Why you are not completing your class time? These people revolve around these little things (P# 7).

Internationalization refers to a comprehensive institutional transformation of the academia. The writing and teaching skills are revolutionized under internationalization of education. It collaborates the academics from all corners of the world that come together and share ideas with one another. This collaboration provides a global system of knowledge which is in the benefit of the world. A female provided discussion of the same topic while saying,

Although learning level of students is pretty high. But in Pakistan, we are bound to go to class, we are not supposed to sit while giving lectures. We are asked to involve students in class. And if teacher is giving presentations, a pure Pakistani teacher will say that she does not prepare for lecture or she wants to decrease her work load. But actually, students can better learn from it rather than just listening (Respondent# 13). On the other hand, the foreign education the modern tools of education which is contrary to the typical education of Pakistan (P# 4).

Similarly, another female explained,

In 2007 when I completed my course work after that I thought I

have to do PhD. Just imagine my research work of M.Phil. was not complete and I started to pursue different universities in 2007. When I started even that time some universities sent me offer letters in 2008 when I was on writeup stage and side by side I was associated with an NGO and channel and working as well in Lahore (P# 18).

In modern economic world, value of a worker does not simply based upon his/her capabilities but future potential, what he or she can do is more important than what he has already achieved. Being mobile or able to be mobile are very precious assets for workers in modern economy. The present research indicates that spatial mobility and networking are interlinked. This study highlighted that in globalized world it's more important who you know as compare to what you do or can do. The similar findings were found from this research as one of the respondents elaborated,

My mother was not willing to send me to abroad without marriage but when I explained before her that this is a chance to build my future career and to get impressive proposals she agreed. No doubt, foreign degree enhances your worth in your respective locality which also enhances the chances to find a compatible life partner (P # 11).

Another female scholar presented the same story by telling,

I worked hard to get foreign scholarship because this was the opportunity which could support the middle-class students like. I made my mind to get the same secretly and when I got this opportunity my family had to permit me for academic mobility (P-17).

This study found that the demands of the modern day of the 'entrepreneurial university' motivates the academics to be mobile in order to learn those research and education techniques required by the universities and organization. The internationalization of academics is fostering educational skills on one hand and benefitting for the job purpose on the other. The academic mobility is also opening the new horizons of international

careers. This study fetched similar results as one of females expressed,

After my wedding, I was not interested to get enrolled in Pakistani university for PhD although I got many offers but for me PhD was not just a degree, I just wanted to learn something new. Secondly, despite of quest of knowledge I was interested to explore the difference between European education system and Pakistan education system (P#23).

Another participant told,

Meanwhile of my foreign degree I got permanent job in a well reputed institute because the foreign experience boosted up my research skills and confidence level. Apart from the job benefits, I really learned a lot from foreign universities and professors (P#26).

This age is the era of information technology and modern innovations and those countries are leading that have knowledge and education in accordance to modern technology. The international academic mobility is also motivated towards attaining the advanced ways of education and knowledge which is motivating the scholars to move to foreign countries. The importance of internationalization of education is also disclosed by the current study. The most of the participants also reported the linkage between modernization and education system. For example, a participant explained,

Academia is very progressive and this demand to get foreign experience, it is legitimate because you can't survive in academia without fulfilling this demand. So, I was looking for the opportunity and I was lucky enough that I got this scholarship with very minimal effort, during my PhD I got the opportunity to work university of Zurich and I worked there despite I has a kid (P#28).

Another female academic told,

I had a lot of family support because my mother was alive at that time my son stayed with her it was for six

months and my husband was also very supportive. I was trying to have a good opportunity for post doc because I was done with my PhD (P#9).

A young female was so enthusiastic about explaining the internationalization of academia who told,

I used to think why just children of elite class can go abroad for higher education why not us who are from middle class families as I belong to a middle-class family so may I just wanted to break this taboo that only those who have feudal background and a lot money can get foreign degree. Because only through foreign exposure we can compete with elite which I gained through academic mobility (P#9).

Likewise, a female scholar of middle age elucidated,

PhD is your very important millstone which you have to do especially from foreign countries, so I applied for the Fulbright scholarship. I am one of the very few lucky people among more than four-five hundred faculty members around Pakistan that applied for this scholarship. Out of all these only we 14 people got selected for the Fulbright post-doc (P#10).

The present research explains that while working in international collaborations, the academics gain valuable experience and knowledge about different research environments. Previously academia was perceived as most suitable profession for women due to its limited requirement for public dealing, gender mix gatherings and most importantly limited mobility. But with the passage of time this field is also going through transition. Key changes in academic structure are commercialization of research, increased emphasis on accountability and audit and shift from traditional to relevant academy. The findings of the present study also elaborated the cultural intimacy, importance and commercialization of academia. For example, one of the participants reported,

Initially I was not eligible, because it requires at least 3 years of post-

PhD experience, after completing this requirement I applied for it and for me it was important not because I already had an exposure of Australia for 4 years and I already knew or had that sense of cultural diversity, an excellent education system and many other things during my PhD but for me I think it was important for my career growth in this sense (P#19).

For the same stance, another female academic of middle age reported,

The modern education system is so costly which is not possible for the middle class by its own finance. The internationalization of education is so commercialized that you have to sacrifice so much to gain foreign research exposure and degree which later improves your worth as well (P#23).

The whole of the above discussion explains the importance of internationalization of academia. According to the findings of the study, it is obvious that internationalization of academia has become need for better future and job promotion. The academic mobility only grants research experience but also collaborate the different cultures of globe. The world is developing day by day and new ways of education, communication and research and being explored. There is tough competition in the field of education and learning because all of the future inventions and discoveries are based on the education system. Under this scene, the higher education polices are being revolutionized which also aimed at gaining knowledge from every corner of the world.

Theme 2: Motivation behind the Decision of Mobility

If we study the reasons behind less representation of women in academia or at higher positions, we can conclude that they face two types of hurdles: Personal and professional. In personal barriers, there are two major opinions on women less representation at higher ranks; Firstly, women do not show much interest in scholarly work due to lack of interest or time. Yet, the females wish to gain international exposure of education. They strived to build their research-based profile in which the

internationalization of academia is much helpful. For example, one of participants told,

I spent 12 years in Germany. I visited many countries which were non-English speaking and were in my surroundings, including Schengen visa. It was my desire to visit to England because firstly educational system of England is very much appreciated in Pakistan, secondly universities like Cambridge and Oxford are very renowned universities so it was my wish to see how they work (P#19).

Another participant told,

There were two options in my mind i.e., UK and US. But I was little worried about America as it is very big city. How I'll manage? Then I thought about England for Post Doc just for the sake of experience. Because after PhD, I became AP and there is no career growth here. So, I will get exposure as well as education. So, these were incentives for me to go to abroad (P#11).

Mobile academics usually find themselves at advantageous position because of their foreign experience. By moving abroad, they learn about different academic cultures, more empirical, methodological and theoretical approaches so they can acquire important reputational capital, such as prestige, credibility and more research skills. But every individual has different experience in this regard, some might experience isolation, weak social networks. The study is also enriched with similar reporting of the respondents. One of the respondents said,

I definitely didn't have this in mind to have this fellowship I will be promoted because I knew that it wouldn't really count towards that. For me my journey for this particular fellowship and this mobility abroad was more for the sake of my own personal satisfaction and my own personal grooming as well as since it was cultural program so I also I had in mind that it will also have impact on my children (P#18).

On the other hand, a middle-aged female elaborated,

The decision of academic mobility is not easy for the females of Pakistani society. They are associated with variety of the duties but in accordance to the modern demands of education employment they have to take such decisions with consent of the family members (P#15).

Participants of the study reported that university research findings play a vital role in researcher's motivation. In international scenario there are certain limitations in research funding like governments and private organization/councils have a discrete grant for foreigners, provide them opportunities to apply for grants through research proposals. The academic mobility establishes links with international research organizations which help to haunt such opportunities. This is also a factor of pursuing academic mobility in Pakistan. Likewise, one of them explained,

Because I was definitely taking worth in academic mobility with me and I had this in mind that they will also have a different perspective of people, culture, places and school system. It was very important not only for me, for my own growth in terms of how I updated myself in the sense that I learned from their class rooms, research culture, how they do things differently (P#29).

Another participant explained,

In the educational culture of Pakistan, such academics that have more international association are given prestige. They can easily gain international and local research grants. This was also a factor I took decision of foreign education so that I could establish foreign link especially for research evaluation of my students (P#8).

But usually, social scientists don't have such funds for their respective fields and usually grants are only available to local researchers and the entire proposal must be written in local language. A Lot of researchers were uninformed about these funding

opportunities due to limited social networking. By the same token, one of the females told,

I met people and share my culture with them and they shared their culture with me, so in that sense it was very fulfilling for me in many ways. I wished to develop professional relations with those professionals. This was one of my primary motives behind decision of mobility (P#-17).

Similarly, another female informant said,

Pakistani research culture is not as much advanced as the foreign countries have. There is gap between the tools and ways so one of my motives was to compare the research of foreign countries with Pakistan. So, I decided to avail the chance of academic mobility (P#-27).

This section concludes that the decision of academic mobility was taken by the females themselves. They wanted to improve their knowledge and to have collaboration with scholars of different socio-cultural backgrounds. It was also found that they developed ties with international scholars and research organizations which proved helpful in evaluating their students' research and international research cooperation.

Theme 3: Gender Discrimination in Internationalization of Education

When we talk about geographic mobility, those females who have kids face more problems than unmarried. In the regard of this study, I found that there is no exception of male or female, they have to face problems in organizing journeys and longer overseas visits due to bonding with spouse's job, children's education etc. These problems are directly or indirectly more related to dual career couples. People usually arrange mobility with a group of their own relatives. Some researchers prefer those centers where they already have their own relatives or friends, so they can become localist there. Likewise, I found that women are not encouraged to be mobile and if it becomes necessity, the decision-making process becomes more complex. For instance, a female elaborated,

It is very different. Our society is based on equality. Males always say that if females work same as males,

then they claim equal pay. But obviously women have different structure, different nature, and different responsibilities. So, being female if you want to go in academics or any other field of work, you have to face different challenges (P#-4).

A female explained the gender-based inequality in the perspective of Pakistan in following words,

Your structure and your family didn't support you. And you are going to manage all these things by yours. Once a person shared a picture on Facebook that a man is climbing up through stairs and woman is given a way which is completely flat or slope. So, I think there are a lot of challenges for a working woman (P#11).

Another academic said,

The women are not given equal opportunities in Pakistani society. They have to face more problems than the males. The males can easily gain the permission for anything but when it comes to females, they have to give hundred times sureties about the matter of academic mobility (P#-1).

Likewise, another participant said,

Although, the females are going to foreign countries for higher education but none sees their long efforts behind the scene. They are not easily allowed for the same rather they have to request their families many times, then they gain the family permission (P#-9).

Historically, reduced mobility is not seen as a barrier to employment and, on the other hand, the inability of women to move is generally seen as a personal problem that needs to be addressed at the individual level. The university labor market is as open to women as it is to men, but they themselves are unwilling to be mobile because of their family (husband and children). Women's academic performance and geographic mobility are influenced by different social and cultural values that determine gender performance. The intersectional approach

developed by founding authors of academia claimed that inequalities have dynamic nature and they stem from different social and political conditions. Gender inequalities vary culture to culture and every individual in same context does not experience them in same way, because they emerge from different matrices of power and authority. So, when we try to analyze decision of international mobility, as well as the very experience of being outside, it is necessary to assume that there are several variables that overlap with gender, making it more or less salient and influential. This research explored the similar unequal educational facilities related to academic mobility. For instance, a respondent told,

I think there are many gender-based hurdles in our institutions, females have to do more struggles as compare to males. But in our institution, we have different departments for male and females so here we face less discrimination. If I talk about my perception and experience, I think in our institution it's not about gender, opportunities are given on the basis of personal links and social networking (P#-25).

Another female explained,

I don't think there is any kind of gender discrimination or foreign qualified or local qualified in my case. I believe that structure provides more support to males. I know the literature as well and I know many of women who have experienced this discrimination. But in my perspective, I did not face any kind of gender discrimination (P#-15).

The comment of a young but serious looking lady also supported the above, who told,

Seriously I don't know why I didn't face it but for me there was no discrimination I think that discrimination could be possible if a male and female both are qualified for such opportunity and authorities have to make a choice among them than perhaps, they would opt a male, again it could be a gender based or networking-based decision. For example, if authorities have a good

working relationship with the woman than they might choose a woman instead of the man so I think it's not that straightforward it's very complicated (P#-10).

I also found through this research that men have more external exposure because they continue to interact with variety of the individuals and organizations. This enhances their educational, practical and linguistic skills. They are more fluent in foreign languages than women which is another reason showing the internationalization assigns more responsibilities to men than women. The study reported that gender discrimination is found in academic mobility to some extent. All of the participants did not support the same stance, but it found that women are not being given appropriate representation in internationalization of education. In this regard of the participants told,

If you are talking about general gender discrimination, yes it exists obviously. Honestly speaking it is very common and exists in various forms, if not in salary we all are working on BPS so everyone gets equal pay, other factors like experience and many other things also affect our salaries but discrimination is there for access to opportunities. Opportunities are not just foreign exposure but for example availability of furniture or other basic infrastructure (P#-4).

Another well-informant told,

If university had to choose between a male and female for this Fulbright and authorities were asked which of your faculty member, do you want to send then perhaps there would have been discrimination based on gender, favoritism or social networks. But this is something which I have earned myself so that's why there was no discrimination (P#19).

Under this section, I found that there is vivid gender biasness in the terms of internationalization of academia. The higher education is superficially linked with the males and females are almost excluded from this educational competition. This scenario declines more when it comes to developing

and poor countries. The gender inequalities in education are not a new topic. The females had been marginalized in terms of education and social assignments. The historical studies also represent the same but with the advent of modernization of competition although women are actively taking part in education but they are not provided equal positions of globalization of education. Hence, this study also reported that gender discrimination exists against females. This is not only confined in the academic mobility only but also in the ordinary and routine matters of jobs as well.

Discussion

The studies conducted by (Zheng, 2014; Oliveira & Soares, 2016; Severino et al, 2014; and Kayani et al, 2015) found that personal and professional growth, job haunting, promotions and educational factors are some of the major factors behind the internationalization of academia. By the same token, the present research found that participants' major triggers of academic mobility were the same. The study highlighted that all of the participants enhanced their research skills, personal and professional growth. Furthermore, they developed international research collaborations which also helped them to publish their research articles in the international journals. Further, the existing literature i.e., (Mählck 2013; França 2016; & Mirza 2013) explain that females face intersectionality of the issues due to their gender. They are not given equal opportunities of academic mobility which is again are found in align with the present study. The commentary of the respondents explored that majority of the gained uneven educational opportunities. It was also highlighted that they faced so many challenges not only in decisions making process but also during their stay at abroad. Likewise, the academic mobility also fostered the research capabilities of the females.

Conclusion

Internationalization of academia is very productive in aligning the scholars including faculty members and the young students according to international parameters of the academia. This study concludes that academic mobility is equally important for the females but the female scholars of Pakistan are suffering from numerous issues at decisions making and adjusting in aboard. The positive impact of academic mobility is to equip the females in the same

line of the males in the line of job haunting and promotions. This research adds knowledge in the field of internationalization of academia. It will help the policy makers and educationist to understand the issues of the female scholars that study in abroad and they should develop policies accordingly. the study concluded that academics boost up their educational and research skills through internationalization of education. Despite facing numerous issues, the academic mobility the academics remained focused in learning new ideas and tools.

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