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STIGMATIZATION OF FLEXIBLE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS: A GENDERED PERSPECTIVE OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Abstract

The present paper analyzes the gender and flexible working arrangements in the context of Higher Education Institutions in Pakistan. The research focuses on whether gender and flexible work arrangements are considered a stigma or not. In the ever evolving workplace; flexible workplaces are becoming the norm. Male workers not only in Europe but also in Asia are now demanding flexible working hours. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted from the academic staff of both public and private universities that explored the research questions. The results showed that a clear demarcation exists in the public and private sector when it comes to the utilization of flexible working arrangements. People feel hesitant to ask for the said flexibility which reveals the stigma around flexible working. The gendered analysis of flexible working arrangements has showed that these practices are gendered in nature. The higher education sector shows the gendering of flexible working arrangements. The culture of flexible working arrangements is still emerging in Pakistan and absence of formal policies and lack of awareness is an issue regarding its implementation. The gender balanced approach is needed to bridge the gap between the working hours of men and women. This will de-stigmatize the flexible working and will bridge the gender gap. The awareness pertaining to flexible working practices is required and employees should be educated about the formal flexible working policies which should be gender neutral. This will result in the increased productivity and satisfaction level of employees.

Keywords: Gender, Flexible working arrangements, Higher Education Institutions, Stigma

Introduction

Organizations today are competing in a complex business environment where they have to manage wild rivalry for skilled labor/human resource and additionally for their share of the overall industry. This competition requires the organizations to consider the diversity regarding worker's needs, work-life adjusts and values, the social and cultural impact of the territory where the organization works and the diverse nature of relationships so as to attain and retain the employees (Mungania, 2016).

Flexible work arrangements refers to the features that are added to full-time position where certain working hours are relied upon to be taken at a set schedule while others are flexible hours (Nadleret al., 2010). The broad research by researchers on flexibility demonstrates that there are different sorts of flexible working plans and the most generally utilized by employers are: Flex-time, compressed work-week, telecommuting, work sharing and decreased working hours to meet the testing condition and to determine the contention between employees work and individual life (Pierce & Newstrom, 1983; Kodz, Harper, & Dench, 2002; Torrington, Hall, & Taylor, 2005).

The flexibility paradigm has been raised a lot recently, especially with more and more millennial generation making a push toward working remotely. Studies have found that letting people work from home actually does improve productivity and asserts that allowing more flexibility could play a part in bridging the gender pay gap (Evans, 2017). Despite of being reinforcement of the importance of the practice, employees of both genders feel hesitant to avail them or even ask about them (Likki, 2017).

Till date empirical field research has been conflicting, concerning the viability of work schedule flexibility anticipates the organizational outcome. One clarification of these conflicting discoveries is because of the variety in work schedule flexibility programs, combined with propensities to look at work schedule flexibility programs as a general homogeneous build. The organizations usually offer work flexibility informally; however no formal organizational strategy is present for this purpose (Avery & Zabel, 2001).

The literature highlights the gaps and the gendered nature of flexible employment. Women are more often the one who use flexible working arrangements. With the changing nature of workplaces, the men not only in Europe but in Asia are now demanding flexible working hours. According to the Asia Gender Diversity Report (2017), more men than women ranked flexible working hours as important. While many companies in Asia offer flexible working hours for mothers to take care of young children, they may need to expand the scope of their policies after a study found that men across the region also wanted similar treatment. Men in China are the most in favor of flexible working option to allow them to take care of their families (Yiu, 2017). The current statistics showed that, in past it was women who try to juggle child care and work and demand flex-time. But a report in UK found that men in UK would like to have more options for flexible working. It was found that full time workers of both genders want flexibility to reduce commute time, increase study time and to assist child care (Russon, 2017).

With the changing socio-economic dimensions and fast pace environment, the education sector has also changed and teaching is now considered as a full time and a tough profession (Winefield et al., 2003). A usual perception about university teaching exists that it allows freedom in work, flexible working arrangements and less workload (Khan, Khan, & Naz, 2016). According to Paul Jump (2013), flexibility in higher education is often stereotyped. This raises the questions about

whether flexibility is regarded as a discourse or reality in higher education institutions. An academic's brain probably never switches off from work entirely. In some cases the lecturer is expected to work the time needed to perform the role, and most often the working hours are not discussed in the contract. Academia could be an easy environment in which flexible working hours can be availed. The time has come for flexible working arrangements in the academia (Highwood, 2013).

The absence of formal policies is also an issue. Formal policies should facilitate both personal and professional responsibilities (“Strategies for effecting gender equity and institutional change”, n.d.). Policies offering flexible working arrangements are especially important for attracting and supporting female faculty. Academic staff appears to have limited ability to access flexible work arrangements due to their increasing workload, and were significantly less satisfied with their current work-life balance than their general staff colleagues. However the benefits of flexible working arrangements and the gender equity have been widely accepted for both the employees and the organizations; however the studies and findings are sparse in the higher education sector (Paull, Omari, & Sharafizad, 2009).

Objectives

The research focused on the gendered analysis of flexible working arrangements to explore

- Flexible working arrangements and the working environment in the Higher Education Institutions.
- Whether flexible working is being feminized especially in the case of Higher Education Institutions
- General stigma around flexible working arrangements

Literature Review

Flexible working arrangements and Organizations

Flexible working hours are being adopted by the organizations around the world but most commonly in informal manner. Flexible working hours can be formal and informal. Employees, who are working flexibly, however have not utilized the formal strategy techniques to concur such plans. Studies have shown that both formal and occasional use of flexibility are positively associated with perceived flexibility, employee engagement, and expected retention. These analyses provide evidence that workplace flexibility may enhance employee engagement, which may in turn lead to longer job tenure. Workers who have more access to flexible work arrangements report greater job satisfaction and are more likely to be committed to their employers and therefore stay at their current company (Casey & Chase, 2004).

According to Powell and Mainiero (1999) it is recognized that the attitude of the organizational head is significant in influencing company practice. Similarly, in the implementation of FWAs the role of managers is vital. Nevertheless, it has been argued that just as managers can facilitate FWAs, so too can they impede it (Yeandle et al., 2003, as cited by Maxwell, Rankiner, Bell, & MacVicar, 2007). Watkins (1995) sets out defensive reasoning patterns that managers may use to resist the operationalization of flexible working.

Flexible Working Arrangements and Employees

In the context of work flexibility, control is generally portrayed as a management concern, for instance, in terms of controlling employees working at home or flexible working hours. The concept of control can also be viewed from the perspective of the employees. The concept of control enabled us to explain the reaction to and impact of different forms of work flexibility,

particularly the difference between formal and informal work flexibility. The work of flexible literature contends that expanded control on the perception of employees about their working hour and its impact on the organizational performance is a key factor in advancing the positive results (Hall & Atkinson, 2006).

It is questioned in the literature sometimes, that whether the FWAs are there to give autonomy to employees or it is another method to have control over employees by the management. While the rhetoric of empowerment is about moving control from manager to employee the result is that the acceptance of such control puts a pressure on the employee to put in more effort which it could be argued is management control by the “back door”. Galinsky et al. (2004) reported that 80 percent of employees want more flexibility in work hours, but these same employees are also concerned with negative consequences associated with the use of flexible schedules. Employees’ often fear consequences for using work schedule flexibility (Bond et al., 2002; Avery and Zabel, 2001). Reported negative consequences include slower promotions, smaller bonuses, and less career-advancing opportunities. Reluctance at the managerial level to promote flextime programs is due in part to unsupported concerns over loss of productivity (Roberts et al., 2004). These issues are enhanced by difficulties employees’ face getting reliable and consistent information about existing work schedule flexibility programs (Bond et al., 2002)

According to social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), employees are continually participating in a give-and take relationship with their employer whereby one party gives socio-emotional resources that are desired by the other in exchange for others that they desire. This exchange relationship is maintained through principles of mutual reciprocity/gains, that is, if you scratch my back, I will scratch yours, and of trust and respect. Flexible work arrangements are organizational resources that allow employees to adapt how and when they work, and as such are

desirable to the individual as they enable them to manage their work and non-work lives (Lambert et al., 2008). When the employee holds positive perceptions of these arrangements, they will feel that the organization cares about their needs, which signifies to the employee that they are participating in a social exchange relationship (Bauregard and Henry, 2009).

Gender, Flexible Working Arrangements and Education Sector

With the changing work-world dynamics, women are participating more in the society, after getting specialized higher education and training (Booth & Ours, 2010). Since women take on more childcare work, one might expect mother's to make more use of FWAs than fathers. Indeed, women are much more likely to work part-time but otherwise gender difference in use of or access to flexible working practices are small. Earlier studies show that women taking time off from work are less likely to excel in the senior positions whereas FWAs were considered a common practice for women and not for men. The men who ask for work flexibility are viewed by their bosses differently as compared to women and they usually fear that they will not excel in their position if they avail it (Khadem, 2016).

The occupational segregation also exists that acts as a barrier for availing flexible working arrangements and stigmatizing the occupation on gender basis (Fact sheet: Working time, Gender equality and reconciling work and family life, 2010).

The European Working Conditions survey, (2010), found that the working hours currently worked by many women and men are not in line with their working time preferences; for men the preference is to work shorter hours, while a larger share of those who would like to work more hours are women. There is a dichotomy that has to be addressed regarding the male long-hours, female short-hours working time culture. "Opinion on flexible and part-timeworking arrangements and gender dimensions in the labor market" (2010) contends that the flexible

working arrangements and quality of part-time jobs are an important factor in determining this gap.

The literature highlights the gaps and the gendered nature of flexible employment. Women more often are constrained in their use of FWAs. With the changing nature of workplaces, the men not only in Europe but in Asia are now demanding flexible working hours. According to the Asia Gender Diversity Report (2017), more men than women ranked flexible working hours as important. While many companies in Asia offer flexible working hours for mothers to take care of young children, they may need to expand the scope of their policies after a study found that men across the region also wanted similar treatment. Men in China are the most in favor of flexible working option to allow them to take care of their families (Yiu, 2017). The current statistics showed that, in past it was women who try to juggle child care and work and demand flex-time. But a report in UK found that men in UK would like to have more options for flexible working. It was found that full time workers of both genders want flexibility to reduce commute time, to pursue higher education or to assist child care (Russon, 2017).

According to Paul Jump (2013), flexibility in higher education is often stereotyped. This raises the questions about whether flexibility is regarded as a discourse or reality in higher education institutions. “Strategies for effecting gender equity and institutional change” (n.d.) describes that the absence of formal policies is also an issue. Formal policies should facilitate both personal and professional responsibilities. Policies offering flexible working arrangements are especially important for attracting and supporting female faculty. Academic staff appears to have limited ability to access flexible work arrangements due to their increasing workload, and were significantly less satisfied with their current work-life balance than their general staff colleagues. However the benefits of flexible working arrangements and the gender equity have been widely

accepted for both the employees and the organizations; however the studies and findings are sparse in the higher education sector (Paull, Omari, & Sharafizad, 2009).

The findings of a research conducted by Lewis and Humbert (2010), the main form of FWAs used in organizations tend to support mothers, but at a cost because of gendered assumptions.

Despite of the commitment to flexibility and work-life balance, the gendered construction of the ideal workers and ideas of competence conflicts with each other.

There is no doubt that gender relations impact women's choices of paid work in Pakistan. The segregation of spaces and sexual division of work has an impact on the mobility of female labor. Women's lack of mobility is often related to their domestic responsibilities or proper travelling arrangements (Ibid). Moreover, to venture out for employment women have to seek permission from the head of the household, particularly their father, brother or husband (Isran and Isran, 2012; Syed, 2008).

The analysis of the distribution of public and private sector teachers indicates that the number of female teachers has increased significantly in the private sector compared to public sector schools. Forty-seven percent of the total teaching work force is employed in the private sector where the number of female teachers is almost twice the number of male teachers (UNESCO, 2013). The private sector is feminized to a greater extent than the public sector in Pakistan.

Apart from the gender, the access to flexible working arrangements is not formally addressed in the workplaces. Similarly in Pakistan, the existence of formal policies on FWAs in higher education institutions can enhance the institutions attractiveness to potential faculty.

However the benefits of flexible working arrangements and the gender equity have been widely accepted for both the employees and the organizations; however the studies and findings are sparse in the higher education sector (Paull, Omari, & Sharafizad, 2009).

Research Questions

The study focused to address the following research questions in the context of Pakistan

1. Why people are hesitant to use Flexible working arrangements?
2. Are male and female employees given the same considerations regarding FWAs by employers?
3. Does a culture exist to support flexible working arrangements in the context of higher education institutions of Pakistan?
4. Whether there is a stigma associated with FWAs?

Methodology

The sampling technique used for the study is non-probability sampling as the approach used for conducting the study is qualitative. Purposive sampling is used as the population of the study is the academic sector including both public and private sector universities in Lahore and the sampling frame consists of the academic staff working in these universities. By following critical case sampling, one prominent Public Sector University and one prominent Private Sector University were selected. From these two universities, five most prominent faculties were selected and from each 2 departments were selected for the interviews. 4 interviews were conducted from each faculty and this makes up a total of 40 interviews. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviewing technique was used in order to get reliable and comparable qualitative data. An interview guide was prepared for this purpose which had an informal grouping of topics and questions to be asked. Prior to the preparation of interview guide the university calendars of the respective universities in the study were visited

and it was found that in both public and private sector, the term flexible working arrangements was not addressed directly. The approach used for the analysis is thematic analysis, which is a flexible approach to provide a rich and detailed account of the data collected (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The data for the purpose of analysis was collected through face-to-face and semi-structured interviews which were transcribed in order to generate codes and themes to get the data reduced succinctly in order to get the pertinent information regarding the research questions of the study.

Findings

The Thematic Analysis of interview transcripts identifies these three broad themes:

1. Flexible working arrangements: from the lens of Profession
2. Flexible working arrangements: from the lens of Gender
3. Flexible working arrangements: from the lens of Culture

Flexible working arrangements: from the lens of Profession

Flexible working arrangements and teaching profession

This is the theme that emerged under the flexible working arrangement: from the lens of occupation. It has the sub themes named as workload and flexibility and inhibitions around flexible working arrangements.

1- Workload and flexible

The respondents were asked about their workload and the amount of flexibility they avail to probe into the flexible working practice being utilized by them. Usually a perception exists that teaching profession have the most flexibility in terms of working hours.

The responses were mixed but mostly people in the private sector stated that they are not allowed the flexibility of even an hour and their workload is a lot. On the other hand, people in public sector stated that they avail flexibility and have autonomy in deciding how to manage their workload and flexibility.

The interviews showed that the **teacher's workload** has increased during the last 30 years.

Technology and the internet have changed the job description a lot. Teachers are encouraged to use technology in teaching which requires constant practicing and participating in training courses, especially among the older teachers.

As one of the respondent from **private sector** mentioned on being asked about their flexibility in working hours that, *“No I, don't choose my working hours. We have to follow the timing orders. Moreover, the workload of a teacher is a lot. We often take our work home and our minds are working 24/7. It is a full time job.”* (R14, F)

The people working in **public sector** defined their work to be quite flexible. Although teachers have lessons which must begin and end at certain times but for the rest, they can decide when, where and how they work. One of the respondent from the public sector stated that, *“Yes think it's quite flexible as I can decide my time slot from 8-2, 9-3 or 10-4.”* (R20, M)

Therefore, it appeared that flexibility is perceived as a positive thing by both sectors but public sector teachers avails it most often. However, some people mentioned lack of flexibility in their working hours but overall people feel that flexibility gives them autonomy to do things the way they want.

2- Inhibitions around flexible working arrangements

Although flexible working arrangements are valued by all but people are often hesitant to avail it. The interviewees were asked about the likely reasons that why hesitation exists. The opinions were varied. Some people shared positive views about flexible working and stated that there should be no shame and fear in availing the right thing. Some were of the views that the lack of awareness and the employer behavior bars the utilization of flexible working. The patterns reflected that even if

Hesitation towards FWAs

The concern for **bad image** and the **fear of being in bad books** is also a reason identified by the interviewees. This response explains the identified pattern. *“Yes, it is true. There is a fear and inconvenience. You are also concerned about your job and your repute as an employee so that can be the reason. I myself was hesitant to ask for it.”* (R29, F)

Another respondent said, *“The misconception about this exists. Regardless of the existence of flexi-hours the people who avail it are seen with suspicion about their work although they complete their work. That is why people feel hesitant.”* (R20, M)

The stigma around flexible working arrangement is identified in terms of **fear of management** and **job security** as well by the interviewees.

“They are hesitant in that manner, that they are scared of the management. This is what I feel. They think that, what would happen if they ask for it, what would be the reaction of the management, how they will perceive them? They might not come in bad books. That is the thing that is restraining most of the people from availing flexible working. They are scared of the people sitting at the high level.” (R22, F)

Lack of awareness

Some of the respondents identified the lack of awareness as one of the factor for not availing flexible working.

As one of the respondents said that, *“I think they are not aware of flexible working hours.”* (R24, M)

Another respondent said, *“A misconception does exist on this thing. But I think flexibility improves your efficiency.”*(R9, F)

Generally people were hesitant because they were scared of the management and they are concerned about their image and job. Some of the interviewees were of the view that one should not be hesitant to avail the right thing.

Flexible working arrangements: from the lens of gender

Gender-Flexible Working Arrangement Nexus

This theme includes the examination of gendered nature of the flexible working arrangements by identifying patterns that emerged from the interviewee responses regarding the concerned questions. It explores issues such as the sexual division of labor and gendering of flexi-working on based on the gender.

Gender and flexible working arrangements

This sub-theme looks into the patterns identified from the interview data pertaining to gender and flexible working arrangement. The interviewees were asked about the consideration given to males and females regarding flexible. The demand for employee-oriented and individualized working practices those permit temporal and spatial flexibility in work processes and help to fit

changing personal needs and environmental conditions is constantly increasing. However, the gendered nature of flexible working seemed to be quite reflecting in the interview data.

The answers of the teachers showed significant variation and majority were of the view that females are given the privilege for flexi-hours than males. Some negated the view as well. The patterns that emerged from the interviewees response includes, women's card, gender biases, difference in treatment, presence of female factor etc.

Gender Biasness

One of the respondents shared the opinion, *“In this institution, I think women are given more consideration for flexibility. For example: We had few colleagues who were expecting, they were avail extra holidays as well, on other hand generally females are given more preference for flexibility as compared to males. This is my opinion. Females are given an edge. But I think males are suffering more, in a sense that they have more responsibilities on their shoulder, and sometimes they cannot show it, but females can show their emotions and men cannot. So I think males should be offered more flexibility, so that they can look after their family in a better way.”*(R1, M)

Another respondent said, *“They should be given same consideration. But I think it depends on the head of the department. For example; if the head of the department is male, then he will show some male chauvinism, whereas if the head of the department is female, then things will be different, she will give more consideration to her peers.”* (R7, F)

The variation in the consideration given as identified by respondents depends upon the head of the department as well, the **gender of the leader**.

This can be validated by this statement by one of the respondents, *“I think it is controversial (Laughs). I think females are given more consideration by employers on flexibility. It also depends on your boss and the gender of the boss. If he is male then his treatment will be different.”* (R3, M)

The answers were generic in nature, but some respondents also mentioned the fair treatment as well. One of the respondents said, *“Yes. In my institute or department, I will say yes the consideration is same and equal treatment exists. Generally, it is not.”* (R15, F)

The mixed views were also shared by the respondent who earlier accepted the equality in treatment but upon probing their answers showed variation. One of the respondent said, *“In general, as per my observation, No, they are not given same consideration. But in my personal case yes, my HOD treats everyone equally. Maybe, because I am the female working in the department. That is why. On other hand, I think males are given more preference than females, I don’t know why. But males who are usually availing it didn’t accept it. I think it is the part of their nature.”* (R11, F)

The interview data offered insights into prevailing gender norms in Pakistan and their manifestation in gendered roles within the household. Women and men referred to teaching as offering employment that is aligned with societal expectations of women and conserved the propriety of the household. Working hours in the profession were thought to accommodate women’s ‘homemaker’ role

Flexible working arrangements: from the lens of Culture

Existence of Culture and Formal Policies

This is the theme that emerged under flexible working arrangements: from the lens of culture.

This theme looks into the indentified patterns from the interview data that sheds light on the exiting culture and formal policies of flexible working arrangements in Pakistan.

1. Existence of Culture

This sub-theme looks into the cultural existence of flexible working arrangements in Pakistan as indentified by the interviewees. The interviews identified patterns like absence of culture, need for promotion of flexible working, demarcation in public and private sector and its existence in few places.

Absence of Culture

Majority of the interviewees identified the absence of culture regarding flexible working arrangements.

The identified pattern can be signified by the statement of the interviewees.

One of the respondent said, *“No, there is no culture of flexible working in Pakistan. A culture has to be evolved, because we are forced to do certain things which we are not supposed to do.”*

(R1, M)

The respondent shared the opinions like to compensate the shortage of staff they have to work more; the concept of overtime was highlighted by the interviewee and the absence of flexibility was mentioned by them.

Promotion of flexible working

Some agreed on the fact that there is the absence of culture but they also urged on the fact that there is a need to evolve this culture for increase in work productivity and output.

This can be signified by the statements from the interview data.

One of the respondent said, *“I don’t think so it exists. But it should exist because I myself believe that time flexibility should be there so can one can plan a schedule accordingly to improve the working output. Because if you have fixed hours and that time doesn’t suit you so it affects your work productivity, you stay in stress and you don’t feel like working. Because certain time we are just sitting free and chatting and have no work to do but still we need to complete our working hours by sitting in the university.”* (R11, F)

In the words of another interviewee, *“I don’t think so. But it should exist for better productivity and employee engagement.”* (R12, M)

The people were of view that rather than sitting idle they should be given the flexibility to work.

On other hand some interviewees said that now the **culture has start evolving**. This can be signified by the statement of the interviewees. One of the respondent said, *“It is evolving. The culture is being developed. For example: ICAP women committee is also working on flexi policy. But if we go 5-8 years back the culture was not there.”*(R23, F)

This sub-theme looks into the cultural existence of flexible working arrangements in Pakistan as indentified by the interviewees. The interviews identified patterns like absence of culture, need for promotion of flexible working, demarcation in public and private sector and its existence in few places.

2- Formal Policies

Mixed patterns appeared under this sub-theme pertaining to the existence of formal policies on flexible working arrangements. Some of the interviewees mentioned the policies existence, majority appeared to be unaware about the written policies and the informal existence was identified by them.

Absence of formal policies

This pattern can be validated by the statements of the interviewees. Some said they are unaware of any policy

One of the interviewees said, *“I am not aware of such policy. I don’t think that it exists because we are directed to follow timings as per order.”* (R5, M)

On agreeing the absence of formal policies, interviewees urged the existence of such policies as well.

One of the respondents said, *“No. But I think flexibility should be given to employees, in case if you are given employees a fixed numbers of hours, so a flexibility of one hour should be given to them.”* (R15, F)

The absence of such policies leads to availing it informally. One of the respondents said, *“No there are no formal policies. There should be formal policies. People avail it informally here.”* (R10, M)

Existence of policy

People in public sector identified the existence of policy. One of the respondents mentioned, *“Yes. We have a written policy in our HR department related to availing flexible working hours.”* (R22, F)

Another respondent said, *“Yes, It exists. You can request the department to alter your time table or you can request HR as well, but again the hesitation point comes in action”* (R25, M)

Some viewed the leverage being given for the pursuing higher studies as flexibility a well. One of the respondent said, “*Teachers who are pursuing higher studies are being given the leverage as per the university policies. So Yes, I think it exists.*” (R33, M)

Interviewees identified that the formal policies exists in the public sector and the absence of formal policies was identified in private sector and in some departments regardless of the existing policies people are availing it informally as they are unaware of the policies.

Interviewees also identified a solution to flexi-policies that if they are implemented with proper check and balance mechanism it can be fruitful.

Discussion

After analyzing in-depth, semi-structured interviews it is revealed that flexible working arrangements is an emerging concept in Pakistan. As far as the presence of flexible working arrangements in higher education institutions is concerned, the results revealed that public sector employees have the option of flex-time available, whereas in the private sector people are demanding it. There is a clear demarcation in public and private sector when it comes to the existence of flexible working arrangements. The literature showed that institutions plays an important role in shaping the views of individual about the flexible working practices and these views are shaped by the organizational culture and practices (Tomlinson, Baird, Berg, & Cooper, 2018). The findings showed the existence of culture and presence of formal policies in public sector institutions, but generally it reveals that the concept is still an emerging one and requires awareness and proper mechanism in order to implement it. Despite of its existence in some places, people feel hesitant to avail it as they fear the management and perceive that it might hamper their career progression. The absence of formal polices and the absence of flexible

working arrangements in private sector can be linked to the literature that shows the academic staff appears to have limited ability to access flexible work arrangements due to their increasing workload, and were significantly less satisfied with their current work-life balance than their general staff colleagues. However the benefits of flexible working arrangements and the gender equity have been widely accepted for both the employees and the organizations; however the studies and findings are sparse in the higher education sector (Paull, Omari, & Sharafizad, 2009).

As far as the perception of people working in the Higher education sector is concerned, the findings showed that people are in the favor of flexible working and yet again the lack of awareness and informal existence of flexible working is what makes its existence shady in terms of the formal existence.

This also reveals the lack of awareness and the evolving HR culture in Pakistan. The scope of HR seems to be restricted only to recruitment and selection, remuneration and resolving conflicts. The lack of understanding and limitation of the scope of HR policies leads to the informal utilization of flexibility by employees. There is a dire need to widen the scope of HR in Pakistan in order to evolve a positive culture nurturing flexible working along with other important HR aspects.

The stigma around the usage of flexible working appeared to be true in the case of Pakistan. The stigma persists in generic terms as well as with reference to culture and gender. The patterns emerged in the analysis revealed that generally stigma around flexible working arrangements exists in terms of the fear of management and people are afraid of being judged by their employees and they feel that availing it can cost them their job or promotion. The interview data revealed that even when flexible work arrangements are available, employees may not feel free

to use them. If employees find policies to be usable, they are associated positively with perceived productivity for all employees, male and female. Even the presence of formal or informal work-family policies is significantly associated with higher productivity, although this relationship is stronger where they are perceived as usable (Eaton, 2003). It can be said that flexible working policies should be perceived usable in order to increase the productivity levels for all employees and for that a culture needs to be cultivated.

As far as looking flexible working arrangements from the lens of gender is concerned, the findings highlighted the gendered nature of flexible working arrangements and the profession itself. The results show that females are given more preference for availing flexible working arrangements than males and the teaching profession does provide work-life balance for females, leading to the establishment of male and female differences. This can be linked to the evidences in the literature that shows in Pakistan home-based women workers spent almost six hours working outside the home and another six to seven hours on their domestic responsibilities. The analysis indicates that household work and childcare remained women's responsibility. It can be asserted from the data that if a household had both working women and non-working women who were not participating in the labor market, then the domestic work is delegated mainly among the latter. The males who are availing the flexibility did not share the domestic responsibility with the females. The Acker and Britton's idea of gendered organizations seems to be quite relevant here. Gendering of the organization is embedded in our system that results in the gendering of flexible working arrangements. However, organizations portrays 'job' as gender-neutral but the concept of job itself is implicitly gendered. Male workers life center on the full time job whereas a woman is responsible for taking care of his home and children (Britton, 2000). Therefore, it does not matter whether women participate in the labor market; the

domestic responsibility remains with women, employment doubles their work burden and does not alter the role of men in the household (Kazi, 1999; Siddiqui, Hamid and Siddiqui, 2006; Khan, 2007).

The results revealed that males were likely to ask for flexibility as females but flexibility is something that is perceived as a female's thing. The findings showed that women are stigmatized against flexible working arrangements and because of which women hesitate in asking for the said flexibility. Another thing even though we know the ground reality and we feel that women still persist in saying that they enjoy flexibility and that the employers give them this relaxation this again can be seen as socialization being performed. The employers brainwashing women into believing that they are being provided flexibility at the expense of male workers.

To see the other side of the coin, the findings also revealed an interesting result that shows that an unconscious biasness exists in males who strongly associates work life balance and flexible working arrangements with women. The prevailing, long-held societal norms of breadwinners and caregivers remain a barrier to change. As the in-depth analysis of the study data reveals that males are often the one who are availing flexibility but did not accept it and considers flexibility and work-life balance as female's thing. The solution to bring equality in terms of availing flexibility is to come from men, who must adjust their attitudes if they want more balance in reality. As by Laura (2017), if men wants to have flexibility as gender neutral and stigma free, they have to overcome the assumptions that their part-time or flexible work request won't be accepted or that the arrangement won't be successful for their particular role or the fact that if they do avail it, it would imply that they are not serious about their work which would result in no promotion. HR can demonstrate that work options other than full-time are genuinely open to both genders by encouraging men in senior positions to work part-time or flexibly without

negating its utilization. The perception of stigmatizing flexible working as a female's things can be de-stigmatized by males themselves. The literature shows that despite of the commitment to flexibility, the gendered construction of ideal workers and ideas of competence conflict with each other.

Another thing is that it is perceived flexibility is also something that is for females. The identities and socialization of the gender (both male and female) are based on the culture they live in. The social structure gives identities to both genders that focus on the nature of person's identities (who they are) and the relationship between the person's identities and their behavior within the context of the social structure within which the identities are embedded. These identities lead to controlling the perception of the people working in the society about what is standard and what is not. In the same way, males and females roles are defined as breadwinner and caregiver, respectively. Considering this fact, the gendering of flexible working arrangements can be understood, and it can be safely assumed that societal norms and cultural influences shape the perception of the people about each and everything and that is reflected in flexibility as well.

The gendering of disciplines is quite evident from the data. The hard sciences appeared to have more males as compared to other disciplines that indicate the gendering of disciplines as well and the existences of stereotypes against the women for choosing the profession and career. As the literature shows that individuals make choices of qualification and have preferences for their careers and family but these 'choices' and 'preferences' are not independent. They bear discrimination emerging from cultural and structural influences (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011; Stier and Yaish, 2014). Bradley (1996) critiqued preference theory by arguing that women's orientations

towards work and family are fluid and subject to change with changing circumstances in their life-cycle and working patterns.

To sum up the gender flexibility nexus in the findings of a research conducted by Lewis and Humbert (2010), the main form of FWAs used in organizations are tend to support mothers, but at a cost because of gendered assumptions. Despite of the commitment to flexibility and work-life balance, the gendered construction of the ideal workers and ideas of competence conflicts with each other. If the national culture of Pakistan is viewed in the context of Hofstede's cultural dimensions, the fourth dimension, masculinity versus femininity, is quite relevant in our society. This dimension is related to the choice of social sex roles and its effects on people's self-concepts (Manrai & Manrai, 2011). Similarly, if this concept is applied in the organizations, it reveals that usage of flexible working arrangements is gendered on the basis of the existence of defined roles and responsibilities of genders as constructed by the society.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study shows that Flexible working arrangements is a growing concept in Pakistan; however its existence is limited in private sector as compared to public sector where people are demanding it. From the Gender point of view, the flexible working arrangements is gendered in nature and the higher education sector shows the gendering of not only flexible working arrangements but of the teaching profession as well. The gender segregation and the gendered views of flexible working are reported to be similar in both public and private sector institution and is subjected to various elements such as the context of sector where one works, the societal norms, and the culture. The absence of formal policies and lack of awareness about flexible working arrangements is something that is acting as a hindrance in its implementation.

The public sector academic institution has somehow addressed the flexibility indirectly but the private sector does not. Since, a loop hole in these policies manuals that result in the informal utilization of this practice. From a societal standpoint, extending flexible work arrangements to men will be critical in ensuring that essential responsibilities around caring and homemaking are fulfilled and that women may truly see gender equality in the workplace. If men will be allowed formally to work flexibly it can lead to greater gender diversity throughout the ranks of the organization and allow all individuals to work to their full potential. From an individual standpoint, extending the availability of flexible work arrangements to men is important to the wellbeing of those who are less comfortable with traditional gender roles, just as many women are. There is a need to break the ice regarding flexibility and stigmatizing it with respect to gender. Things can work towards betterment if initiatives will be taken by the people themselves.

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