

## ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted to explore the characteristics of successful professional women and the accompanying environmental factors that make them successful in their careers. The study was conducted in three phases. In the first phase perceptions of 200 post graduate students from G.C. University Lahore, were obtained regarding characteristics of successful professional women and the supportive environmental factors. Multi Dimensional Scaling and Hierarchical Cluster analysis of the data revealed some important similarities and differences in the perception of boys and girls. Boys appeared more inclined toward stereotypic thinking about characteristics of successful professional women whereas girls seemed focusing more on environmental conditions as important. To discover the the characteistics and environmental factors further, a focus group with six female PhD scholars was conducted. The analysis of focus group transcript pointed to various experiences of successful professional women as important factor shaping their characteristics and behaviors. In the last phase, semi-structured interviews with eight successful professional women from various universities were conducted. The qualitative analysis, using interpretative phenomenological analysis, revealed two important dimensions of characteristics of successful professional women. These dimensions are internal experiences such as internal motivation for individuation and superficial acquiescence to dominant power structures. The second dimension, outward manifestations of internal experiences includes use of diplomatic strategies and stretching the effort levels. Father's role was found to be an important determinant of personality of successful professional women. Besides, male dominating social structures and rigidity of attitudes and beliefs in society also turned out to be important factors, affecting women's career advancement and process of self-realization.