A STUDY ON PERCEIVED GENDER DISCRIMINATION, JOB STRESS AND TURNOVER INTENTION IN SERVICE SECTOR OF PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

The study explores Pakistani working women's perceptions on gender discrimination and identifies a knowledge gap about how women are treated unfairly in positions of power. The study also focuses on the relationship of gender discrimination with job stress and how the productivity of the firms is reduced which results in employee intention to quit the organization. It further investigates the mediating role of job stress between gender discrimination and employee turnover intention. A total of 268 questionnaires were used. Based on quantitative research approach, the data analysis was done by using IBM SPSS Statistics 22 and Smart PLS software version 3.0. Bootstrapping was used on the statistical data, which showed a mediating effect between gender discrimination, employee turnover intention and job stress. The software was used to assess convergent validity, discriminant validity, cross loading and hypotheses. The results interestingly highlights that all 3 hypotheses were significantly correlated at 1% significant level. In addition, results indicated that gender discrimination had a significant influence on employee turnover intention. Companies can lessen gender prejudice by giving female employees equal opportunity. The findings of this study clearly show that prejudice is widespread and is evident in two service sector businesses. Therefore, implementing anti-discriminatory rules was strongly advised in order to enhance the organizational legal foundation.

INTRODUCTION

The largest group of workers in South Asia who experienced gender discrimination in terms of equitable employment opportunities and wage discrepancies were women. Perceived gender discrimination is defined as unequal treatment based on gender, particularly toward women and girls. (Klasen, 1994). Generations of Pakistani women have experienced discrimination and harassment in South Asia. Despite numerous changes to Pakistan's constitution, the nation has failed to advance the economic and political rights meant for women. Gender discrimination in South Asian nations is a well-documented reality (Delavande & Zafar, 2013).

This study concentrated on the gender discrimination that exists in Pakistani workplaces and occupational opportunities. It will also identify variables like job stress and turnover intention and show on how they can have a significantly negative impact on both employees and organizations from a financial and emotional standpoint. Unfortunately, in terms of Pakistan's working environment, the human resource department function in most organizations had remained restricted to transactional issues like hiring and firing, salaries, promotions, and so on, but not those pertaining development and motivation of employees in particular to gender. Many countries in the subcontinent have given the right to a safe environment free from discrimination and job stress, and it is the duty of HRM to find such issues. In addition, according to the Human Development Index (HDI) report released by the United Nations Development Program in 2018, Pakistan is rated as having "medium human development," placing 150th out of 188 countries, necessitating major attention on income, gender, health, and education. Other South Asian countries like India, Bangladesh and Nepal have overtaken Pakistan ranked at 130, 136 and 149 positions respectively (UNDP, 2018) Therefore, the biggest obstacles

to human development continue to be gender inequity, gender gaps, and women's empowerment, particularly for Pakistani working women. The gender inequality that persists in organizations will be the main topic of this study. As the greatest contributor to Pakistan's GDP, the services sector now accounts for the majority of the nation's economic activity, increasing from 39% of GDP in 1960–61 to 53.3% of GDP in 2009–10 (Ahmed and Ahsan, 2011).

As previous studies investigated, the services sector in Pakistan produces the largest portion of the nation's economic activity. Its share of GDP climbed from 39% in 1960–61 to 53.3% in 2009–10, making it the largest contributor to the GDP of the nation (Ahmed and Ahsan, 2011). According to the most recent statistics, 82% of police employees in Pakistan's Punjab province were looking for new jobs, while 87% of those who were already there were not fully committed to their jobs. This high turnover rate was not only related to how well the police department was performing overall, but also to other factors like the environment, which was extremely stressful. (Islam et al., 2018).

Table 1 Classifications of Pakistani Services Sectors

Major Sectors	Sub Sectors
Distributive Services	Airline industry
Producer Services	Commercial Banks

Source: Annual Report of State Bank of Pakistan (Various Issues).

Services sector industry in Pakistan is highly diversified. This study focused area mainly consists of distributive and producer services (one organization from each) as per Table 1. According to the report published by Asian Development Bank (2008) significant jobs were created in these sectors due to the higher diversification of the economy in recent years. Furthermore, these two services have been the projecting contributor in development of occupations in the country specifically for female workers. However,

in terms of perceived gender difference, the concentration of male workers was higher both in the rural and urban areas and if the employ trend of the service sector remains unchecked on account of gender discrimination the difference maybe expected to exceed (ILO, 2015).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Liberal feminist theory is one of the earliest theories to describe how people perceive gender discrimination and the value of money. This idea holds that equal rights and opportunities for both genders will only prevent gender discrimination if both genders were treated similarly (Lorber, 2005). Discrimination can be defined as prejudice based on age, race or sex, involving treatment of people differently on the basis of their properties, for instance, sex and race, in an ethically objectionable way (Lippert-Rasmussen, 2006). Discrimination can be defined as "the provision of the one-sided gains earned by people of different attributes despite having the same education and merit". According to researchers (Davidson, C. M., 2022) despite the fact that studies on the employment of women pilots around the world are increasing there were just 4% of female airline pilots in the entire aviation sector when women were empowered, they may play a larger part in the economy, society, and politics, and one way to do this was by working as airline pilots. Previous studies have shown that women in aviation experience discrimination, bias, and prejudice, but females in aviation have managed to remain strong despite this. In view of researchers, women concentrate less in education and career than men because of their responsibility towards family and children where it restricts their advancement to top administrative positions (Powell and Butterflied, 2015).

In Pakistani society, gender discrimination is rife; societal norms and conventional views, corporate culture, and low literacy rates have all contributed to the underrepresented participation of women in the workforce (Qidwai *et al.,* 2008). The issue of perceived gender equality through women's empowerment is a major concern for female employees around the world. Being neighbors, India and Pakistan share the same problems with inequity, male superiority, female inferiority, sex stereotyped roles, and the dominance of men in social and political spheres. Since women are typically the last to eat and the last to obtain medical care, they frequently suffer from malnutrition. According to studies, only 54% of Indian women are literate, compared to 75% of men, and women also receive less education and are subject to unfair and biased traditions. The issues that South Asian working women encounter at the workplace include gender unequal treatment, sexual harassment, economic disparities, and social attitudes that view women as suitable for some vocations but not others (Rahi, 2015).

(Yahaya *et al.,* 2012) suggested that a positive workplace environment can be influenced by a systems approach to establishing a training program that targets the core reasons, involves all employees from all levels, and offers skills for coping with the issue of gender discrimination. (Forbes, 2015) survey shows, up to 8% of all healthcare spending in the USA is attributable to workplace stress. According to studies (Safe work Australia) between the years 2010 -2011 and 2014–2015 approximately 91% of workers' compensation claims involving a mental health condition were associated to job stress. Some of the common reasons causing job stress were characterized as work harassment (27%), work pressure (31%), sexual or racial harassment (2%) and exposure to workplace or occupational violence (14%).

In terms of work life, job stress can be defined as the external factors in the work environment, which may be mental, emotional or physical or social. It is important to study and address job stress in organization because stress badly affects both physical and mental

health of the employee (Rana and Munir, 2011). On the other hand, turnover intention is defined as the degree of likelihood that an employee will leave an organization (Huang *et al.*, 2021), It might also mean employees having the intention to quit the company soon. (Mowday *et al.,* 2013). Employee turnover intention is an important study topic for researchers because it directly concerns job-related attitudes and organizational outcomes. Several studies are linked with the voluntary and involuntary professional interruptions to substantial earning losses (Brand, 2015; Couch and Placzek, 2010; Theunissen *et al*, 2011). United Kingdom estimates losses reported ranging from 14% to 25% were those who suffer mass layoffs. Job stress results from an environment where excessive demands were frequently placed on workers who were underprepared to handle a given circumstance, leading to a poor fit between the employees' abilities and the work environment. When an employee's work life become stressful, it can have a negative impact on the company they work for because employees are more likely to leave when they feel overwhelmed. Organizations should concentrate on methods to lessen workplace stress as a result (Dodanwala, T., 2022). Another study investigated that unpleasant work environment such as discrimination and high job stress predicts turnover intentions as the employee will try to avoid the situations by being late, being absent or quitting the job. Job displacement is a triggering and stressful life event that involves a sequence of experiences from being joblessness, to job search, reemployment, retaining and in between all sexual harassment may be a main scarring event that interrupts "the usual trajectory of steady jobs with career ladders that normally propels wage growth".

H₁: There was a significantly positive relationship between perceived gender discrimination and job stress in female employees

As the study (Iman and Raza, 2014) in Pakistani banking sector reveals that workplace discrimination can be a big reason of stress in

employees that can make organization suffer and as banking sector was considered to be the more stressful sector for the employees as compared to any other sector therefore banks need to curb the gender inequality practices. (Nelson *et al.*, 1990; Nelson and Quick, 1985) investigated that lack of career progression in working women outcomes in producing stress and adversely affect the health of females and decrease satisfaction.

H₂: There was a significantly positive relationship between job stress and turnover intention in female employees.

Employees in the company may have mental health issues; if workplace stress levels rise, this can eventually lead to a decline in employee motivation. Stress prevents workers from working more effectively. Employees' relationships with organizations will be impacted by job stress, and they may be more likely to leave if they do not perform well for the organization's development and prosperity (Iman and Raza, 2019). The degree of stress among employees was raised by mergers, firings, re-organizations, changes in technology, and downsizing in businesses as a result of the ongoing growth of competition. As a result, there is currently a lot of research being done on the subject of stress (Fernando *et al.,* 2010).

H₃: There was a significantly positive relationship between perceived gender discrimination and turnover intention mediated by job stress in female employees

According to a study, there is a real distinction between the pay scales and benefits provided to male and female employees, with the former receiving the worse treatment. Such discrimination can increase employee stress at work and increase the likelihood of turnover, which can result in dissatisfaction with one's professional career (Lowry, Truman *et al.,* 1994). Regression and correlation analysis are used in a study on the Pakistani banking industry to identify potential influences on staff turnover. The findings indicated that finding and

keeping brilliant individuals is the #1 difficulty facing HR managers in the twenty-first century. The main factors creating work stress in female employees include unequal compensation, a lack of career advancement, and abuse at the workplace (Powell & Butterfield, 2015).

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted using a quantitative research methodology, which entails gathering data and converting it into numerical form so that conclusions can be drawn by using statistical techniques. The survey questions consist of close ended items. In order to conduct the data analysis for this study, a total of 268 respondents were used. Age, year of service, and marital status are the main characteristics of the respondents evaluated in this study. All of the respondents were female workers. Procedures used for data analysis contains principal component analysis (PCA) and PLS-SEM Structural model. The framework was formed based on Liberal feminist Theory which focuses on gender discrimination, gendered job markets and inequitable wage scales, which reduces employee turnover. Furthermore, the approaches were illustrated by a framework in Figure 1.

Figure 1 The framework of the study
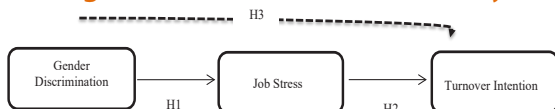
Sources: (Iman, Shah and Raza, 2014; Bano, malik et. Al, 2017; Budri, 2019)

RESULT

Principal component analysis

Principal component analysis (PCA) was performed by entering all measurement variables. The results suggested that one single factor of the un-rotated factor solution is 18.87% of variance explained.

Structural Model Evaluation: First Order Constructs

The assessment of the structural model, the path coefficients were obtained for the structural model of relationships which test the hypothesized relationships among the constructs. The hypotheses of the research models were tested using bootstrapping procedure with 5000 subsamples, which has recommended guidelines from (Chin, 1998; Hair *et al*., 2011). The significance of the path coefficients was based on the t- value. The SmartPLS 3.0 results for the 3-hypothesis shown in below Table 2.

Table 2 Significance Testing Resultsof Structural Model

Path	Beta (β)	Strd.Error	T-Value*	Decision
Perceived-gender discrimination-> Job stress	0.505	0.046	11.04	Accepted
Job Stress -> turnover intention	0.558	0.045	12.44	Accepted
Mediating Effect				
Gender discrimination > Job Stress > turnover intention	0.282	0.039	7.20	Accepted

The results shown above in Table 2 suggested that all 3 hypotheses were accepted. For H_1, the relationship between perceived gender discrimination and job stress was significant with β=-0.505 and t=11.04 at p<0.01 indicating that the perceived gender discrimination has direct influence on job stress of female employees. Similarly, H_2 indicated the relationship between job stress and employee intention to quit the organization with β=0.558 and t=12.44. Furthermore, for H_3 the relationship between perceived gender discrimination and turnover intention mediated the job stress showed a significant relation with β=0.282 and t=7.20 at p<0.05 which indicated that if there was gender

discrimination in the organization employees will have job stress and due to which there will have be a turnover at work place.

CONCLUSION

The above-mentioned results showed a positive relationship between perceived gender discrimination and job stress of the female employees. Therefore, as a result hypothesis H_1 was accepted which indicated that due to gender discrimination present in the organization women workers were more likely to do work under enormous stress. The result obtained from the H_2 showed statistically significant relationships between with job stress and employee turnover intention in the firm, which suggest that employees were keener to have turnover intention due to stressful situation at workplace. The result of H_3 also indicated a positive relation between the mediating variable job stress with perceived gender discrimination and turnover intention. Therefore, the hypothesis was accepted. Gender discrimination also has negative impact on employee health conditions due to job stress and employees have a clear inclination to quit their service.

Since the data was gathered through self-reported questionnaires, it was challenging for the female personnel to disclose instances of gender discrimination in the workplace, and some of them might not have wanted to answer honestly. Few survey participants may have been hesitant to submit sensitive information, such as unpleasant work environments, because they were unsure if the information would be kept confidential or not. Due to the higher female management's lack of participation due to organizational human resource policy issues, the study was unable to completely focus on the broader spectrum. Interesting findings highlight a few crucial ideas that apply to other multi-disciplinary companies. Therefore, it is obvious that the results support the five hypotheses that were tested because they were all found to be significant.

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