

Challenges of Women's Empowerment in
Pakistan: A Case Study of a Male-Dominated
Society

Rehana Yaqoob

The Graduate School of Government and Business
Yonsei University

Challenges of Women's Empowerment in Pakistan: A Case Study of a Male-Dominated Society

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Rehana Yaqoob

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This certifies that the Master's thesis
of Yaqoob Rehana is approved.



Thesis Supervisor: Seohyun Lee, Ph.D.



You Sueng Han, Ph.D.



Kyu Jae Lee, Ph.D.

The Graduate School of Government and Business
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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my devoted husband Mr. Khawar Shahzid, my gorgeous daughter Renée khawar shah, and every one of my family for their moral support and patience while I was studying in South Korea.

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Abstract

Challenges of women's empowerment in Pakistan- a case study of a male-dominated society

Rehana Yaqoob

*Master's Degree Program in Gender and Rural Community Development
The Graduate School of Government and Business
Yonsei University*

Over the past three decades, discussions on gender equality and women empowerment have played a central role. It is recognized that policies and projects that do not consider women's place in society harm development. In 1995 United Nations International Conference on Women in Beijing emphasized the need to reduce gender inequality and empower women. The third Millennium Development Goal relates to gender equality and women's empowerment. Various countries, districts, and multilateral development agencies have committed to reducing gender inequality as a key to a sustainable financial transition.

The situation of Pakistan on gender equality and women empowerment is bleak because of its social and cultural practices at individual, family and society level. The social and cultural barriers like husband and father play dominant role to channelize all sphere of women's life and most of the women have no rights to make decisions and choices about their education, jobs, family planning, health care and even marriages (Ali et.al, 2010).

Pakistan put into practice the Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) for the last fifteen years. To reduce the gender inequality, the Convention provides equal rights in education, employment

and health care including family planning and reproductive health services for men and women.

Pakistan also announced a National Policy for Development and Empowerment of Women (2002) aimed at “to remove inequities and imbalances in all sectors of socio-economic development and to ensure women's equal access to all development benefits and social services”.

Although Pakistan has achieved little in this regard, women are significantly underrepresented in every sphere of the life.

The purpose of this study to find the employment situation of working women in the Rahim Yar Khan region of Pakistan through an interview guide. The primary objective of this qualitative study is to examine and address the underlying problems of women’s status and empowerment in society, and specifically looking at the experiences of women at the workplace in terms of the challenges and barriers they must face, based on the experiences of employed women in Rahim Yar Khan, Pakistan. This qualitative research used, convince sampling technique in the sample selection. The research questions focused on the current status of female empowerment in Pakistani society, and what are the socio-cultural and economic factors that play a role in attaining this empowerment? With regard to this sample size, 20 purposefully selected Pakistani women from Rahim Yar Khan Region were interviewed coding, categorizing and analyzing themes.

As the findings confirmed, women gender discrimination in the employment of women was high and women were facing challenges not only work place as well as in other sphere of life in this region. This study was important to address gender discrimination, based on experiences of these working class women in Pakistan. Women, if empowered to do so, she can contribute not only in economic growth of the country but also effect the better growth of the family.

Keywords: Gender equality, Women empowerment, Gender inequality, Pakistan, Employment

Chapter1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

There is an urgent need to study the determinants of women's empowerment in the Pakistani context as women have always been affected by the complex socio-demographic and cultural milieu of Pakistani society. Women empowerment is the most debatable phrase nowadays. Although Pakistan is a democratic Islamic state, women empowerment still faces many challenges. Klasen, 1999 evaluated that there is vividly recognized that women empowerment is essential for sustainable economic growth and reduction in poverty in developing countries. The World Bank Policy Research Report suggests that women empowerment is being progressively recognized as an important policy goal for improving not just the well-being of women themselves but also for its positive impact on the family (King and Mason, 2001).

The women empowerment have been an issue of Pakistan from the past many years due to which women are marked lower than men on all the important human development indicators. Thus, affecting women's 'equal and active' at every level especially at workplace. It has been admitted that women's involvement has been

consider unimportant in policy and decision making which can have adverse effects on the development of a society.

Women empowerment works in all the dimensions which include economic, political, cultural, legal, social and psychological (Malhotra et al. 2002).

Every individual has the ability to influence others and has equal rights to express their ideas, thoughts and viewpoints. So if a women is given equal status and listened properly, it can lead to economic competence and other developments can take place in this sphere. Empowering women as economic, social and political actors is not only needed for the progress of a state but also inevitable to promote economic growth and reduce poverty ratio. (Chaudry et al.2012). The United Nations Women Policy Division (2013) suggests that women empowerment is crucial and all the policies development projects need to be made with gender equality.

1.2 Importance of Women Empowerment

Half of the population of Pakistan constitutes of women yet they are marginalized politically, socially and economically. Due to gender inequality, women do not have the leverage to share their thoughts or influence the society.

Even in liberal democratic nations, men have more advantage over women at workplace.

This restricts the women to participate confidently at all professional levels. The participation of women and men equal basis at decision making positions is a prerequisite for women's contributions to development, Hess (2015). 'Women Empowerment' means to give women equal rights to participate in education, society and at work. Women empowerment encourages women to stay strong at home and at work. It gives them the confidence that they can do everything they want. Not only this, it also reduces domestic violence, sexual, physical and emotional abuse.

Women empowerment freedom allows women to achieve high level jobs just as men do. With the help of women empowerment, the problem of unemployment and unequal opportunities at work can be eradicated. Moreover, the intelligence of women cannot be predicted without women empowerment. As women are well versed in solving technical problem in the modern era, women empowerment will play a vital role.

Women can show case their talent to society if they are given a chance to take the responsibilities as men. That is why women should be given equal rights. There is no harm if women take part in the development of the society.

For the overall development of society, women empowerment is an important term. The women of Pakistani society lack the freedom of decision making and leadership at workplace in contrast to men because they are expected to play passive role or given less opportunity to make decisions outside the home. As Pakistan has traditional society, women are largely confined within the home and family where they are taught to accept the decisions of father, brother or husband made on their behalf. This results in lack of confidence and skills required to function effectively at workplace.

In addition to this, women are handicapped due to illiteracy and male domination at home or at workplace. Even when women are successful in getting education and entering the mainstream of decision making, they are frequently sidelined by institutional settings that mirror the requirements and circumstances of men while ignoring the unique needs and experiences of women. All these issues require women empowerment.

1.3 Problem Statement

It is well known that discrimination against women has been a problem for a long time. It is because other factors such as psychological, national, political, social and traditional work together to make this happen. The rate of female labor force participation in Pakistan is very low as compared to male counterparts i.e. 25% vs. 82%. Similarly, the rate of education is also low between women in contrast to men i.e. 26.5% vs. 47.3%. This low and poor an educational opportunity leads to low empowerment among women. The situation is further exacerbated when female employees in Pakistan appear to be bound by patriarchal beliefs and practices. In such situation, the concept of empowerment in Pakistan is only theoretical without any concept of practical embodiment.

It is a fact that half of the population of Pakistan is women and empowering them could improve the well-being of the society. Still, the country is among the lowest in the world regarding women empowerment. Gender difference is also widely observed when investigating the position of women at workplace resulting in economic imbalance, unequal opportunities and low pay scale.

Therefore, this interpretative qualitative study is to explore and understands the experience and perspectives of women at workplace in Rahim Yar Khan Region of Pakistan. This relates to gender inequality and issues that affect women participation and position in professional sector.

The insights of the study will torchlight and deepen the understanding of critical issues and challenges which limit the women participation at workplace. This research will also provide contextual recommendations which will help concentrate on the issues and help in increasing women's qualitative representation at work space.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this interpretative qualitative study is to understand the perspective and experiences of Pakistani women as it relates to gender inequality and issues that affect the women's participation and position in the work place. This literature focuses on the following objectives:

1. Evaluation of problems and challenges which limit the women's contribution at workplace.

2. Analyzing, why women in a professional position don not exercise their full potential due to organizational structures and cultures which in return affect their performance.
3. Contextual recommendation is also provided which discusses the problem and solution to increase the qualitative and quantitative representation of women at work space.
4. To study the effect of Women empowerment on Organizational Structures.

1.5 Research Questions

In light of the objectives that serve as the purpose of this study, the following research questions will be raised: (i) What is the current status of female empowerment in Pakistani society, and what are the socio-cultural and economic factors that play a role in attaining this empowerment?; (ii) To what extent do cultural barriers in particular hinder women from attaining a higher status and empowerment?;

(iii) To what extent can the development of a plan of action with useful recommendations aid in addressing this problem of empowerment and overcoming the overarching problem of culture itself?; (iv) To what extent do women empowerment affects organizational structures?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study helps to highlight the difficulties that women still have when participating in professional level and provides an examination of the institutional and cultural factors that contribute to these difficulties. It is well documented that Pakistani women have suffered from gender discrimination for a long time. Despite Pakistan's relatively slow economic growth; women's significant participation in the workforce contributes to the country's economic development by helping to boost the country's productivity.

This study is important because it sheds light on why institutional changes have not resulted from the participation of women in work place. As a result, it offers the foundational discussion for potential future solutions. Furthermore, this research also offers contextual recommendation that will address the problem and aid in empowering women qualitatively.

In this regard, the study has the ability to affect societal change by offering suggestions to hold powerful roles at home and at workplace. Pakistan cannot achieve sustainable development if a woman continues to face gender inequality and male domination. Therefore, it is important to improve women's position in the society and increase their access to basic needs, education and economic resources.

1.7 Scope and Limitation of the Study

There are several assumptions that underpin the current investigation. The first assumption was that while sharing the experience, all participants were candid, honest and truthful in their response. Secondly, the selected participants were well aware of the phenomenon under inquiry. The focus was on the working women of Rahim Yar Khan Region of Pakistan where their position in the workplace and challenges faced was studied. The interview number of 20 justified in qualitative research as it included carefully chosen women who fit the requirements and can contribute enough data to reach saturation.

1.8 Outline of the Research

First of all, a thorough explanation of women's participation and challenges faced at workplace in Pakistan is given in Chapter 2. The second chapter also explores on social and cultural barriers which are becoming a hurdle to women's empowerment in Pakistan. Chapter 3 explains the study areas as well as the methodology used in the study. The experiences and perceptions of women at workplace as learned through interview sessions were studied, debated and interpreted in Chapter 4. The study's conclusion, advice, and social implications are presented in Chapter 5.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

The focus of this qualitative study was to examine the challenges faced by women in the workplace as well as cultural and social barriers to women's empowerment of Pakistan using existing data to explore and understand why, despite many efforts and women laws, gender equality is still big issue in Pakistan. Chapter 2 consists of an overview of challenges in women's empowerment in Pakistan regarding employment, social and cultural difficulties. Both historical overview and the current research of challenges of women empowerment at workplace are explored in this literature.

This chapter is reviewed, under various captions, as follow:

2.1 Gender Discrimination

Women face gender discrimination at home, in education and at workplace. Women represent 48.76% of the total population of Pakistan but in the labor force, they remain unrepresented.

According to the Constitution of Pakistan, article 25(a), 'There shall be no discrimination on the basis of sex.' Overall 10% quota is allotted to women in public sector employment and at provincial level; the quotas are 15% in Punjab, 2% in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 5% in Sindh and 10% in Gilgit-Baltistan. However, the civil service and Central Superior Services of Pakistan continues to be male dominated.

In order to help reduce sexism in the workplace, it is imperative to have a diverse workforce culture (Yasin & Naqvi, 2016). Through the establishment and reinforcement of family relationships that conform to the norms and values of society, gender roles are created and reinforced. Although they are built for men and women, these roles are rarely neutral because of the authority in relationships that exist in our society.

It is pertinent to note that some of these relationships are privileged, while others are marginalized. As a result of these relationships, both genders can create dominant professional identities in the workplace.

The result is a stereotypical interpretation of a male and female relationship that affects both genders on how to act and interpret that relationship. In Pakistan, working women face a dual responsibility of personal and professional life, compounded by the open secret that sexism is a widespread problem (Delavande& Zafar, 2014).

While the government has made much effort to advance equal opportunity for women and ensure a safe working environment for them, it remains an enormous test for Pakistan, despite all the steps that have been taken by everyday society and the authority parody of the public authority. (Shaukat et al, 2014). In partnership with Pakistan's government, WFP has initiated several humanitarian and development programmes to support gender equality and women empowerment in Pakistan.

The proportion of women in Pakistan's labour force is under-represented despite the fact that they account for almost half of the population. Women hold only 5% of senior and leadership positions in Pakistan, while 85% of men participate in the labour force (i.e., work or seek employment).

One of the lowest shares of Pakistani labour income belongs to women i.e. 18%, and the bulk of women's participation in the labour force (88.4%) is in traditional agriculture, a role that does not translate into financial or decision-making independence. In sectors where women have traditionally been underrepresented, like finance, energy, construction, and gas and water, some organizations are actively promoting their participation. Women are conspicuously absent from Pakistan's Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) workforce. It is striking to see what a low rate of female participation is in the finance, energy, gas, and water sectors and what a low rate of female participation is in mining engineering (Waqar and Bano; 2020).

2.2 Limitations to women's participation in the Pakistani labour force

Female labor force participation (FLFP) in Urban Pakistan is among the lowest in the world i.e. around 10% for over 20 years. According to a survey, it was found educated women are struggling to enter and stay in the work place while low education levels faced even more limitations.

However, women who worked had to face low wages and the burden of household responsibilities. The reasons behind limitations to women's participation in labor force in Pakistan include social and cultural restrictions, rigid gender role, and the notion of honor associated with women. Generally, social norms and attitudes are deemed as explanations of cultural barriers for women in the labour force (Inglehart, Norris, & Ronald, 2003; Klasen & Pieters, 2012).

As Pakistan is knitted by cultural values and norms, traditional belief defines the role and status of women in the society. Social limitations restrict the women to participate in the labour market. The literature also studies that women are restricted to the responsibility of children's upbringing, care of elders, social isolation and inter-family challenges which determine the woman's intentions to work and reduces their participation in the work place.

Although creating suitable environment for women, employees/workers at the workplaces can enhance their participation in work but unfortunately, in Pakistan, government and nongovernment organizations are reluctant to formulate favorable policies and work conditions for women (Shahzad & Malik, 2014; Tanaka & Muzones, 2016)

Rigid gender role also limits the women's role in an organization where gender stereotypes are held by male managers. Due to women's restrictions, organizations also hesitate to invest in female career development as women have short careers due to marriage and relocation issues.

2.3 Job Opportunities and Challenges at Working Place for Women

Having the lowest rates of female participation at work place i.e. only 22% in Asia, Pakistan has limited job opportunities for women. Even with men and women at the same education level, there is a persistent difference between men and women actively searching for job. For jobs like teachers and parlor employees, there was a relative preference for female candidates. However, for traditionally male-dominated occupations like electricians and technicians, over 90% of the employers preferred to hire a male candidate.

It is also observed in the survey done in the remote area of Pakistan, Rahim Yar Khan, which is further discussed in this literature that the most suitable job opportunities which women avail are Teacher, Office Assistant, and Health and Safety Specialist. Gender based discrimination, harassment, domestic restriction, work and family issues, negative issues of male co-workers and unequal pay are the

different challenges faced by women workers. In this male dominating society, men are given unfair advantage and are considered more hardworking than women.

Due to this gender discrimination, there is an increase in stress level and decrease in motivation to work. Domestic restrictions has restricted the woman's exposure to other available job opportunities and limited their growth in developmental sector. Lower pay scale is a silent offense which women face at their work place. At times the attitude of male co-workers is humiliating and biased. Lack of social support at workplace from colleagues and supervisors leads to absenteeism. A supportive and conducive work environment should be established.

2.4 Lack of Promotional Opportunities

As a result of various regulations aimed at strengthening gender equality within organizations, women are continued to be discriminated against in a range of aspects, including their ability to advance in their careers and economic benefits (Ali et al., 2017). There is a direct and indirect impact on salaries and advancement opportunities in the workplace when gender differences are addressed. There is a problem of gender discrimination that leads to women being considered unsuitable for demanding jobs due to their gender (Farid et al., 2016). The common

misconception is that women do not have the skills or abilities to do difficult jobs (Akanbi, 2016).

Due to which men still dominate senior positions in companies and organizations. Women face many barriers due to organizational culture and traditions. There is a lack of acceptance of women in senior positions and a feeling of isolation within the workplace for them.

In order to prove that they are capable of the job, they must work hard. According to research report that have been conducted and discussed in Chapter 4, women are often seen as emotional, irrational, illogical, and incapable of analyzing situations objectively, There is a perception that women are only suitable for secretarial work and are usually restricted to lower levels of hierarchy within an organization due to their gender. However, females are so committed to their professional responsibilities that it is not justified to assign them only vague roles (Bibi et al.,2017).

2.5 Peers' Behavior

As a result of attitude of male partners, women at work feel socially disengaged from the work environment. "I worked with men who treated me as if I were a pet of theirs. They would agree, goodness, we should not have expressed that before, but that did not matter to me. I told them I would not fret made any difference, and I felt very disconnected from them. They would go to their all-male clubs at noon, where a great deal of real business takes place, and I was barred from it" (Quote from Lady Learner in Davidson et al. 1992).

It should be noted that these societies reflect the traditions, convictions, standards, and values that the male members of the association outline. As a result of these traditions and values, all human relationships are represented similarly. Women are often treated unpredictably in casual organizations and gatherings and forbidden from participating in social events. As a result of this, women rarely take advantage of the opportunities available to them to develop their organizations or their ancillary power sources.

Men tend to feel better when they associate with male partners and deny women the opportunity to participate in the organization. It has been observed that this current situation gives women a sense of intimacy in their social lives. It has been observed that 48% of the women employees intentionally decreased their work

effort, 47% intentionally decreased their time at work, and 38% intentionally decreased the level of quality in their work due to the incivility at work place.

According to the model Akanbi (2016), men were promoted in associations because they played squash with men who also agreed to vote in the association. Still, the women who were deserving of this promotion were not considered.

As a result of male control, females are influenced strongly by it. Women tend to be suspicious of their partners' behavior for some reason or another. There is also evidence that the gender gap has escalated accepted practices and social characteristics, creating a prominent gap between men and women. However, exceptions to this rule are instances such as joint administration and university affairs. However, these exceptional cases can only be found at the highest level of the hierarchy (Parach& Shahzad, 2017).

2.6 Sexual Harassment

It is estimated that most women working in a functional environment are supervised by men, particularly those in lower positions. Harassment makes the working environment hostile and unsafe for women. It is widely acknowledged that

sexual harassment is one of the effective forms of discrimination against women in the workplace, a form of sex discrimination. The study by Mushtaq et al. (2017) found that women regulated by men were more likely to engage in regular lewd behavior than women working under the supervision of women.

In a report of Pakistan's national commissioner of children and women, around 93% of Pakistani women had experienced sexual violence and harassment in public or workplaces in their life. According to Section 509 of Pakistan Penal Code, it is stated that an offender gets punished by one to three years imprisonment or a fine of up to Rs 500,000 or both. Even after this rule, female workers do not file due to the fear of being rejected.

2.7 Women's work in the public sector

Women's work in the public sector is undergoing a profound change due to the recent rapid development of the financial and technological sectors. It has been noted that globalization has been the most significant and influential factor in this development and has effectively brought about the increased involvement of women in the dynamic work of an organization (Aman et al., 2016). According to Zia et al. (2016), the company's senior employees regularly engage in offensive behavior and have great power over females. As a result of inappropriate behavior,

the execution of work and the accomplishment of undertakings are adversely affected (Jaleel et al., 2015).

There is no doubt that this pattern persists no matter what the modernization and receptiveness that has taken place, in that female laborers are still being bugged in their workplaces, generating the negative impression that their errands and work are being exposed.

2.8 Works-Life Balance

Work-life stability is very difficult for working women, especially married women. It is not easy to separate work and home. The interaction between home and work cannot be effortlessly prevented. Taksim and Siddiq (2016) conducted a cellphone survey in New Zealand. They determined that working females consistently sought to use their office phones to remain in contact with their teens at home at some point during working hours. Work-life balance indicates how involved a person is in both their personal and professional life and, at the same time, how satisfied they are with both in each area. According to Arif& Farooqi (2014), work-life balance plays a central role as it affects a person's personal and professional spheres.

Deviation from one role means a stronger tendency towards the other, creating more imbalance in an individual's life. Finally, such deviations challenge individuals to bring stability to their lives. (Syed et al., 2015). Naz et al. (2017) found that dividing and planning time between work and family roles created conflict between work and family. Studies examining the consequences of work-family conflict, have found a strong positive relationship with poor health, job dissatisfaction, and work and family stress. Women's domestic responsibilities include caring for children, household chores, the elderly, and the groom's parents.

A married woman must take more breaks in the middle of her career (to have children), resulting in a longer career path. It is more difficult for women to advance their careers than men because companies do not give them time off. Furthermore, balancing work life is a herculean task and creates challenges for women to balance work and family obligations.

Chapter 3. Methodology

This chapter shall present the research process; the research model developed and describes the geographical location of the study as well as the data collection process. To achieve research objectives, this research employed a qualitative approach to analyze the underlying problems of women's status and empowerment in society, and specifically looking at the experiences of women at the workplace in terms of the challenges and barriers they must face, based on the experiences of employed women in Rahim Yar Khan, Pakistan.

Creswell (1994) defines that qualitative research have inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting” (Creswell, 1994, pp. 1-2).Published on June 19, 2020 by Pritha Bhandari. Revised on October 10, 2022, Qualitative research involves collecting and analyzing non-numerical data (e.g., text, video, or audio) to understand concepts, opinions, or experiences.

This study tries to find the research gap by exploring the challenges of women empowerment in work place as well as in society. Qualitative research methodology was used to address all the research questions and gathering overall information.

3.1 Research Design

The research has been conducted in Rahim Yar Khan Region of Pakistan. The major reason for choosing this city is because gender discrimination cases are mostly high in this district.

As government of Pakistan is still working to overcome the gender inequality issues, Pakistan ranked 151 out of 153 countries on the Global Gender Gap Index Report 2020 index, published by the World Economic Forum (WEF). The scorecard for the country places Pakistan at 150 in economic participation and opportunity, 143 in educational attainment, 149 in health and survival, and 93 in political empowerment. A comparison of previous rankings shows that the overall ranking for Pakistan has drastically come from 112 in 2006 to 151 in 2020.

The research design is the logical sequence that links data to the study's research problem, initial research questions and ultimately to its conclusions.

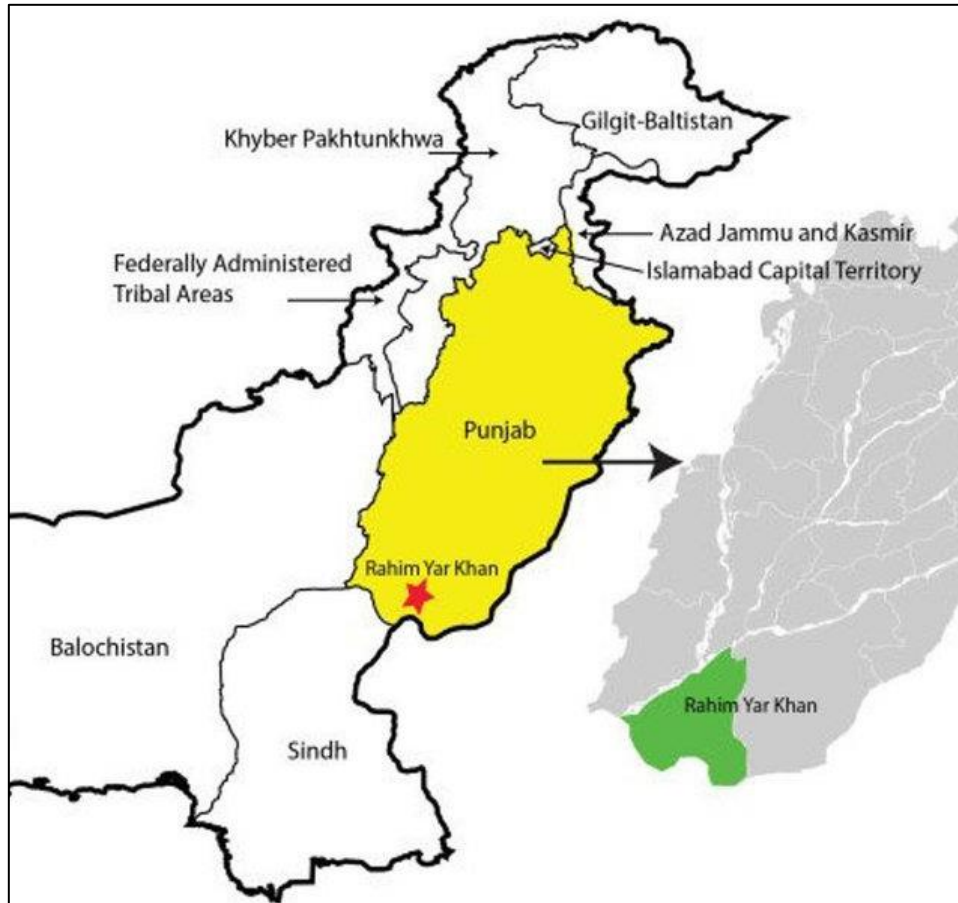


Figure 1. Map of the **Islamic Republic of Pakistan** with target city * (Source: Google Map of 2022)

According to (Creswell, 2014): Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. On other hand qualitative methods are selected by researchers when they determined to explain a difficult experience from the view of participants. In the same opposite side, the quantitative research method is used

when researcher's intent is to seek explanations and predictions that would be used to generalize other situations.

The respondents represented the working-class women in Rahim Yar Khan Region of Pakistan. The survey on Women's Economic and Social wellbeing (WESW) in the Punjab 2017-18 has focused on current situation of the economic and social empowerment of women in Punjab including the Rahim Yar Khan. According to this survey in Punjab 2017-18 the labor force participation rate of women, aged 15-64 is 36.3% in Punjab. Paid workers or employees are 34.3% and working contributing or family workers (45.25). Ratio of self-employed is 20.2%. This survey highlighted the barrier to their working. According to survey most frequently quoted barrier was lack of qualification/experience 50.2%, followed by, lack of appropriate job opportunities 41.1% and domestic work/care responsibilities 41.4%.

The lack of training opportunities is 36.9%, inadequate promotion opportunities 36.2% and presence of male colleagues 34.6%. The participants despite their fluency in English language and level of education, they all speak and communicate in their mother tongues (Urdu) effectively. The major reason for selecting my participants from Rahim Yar Khan was because in this area women

are experienced, educated and more important traditional norms followed by these women.

On evaluating whether what qualitative approach was most suitable or appropriate for this study, several methods were reviewed. The initial design considered for this study was the case study. Baxter & Jack, 2008 noted qualitative case study methodology provides tools for researchers to study complex phenomena within their contexts. On other hand the purpose of a case study is to learn as much as possible about an individual or group so that the information can be generalized to many others.

This option is chosen over the others because it best demonstrates all the qualities of qualitative research (Merriam, 2002). Data can be gathered through interviews, document analysis, or observations, just like with the other methods.

The primary distinction between this strategy and the others mentioned is the investigation's aim and methodology, which are framed by the ideas of social role theory. In a study by Rodehorst-Weber, Wilhelm, Tobacco, and Delapaz, characteristics of the fundamental interpretive qualitative study was described (2009).

The focus groups were utilized in this straightforward interpretive study to assist researchers in determining how to carry out asthma tests in tribal. The researchers indicated that an interpretative strategy was used to assist them in looking at how people described their position and made meaning of their lives (Rodehorst- Weber, Wilhelm, Tobacco, & Delapaz, 2009). With this approach, the focus was on articulating how a thing was experienced and how meaning is created in context. In order to interpret the experiences, the researchers were able to use interviews, observations, and field notes. By participating in the context that is being interpreted, meanings are constructed rather than discovered.

As a result, I was interested in (a) understanding people's experiences, (b) building their worlds, and (c) the meaning they assign to their experiences while employing the fundamental interpretative qualitative study

Merriam (2009) similarly outlined how the researcher seeks to comprehend the significance of a phenomenon for all parties involved. Several steps were followed using Merriam's (2009) methodology, including (a) data collection through interviews, (b) data analysis to detect recurrent themes and patterns, (c) presenting a rich description of the findings, and (d) referencing the literature that served as the study's initial framework.

3.2 Participants' Selection Criteria

An effective research technique must be developed that is suited to the situation in order for the generalizations made to be as persuading to as many people as is practical (Trochim, 2001). Twenty women who may have met some or all of the following requirements participated in the deliberate in-depth interview:

- Must be female and at least 20 to 50 years old.
- Currently employed in either the public or private sector

3.3 Interview Procedures

Merriam (2002) suggested that deliberate sampling refers to the process of choosing subjects from whom it is possible to learn a great deal about the issues that are essential to the study's goal. Therefore, I only chose women who I thought could offer insightful commentary on the subject in order to comprehend the perspectives of working-class women challenges in work place.

The main goal was to identify individuals who were approachable, open to sharing information, could shed light on the topic under investigation, and might offer useful information to address the research questions of this study. For the personal interviews, I had a total of 20 participants. The most important aspect of

qualitative research is to carefully choose participants so that readers and the researcher are likely to hear the majority of perceptions that may provide insightful information. Nastasi (n.d.) of Walden University said that when deciding the appropriate interview size, the researcher should consider whether the data is large enough to reach saturation and whether the interviews are large enough to represent the variation within the target population.

Women who lived in Pakistan and met the prerequisites were the 20 participants in this study who were approached through Email and WhatsApp. Until I received at least 20 responses that were willing to take part in the study, the process was maintained. The participants were also chosen based on their background knowledge and skills in the relevant field.

The ages of these people ranged from 22 to 50. These people were reachable and demonstrated a desire to participate in the study by sharing their thoughts and experiences in casual interactions. They were all female and came from various social and educational backgrounds. Each respondent holds a unique position at their place of employment.

The research has encountered the following issues and restrictions: real-time differences resulting from participant and researcher geographical separation;

poor internet connectivity issues due to the fact that all interviews were carried out via zoom; and failure of some participants to provide accurate information due to their propensity to talk more about their successes and accomplishments.

3.4 Data Collection

Data collection is a series of interrelated activities with the purpose of gathering information needed to answer the research questions (Creswell, 2007). In-depth individual interviews served as the main source of information for this. The interview method gives the researcher the chance to learn more in detail information and to ask incisive and additional questions (Trochim, 2001). The participants to the event were invited to share their thoughts through zoom.

The letter of invitation contained the following details: (a) an introduction with the study's purpose; (b) a brief explanation of what their participation entailed; (c) the anticipated time needed to complete the interview; (d) any risks and inconveniences; (e) a statement outlining how I intended to protect the participant's confidentiality.

According to a concluding statement in the permission form, Participants were not required to take part under any obligation, and there were no negative consequences if they chose not to, Participants were required to sign a consent form that contained the same information as the invitation letter if they were willing to take part. I conveyed the information to the participants know that I plan to use phone call (whatsapp)to have informal semi-structured interviews for about 50 minutes at a mutually convenient time.

Digital recordings of these semi-structured interviews were made, and they were then saved for transcription and study. Because I had a list of prepared leading questions that was open to probing and following the leads of the participants, the interviews were regarded as semi-structured. Every prepared question was meant to be open-ended and encouraged participants to share their knowledge and experiences. In order to commence the interview and confirm for the record that the participants met the requirements, introductory background questions were asked for instance can you start by introducing little bit about yourself, such as your current employment, educational history, and marital status?

The key questions that were meant to get to the study's goal and answer the research questions were asked after this line of inquiry. The length of each

interview, which typically ranged from 50 minutes to longer, depended heavily on the participant's response. During the interviews, relevant phrases or points that might have called for more investigation or follow-up were noted online.

The interview notes also made it easier to remember the questions that were asked and how the interview was progressing: (i) How do you think your family and friends would describe you? (ii) What does women empowerment mean to you? (iii) Do your family and co-workers allow you to make your own decision? Please explain. (iv) Do you think you are able to live a life as you like? Please explain (v) Do you think you have faced any challenges being a woman in your working place? If yes, please explain. (vi) Do you think you have equal opportunities at work place? Please explain. (vii) Please explain if you are feeling any discrimination at work place being a woman? (viii) In your opinion how can we improve women empowerment? Is women's empowerment a reality or a myth? What is the effect of women empowerment? What strategies, interventions, etc., would you recommend to support women's roles at home and work place.

3.5 Data Analysis

Data analysis is a systematic approach for examining, organizing, and categorizing data in search for meaning (Hatch, 2002). A methodical strategy to

reviewing, arranging, and categorizing data in pursuit of meaning is known as data analysis (Hatch, 2002). In order to get the answers to my research questions, the qualitative data that I had collected has been examined using several techniques. Through this method, I was able to recognize themes, spot patterns, create connections, form interpretations, and jot down preliminary explanations for the study's main issue. I listened to the interview tapes as soon as possible or immediately after the interview to ensure that the tapes were audible and the interviews were conducted as intended. To ensure accuracy in transcription, every transcript was checked while the tapes were being listened to. All transcripts were saved.

3.6 Trustworthiness Issues

Research must be dependable and valid in order to be taken seriously (Merriam, 2009). The credibility of the research findings is also crucial, thus both the researcher's credibility and the trustworthiness of a study are dependent on it.

Several steps were made to address the credibility in order to ensure that the interpretations were transferable as well as trustworthy (Merriam, 2009). Credibility

is basically, the conclusion that presents a truthful interpretation of the data derived from the participants' original data.

There was open and honest communication with the study's participants in terms of the researcher-participant interaction. To prevent personal biases from skewing the understanding of the participants' opinions, appropriate measures were made to bracket my perspectives. In order to be open and attentive to the participant's viewpoints, the researcher must suspend or be conscious of any personal biases, assumptions, or preconceived beliefs, which are referred to as bracketing in phenomenological research (Hatch, 2002).

3.7 Methods For Ethical Protection of Participants

I had a lot of ethical considerations to keep in mind. To ensure that all ethical concerns stated by the IRB are addressed, procedures for the ethical protection of participants were followed. Each participant was given information about the study's goals and given the chance to opt-in voluntarily.

Each participant received a consent form that included information about the study's goals, methodology, potential risks, and rewards. Each participant was

given information about the study's goals and given the chance to opt-in voluntarily. Each participant received a consent form that included information about the study's goals, methodology, potential risks, and rewards.

All completed consent forms were appropriately preserved in a safe and secure location throughout the study, along with additional artefacts such as transcripts, notes, confidentiality forms, and tape recordings. In case of loss or damage, backup copies were created. When given the chance to study the initial report, the participants will be able to identify their own comments because they are aware of their individual pseudonyms. This is important because data collected should not be traceable to the participants as this will maintain their right to privacy (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005).

Chapter 4. Research Finding

This section will focus on the key findings and analysis that are imperative in covering the research objectives. The primary purpose of this interpretive qualitative study is to critically examine the experiences and perspectives of Pakistani women in the workplace environment, particularly examining elements of gender-based discrimination, and facets of gender inequality in various aspects of their lives.

In order to address these preliminary questions and areas of interest, extensive interviews were conducted with 20 working women from the Rahim Yar Khan region of Pakistan, holding professional experience in multiple institutions/sectors. Since this study was conducted in Pakistan and the interviewees were residing in distant geographical locations, all interviews were conducted via phone calls/Whatsapp. Each participant in this study gave their informed consent by signing and returning the consent forms.

The fact that the interviews will be recorded and afterwards transcribed and analyzed was also disclosed to each participant. The results of our data analysis will

be presented in this chapter's opening section, with a focus on the demographics and an overview of the conducted interviews.

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Interviewees

There were 20 female participants in the interview who were working women from the Rahim Yar Khan region of Pakistan. Majority of these women were highly educated with Bachelor's and Master's degree in hand.

The age group varied from 24 – 41 years with marital status as single, married, and divorced. All the interviewee's were cognizant regarding gender discrimination taking place in the workplace. All the participants held different working designations in multiple government sectors, private companies and institutions, and worked for the purpose of providing financial support to their families.

In addition to mentioning that women are working more and more each day, the participant also mentioned that they still have some cultural barriers to overcome in order to be competitive in the employment industry. For the sake of privacy and confidentiality, names of all participants were kept hidden during these interviews.

Demographic Characteristics of the Respondent

Names	Age	Marital Status	Study level	Nature of employment
Naila	35	Married	Master's degree	Teacher
Rose	38	Married	Bachelor's degree	Teacher
Irum	25	Single	Master's degree	Office Assistant
Noor	30	Single	Bachelor's degree	Health and safety specialist
Rema	25	Single	Bachelor's degree	Office Assistant
Ayesha	23	Divorced	Bachelor's degree	Health and safety specialist
Iqra	35	Divorced	Master's degree	Teacher
Asma	26	Single	B.Com	Teacher
Ersa	33	Divorced	Bachelor's degree	Office Assistant
Uzma	41	Single	Bachelor's degree	Health and safety specialist
Laiba	22	Divorced	Bachelor's degree	Health and safety specialist
Aalia	37	Married	Master's degree	Office Assistant
Zainab	24	Single	Bachelor's degree	Administrator
Saika	30	Married	Master's Degree	Nurse
Tuba	28	Married	Bachelor's Degree	Office Assistant
Maria	24	Single	B.com	Receptionist
Rukhsana	40	Married	Bachelor's Degree	Teacher
Fouzia	24	Single	Bachelor's Degree	Receptionist
Amina	35	Divorced	B.com	Receptionist
Rabia	26	Single	Master's degree	Receptionist

Note: All names are sobriquets that were assigned to protect the privacy of the participants

The transcripts of the interviews were categorized according to trends, similarities, and differences. The analysis presented 8 major themes: gender inequality, Low wages, a negative attitude of male co-workers, discrimination during the promotional stage, gender-based stereotypes, religious and cultural bias, lack of resources and money and lack of support from family or spouse. The analyzed response indicated that majority of women felt they faced gender-based discrimination in workplace. Gender inequality, low wages, gender-based stereotypes and cultural bias were the main obstacles that the women believed, restricted their ability, upward mobility and success in workplace. Many of the participants believed that their educational backgrounds gave them power, but this power did not necessarily gave them freedom in their daily lives.

4.2 Challenges of Working Women at Home

One of the research questions was how family and friend describe you. Each participant explained that what their family and friends think about them as a daughter, mother, daughter-in-law, and a good wife. A "good lady" is defined as being unselfish, calm, tolerant, sympathetic, reliable, is able to plan, compromise, coordinate, and preserve hospitality within the home and in maintaining good connections.

She may be educated or uneducated; a decent woman is expected to take care of the home, her husband, children, and in-laws, as well as to supply additional income as necessary. Women are required to suppress their feelings, give up their ideals, and compromise with others.

This expectation by family members burdened women emotionally and become a hurdle in fulfilling her responsibilities at home. Hence, decreasing women's morale. It becomes difficult for her to maintain balance and equal attention to family members. It's a tedious task to concentrate at home and at work equally.

According to Kishwar and Akhtar (1982), concerns like limitations on women's freedom of movement, their employment, and involvement in spectator parks, access to education, and a set dress code all lower the status of women in society. There is an ongoing struggle for working women to come up to the expectations of husband, children and other family members. Thus, fatiguing her body and soul on daily basis.

Many mental and physical breakdown hits her daily just to complete the challenge of keeping balance at home while working. She is committed to her duties at the cost of her peace. Women empowers herself to face new challenges of

life daily but it becomes hard for her to accomplish the role of wife, daughter, sister, mother and also a working women. That is why it is necessary to support her in establishing a balanced and growing society.

The social role theory was cited earlier in the literature reviews for this study, according to the social role theory, socio- cultural expectations are the reason why men prefer women. Because society views women as dependent and prefers spouses with more social standing and earning potential, they are barred from economic resources and leadership positions.

Socio-cultural barriers are a major impediment to women's empowerment in the job and at home. According to respondents, the male family members, primarily the fathers and husbands of these women, make decisions on the education and work of women. Women have little or no influence on issues that are important to them.

"I opened my eyes in a home where I have seen male control all over and I got married in a family where I am bearing same circumstance," one of the interviewees said in reference to her lack of autonomy in making decisions for herself. I believe that because women lack the authority to make decisions about

their lives, they are unable to take the right decisions and are thus not entitled to give all the authority to family men, father or husband. An ingrained patriarchal system where males dominate the family and make the decisions is crucial to the limitations that women experience.

Numerous academics have provided numerous explanations for the factors that affect women's empowerment in Pakistan over the years, including: traditional and religious opposition, gender-based discrimination, deeply ingrained cultural norms, low participation rates for women, and a patriarchal mindset that prevents equal opportunity for all genders. Socio- culture is among the major factors affecting women empowerment at home. It is a non-egalitarian society with major gender differences, making gender equality and women's emancipation seem like distant goals (Raza A, Murad HS. Gender gap in Pakistan: a socio-demographic analysis. *Int J Soc Econ*. 2010)

Socially and culturally, women are to be seen and not heard in Pakistan's patriarchal society. Another interviewee is in the same traditional family structure as the first, with her spouse making the majority of her decisions. She says, "I am impacted by my husband's choices after we got married, which is harming my work life" she clarifies. We discover the same dilemma these women encounter in the words of the respondent—a lack of decision-making autonomy. Furthermore, the

joint-family system makes this problem worse because the male family members, who typically make the decisions, do so to satisfy their relatives while also adhering to societal standards and expectations. As a result, the wellbeing of the women in the household is sacrificed. Another group of respondents provides an eye-opening perspective in this area by emphasizing the weight placed on societal norms rather than the preferences of female family members:

“My father is responsible for all the decision-making things. As we are living in a joint family system so there are a lot of barriers I must face in terms of education as well as my job. They mostly think about what the society thinks.”

“I live in a joint family where the males of the house take all the decisions. Parents in joint families use their power brutally to create massive mental stress among their daughters by making all these decisions dictatorially.”

Our preliminary examination of these interviews leads us to the conclusion that the joint family system's invasive nature contributes to the social limitations placed on women. In contrast to households that operate independently, this joint family arrangement places significant restrictions on female offspring.

All key decisions of woman such as her marriage, education, or pursuit of a job, ultimately wind up being made by the parents, particularly the father and after marriage husband. The joint family system can be seen as the primary reason why decision-making has evolved into a brutally authoritarian procedure that puts a great deal of mental strain on the family's female members. The conventional view that women don't naturally have the right to make their own decisions also supports this. These choices frequently relate to extremely important issues like family planning, the education of the kids, and other important post-marriage choices.

Many of these women also frequently choose to follow in their fathers' footsteps in terms of careers. Given that men predominate in this culture, the men actively uphold and sustain this power structure by using their influence to oppress women. Many husbands prefer their wives live with them rather than allow them to support themselves financially on their own, which is an example of patriarchy. Multiple-member families are again more likely to experience this issue. It is safe to infer that since this issue is far more frequent in rural areas than in urban ones, its effects are likewise much more severe there.

As far as Pakistani society is concerned, living within the joint family is the most arrangements. Ruggles (2010) defines the term joint family as when more

than one child lives with his parental household after marriage. Chadda and Deb (2011) further explain joint family as a group of individuals who live together during important stages of their life and bound by biological, social and emotional relationship to each other in Asian and Pakistani family context. The survey observed that the role of joint family affects the work life of married working women resulting in job dissatisfaction, poor performance, and high absenteeism.

Carlson, Kacmar, Zivnuska, Ferguson, and Whitten (2011) argue that work and family roles are interconnected as far as attitudes and behavioral outcomes are concerned. No group has been denied its human rights under the cover of culture more than women, claims Iwobi (2008). This is true for all societies, especially for Pakistan, where academic studies have shown that indigenous cultures have negative effects (Iwobi, 2008). Despite having no choice but to accept these decisions, the women in these instances are not obligated to do so.

Most of these women have to obey the decisions made by their father regarding their topic of study and the profession they are to pursue because a woman does not have the capacity to make decisions about her own life. It is also identified that Women's empowerment is exceedingly challenging to attain in patriarchal

societies like Pakistan, where culture forbids women from crossing boundaries without the approval of men.

No one can surpass it because it is observed as cultural norms and customs in the society. Men are expected to make all major and insignificant decisions in Pakistani societies, regardless of what women may think.

4.3 Challenges of Women at Work Place

The experiences and perspectives of working-class women are crucial in understanding the nuances to this particular issue of gender-based discrimination in the workplace:

“As women, we are consistently underpaid despite performing similar or related tasks to men in many countries around the world.”

“There are few opportunities for women to develop their careers and professional lives in most workplace policies, in my opinion.”

“Almost all women claim that their career paths will be adversely affected if they have children freely.”

“According to my own experience, I miss work due to maternal leaves and I am not considered for promotions or consideration for more advanced positions.”

After conducting interviews with the women quoted above, it was found that almost all the employed women in Rahim Yar Khan face challenges in their work environment, starting with the enormous gender gap in their salaries.

Almost 70% of the women employed in Rahim Yar Khan’s workforce are currently facing this problem. According to the employees, they entered the workforce with the expectation that they would be fairly compensated for their contributions.

However, statistics have unequivocally demonstrated that women across the world are consistently paid lower than men despite performing similar or related tasks. According to one study conducted in the United States, most women consider that equal pay represents the most pressing issue in the workplace. Besides the salary itself, the process of negotiating pays and relevant bonus structures are inherently designed to favor men over women in most cases as well. Besides, the pay negotiations and bonus structure are designed to favor men more than women in most cases, resulting in lower levels of compensation for women over time.

Men are more likely to earn a pay rise after presenting formal requests than their female counterparts. However, the statistics do not suggest that women offer lower contributions than men in the work to warrant the significant gap in pay and bonus consideration.

Research by Starnski & Son Hing in 2015 has shown that when it comes to technical and analytical capability, women are equal to men in their job contributions. This demonstrates that the consistent difference in pay is not related to performance, but on the basis of historical and systemic influences that lead to discrimination. 40% of the interviewees stated that most workplace gender policies are ineffective and offer women limited opportunities to develop their careers and professional lives.

There is an apparent distinction between men and women according to biological and sexual make-up, however, policies such as maternal and paternal leaves provided by most organizations do not consider the unique characteristic traits of women. Women inherently lack a freedom of choice when it comes to their career and life-related variables.

Additionally, women who miss work due to maternal leaves are left out in determining factors such as promotion and consideration for a more advanced position in an organization. The busy schedule at work and childcare requirements affects women's lives because they have a limited amount of time for either.

An organization needs to implement policies that allow women flexibility and enable them to offer maximum productivity according to their specific circumstances.

Moreover, women experience numerous incidences of micro-aggressions in their line of duty. By micro-aggressions, we are referring to the use of verbal and behavioral instincts on the part of men that appear to be derogatory, abusive, hostile and/or prejudicial towards women. There have been numerous instances of women being inaccurately perceived as incompetent because of their gender and/or sexual orientation. These kinds of social interactions add to women feeling inferior, sexually objectified and victimized, along with their roles being restricted in an organization.

As a result, gender profiling is extremely prevalent in organizations and certain functional roles are designated exclusively to men. According to Verniers

&Vala (2018), questioning the ability of women in their role within an organization along with the challenges they face may be a direct result of historical and cultural prejudices which end up restricting the role of women to homes.

This can also elevate stress levels at work, which can ultimately influence the output and productivity of women in an organization. Moreover, many women who experience these various micro-aggressions at work often ponder leaving because their sole contribution is to appreciate the work of others, rather than offering their own expertise to help the organization in achieving its objectives.

Women continue to face sexual abuse and harassment at workplaces in a modern organization; this is a widespread phenomenon because research indicates that at least 25% of women who work in a formal setting reported incidences of harassment. Inquiry for Women in Pakistan recognized that sexual harassment in the workplace does take place in Pakistan (Malla, n.d.). According to Parveen (2010), a total 24119 of violence against women cases were reported in Pakistan during 2008-10 among of which only 520 workplace harassment cases were filed.

Beside that the newspapers and electronic media portray few cases of sexual harassment at workplace, which show that the work place in Pakistan is not safe for

women. Keeping in view the recent and past incidents, government passed The Protection against Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Bill in 2010 in order to provide safe and sound environment to the working women.

The increase of sexual abuse in workplaces is caused by the social attitude developed by men about the appropriate role of women. Men consider the push by women for equality as a threat to their power and privilege in a social and family setting.

Sexual harassment is one of the strategies that men employ to assert their control over women as economic competitors, as women are seen to occupy lower ranks within an organization. Climbing the economic ladder requires the approval of male managers and supervisors who hold a higher position in an organization. Therefore, men request sexual favors to approve women and nominate them for the consideration of elevated positions. Most women fail to report sexual harassment cases because they fear that they may end up losing their jobs.

Similarly, they tend to avoid it because they may experience social trauma, profiling, and stigma for sexual harassment. The law prohibits any form of sexual harassment at work, but the same incidence continues to be reported in most

organizations. Based on this analysis, it becomes clear that women continue to face numerous challenges within their workplaces despite efforts to criminalize such policies.

Most policies within an organization are gender-biased and provide more opportunities for men to grow and develop their career paths. The systems in place fail to make considerations for the uniqueness of women, their role in society, and their familial roles. This makes it difficult for women to advance upwards on the corporate ladder, attain a more advanced position, and assume leadership positions within an organization. Sexual harassment is also rampant within organizations and often used by men as a tool to assert control over women.

These factors highlight that men are the most significant hurdle to achieving gender equality within an organization for women because they perceive such efforts as a threat to their positions. Organizations are required to implement policies that ensure women have the same opportunity as men to advance their profession, equal pay, and respect for their contribution, whilst establishing a protocol for reports of sexual harassment and mitigating its prevalence wherever possible.

4.4 Recommendations from the Interviewees

The second research question sought respondents' opinion on women's emancipation. They all suggest that advancing women's self-worth, their capacity to make their own decisions, and their right to have an impact on societal change for both themselves and others constitutes the core of women's empowerment. Respondents mentioned that,

“To possess strength and make independent decisions. Engage in all activities without restriction”.

“Women's empowerment, both at home and in society, is extremely low. It indicates I advocate for the social empowerment of women.”

In order to ascertain whether there were any differences of opinion among the participants regarding, whether or not women's empowerment involvement is determined by society, information about participants' experiences with women's empowerment was collected.

The varied comments resulting from the interview session demonstrate how important it is for women to be empowered.

It's noteworthy to notice that, according to each woman's particular profile; they were all responsible, well-educated individuals. In order to empower women, there needs to be an environment where they can make wise decisions about their lives in a particular situation. Decision making, economic decision-making, control over resources, physical mobility and self-worth is a key factor in building women's capacity in workplace as well as in society.

Reviewing the lives of Pakistani women reveals that they are troubled. Numerous studies have highlighted the issues facing women. This study also showed that even though Pakistani women are educated and financially secure, they continue to face the same problems. However, they lack the ability to move around freely and make decisions. The study's participants adhere to conventional ideals.

It is crucial to look at women's empowerment in Pakistan. Since male dominance and gender gaps are impeding women's ability to actively participate in society's growth (Akram N. Women's empowerment in Pakistan: its dimensions and determinants. Soc Indic Res).

Despite the widespread support for women's empowerment and the significant role that women play in the development process, in the majority of countries around the world, women's status is not equal to that of men (Maheen S. Women's perception of empowerment-findings from the pathways of Women's empowerment program; 2015. Accessed 14 May 2020).

The participants also identified the women role in society is control by socio cultural norms. The respondents talked about the challenges that women have to face in workplace. They recognized that several forms of gender inequality as well as socio cultural and personal barriers which consistently restrict women's employment opportunities should be also be resolved.

The majority of interviewees thought that gender inequality and socio cultural were the main prompting factors at work. In this perspective, Pakistan's low level of women's empowerment is a real problem because the nation is almost at the bottom of the Gender Gap Index, coming in at number 151 out of 153 countries assessed (World Economic Forum. *The global gender gap report 2020*. Geneva).

Similar to this, the country's Human Development Index result for women in 2019 was lower than for men (0.464 vs. 0.622). Although everyone has equal rights under the constitution Of Pakistan. In practice, the women are still living in the miserable condition inside as well as outside.

There is a vital need to spend more money on formal and informal education to change the general public's traditional and social values, as they pertain to female empowerment. Education to the male members of our society is quintessential to providing fundamental rights to female members within families. The educational curriculum at all levels of formal education must also raise awareness about women's rights.

It is important to note that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can also play a vital role achieving this goal by launching a variety of campaigns centered on raising awareness of this matter of female empowerment, organizing conferences, seminars, lectures and other special programs aimed at achieving this goal.

It is imperative that women are at the very least should be provided with equal opportunity in the work place, as this is the first stepping stone towards attaining empowerment.

Additionally, political leaders and religious scholars are not only massive stakeholders in this societal issue because of the role they play in shaping the values of Pakistani society, but they also have an important role to play in fixing the problem at hand. Religious scholars can utilize the teachings of Islam and draw upon a number of historical instances from Islamic history concerned with equal rights for women, and empower women to use their voices by sharing pertinent examples of female equality from Islamic history.

The idea that every woman has the same fundamental human rights as a man in terms of their health, education and independent decision making is a foundational principle of Islam as a religion, and this is an important source of empowerment unbeknownst to the women of Pakistan at the present time.

Similarly, in the domain of politics, women should be given the freedom to participate in national and provincial assemblies, as a woman being responsible for

decision-making at a national level would serve as a shining example for women who seek this ability to make decisions in other avenues of life.

It was also evident from the survey conducted that women can be empowered by facilitating them with transport or a day care system so that they could maintain balance between their work and home responsibilities. Women in leadership roles can also lead to women empowerment and let the talented women explore their hidden potentials by developing confidence. Advancement of Pakistani women in their careers and onto the position of leadership is still largely defined by the ‘indigenous’ culture of the country- a culture which places certain barriers on the advancement of women in professional fields (Manzoor, 2015).

Our interviewees agreed that anti-harassment policies and workshops will be highly impactful method in increasing meaningful participation of women in leadership roles. Research indicates that formal changes – in law, organizations and processes – are necessary foundations for women to have decision making power (O’Neil & Domingo, 2016).

Therefore, workplace gender equality is highlighted as the most important strategy to overcome hindrances in achieving meaningful participation of women

in leadership. A female journalist at a renowned newspaper group quoted, “Actual structural changes in company policies go a long way. The most effective would be to put your money where your mouth is. Proper maternity leaves and accommodation should be given to women with flexible working hours. Companies need to start holding the problematic men in the company accountable.

We all have these stories or heard rumors of these men and we underestimate how far these stories can go in terms of encouraging women to join. So, companies should have active anti-harassment policies”.

Chapter 5. Conclusion

To obtain better understanding of the issue and produce suggestions for remedies, a straightforward interpretive qualitative study methodology was used to look at gender inequality among Pakistani women. Personal interviews and a thorough literature search, which included a review of academic, governmental, and non-profit materials, were the two main sources from which the data were derived. To address the three primary study issues, 20 women working in Rahim Yar Khan Region of Pakistan carefully chosen from various institutions to participate in one-on-one interviews. Without realizing it, the participant work selflessly despite the challenging job market.

Additionally, it has been shown that women face discrimination when it comes to promotions because they do not receive greater pay and there are fewer women in management roles, regardless of whether male employees receive more opportunities for advancement than female employees. Due to discrimination during the hiring process, some positions are not open to women.

In response to the persistently dismal state of women's empowerment in the nation, the Pakistani government has taken a number of targeted measures, such as the National Policy of Development and Empowerment, which was introduced in

2002 and sought to increase the economic, social, and political empowerment of women.

Furthermore, more seats have been set aside for women in the National and Provincial Assemblies, the Senate, and other bodies. Although this is the case, women in Pakistan continue to experience unequal power structures and have less freedom to make personal decisions (Bhattacharya S. Status of women in Pakistan. *J Res Soc Pakistan*. 2014). Even though women make up about half of the population, the nation ranks among the lowest in the world in terms of their empowerment, and raising their status could enhance society as a whole.

5.1 Interpretations of findings

The subject that this qualitative study set out to examine, was gender inequality and problems that have an impact on women's empowerment, particularly for those who work in various industries of Rahim Yar Khan region of Pakistan. Government of Pakistan has made efforts to empower women.

In the nation, several rules have been developed and put into effect. The Punjab government's 2012 "Women Empowerment Package" is a source that unequivocally promotes women's empowerment. According to the women's empowerment package, women have the right to receive a share of their parents'

property, higher education, government-provided transportation, a fixed quota for jobs, up to three years of age relaxation at the time of a new appointment, and posting at the same station where their husband works.

But it's important to keep an eye on how laws are really put into practice. The above-reported literature was taken into consideration when planning the current study to assess the condition of women in Pakistan. The results revealed that women continue to be underrepresented in all decision-making and power systems. This showed that women continue to struggle with female empowerment in work place as well as in house.

The information obtained indicated that 70% of the participants had been facing gender discrimination in work place. It is a fact that women who are confronted with a variety of issues relating to their families or society find it difficult to carry out their duties effectively and efficiently.

The advancement and elevation of women's status in society are hampered by this circumstance. Governments and all charity groups are urged to work for the empowerment of women. The empowerment of women feeds into the empowerment of society as a whole. According to Chaudhry, Chani, and Pervaiz (2012), women's empowerment can enhance the lives of men, children, and other

family members by giving them new vitality, perspective, and leadership. The key subject was the underrepresentation of women in light of these findings.

The second research question examined what women's empowerment means to respondents. They all agreed that empowering women was a key element in gaining a significant role since it allowed women to participate equally with men and make their own decisions. All respondents were well educated, as present in their individual profiles. The women believed that education gave them power. All of them had good occupations and were highly educated. One respondent, however, believed that less educated males were given preferential attention over intelligent women.

The third question examined the challenges faced by women in work place that limits women self-growth. Socio-cultural, traditional, and religious prejudices, patriarchy, the demands of family life, a lack of resources, and gender inequity, all have been highlighted as factors that prevent women from having equal chances. Women's empowerment was found to be significantly impacted by gender inequality. The general perception that women have of socio-cultural barriers is also very important. The family structure would present a hardship for women.

The higher mobility and financial independence of competent working women is a contributing factor to their increased empowerment.(UN Women Pakistan. Status Report on Women's Economic Participation and Empowerment; 2016).The government of Pakistan has started certain specific initiatives in response to the country's continually dire position for women's empowerment.

However, Pakistan has yet to attain women's emancipation or, to put it another way, women's equal participation. Therefore, enhancing women's self-growth, decision-making, and freedom of movement at work is not only a required but also a crucial goal, particularly for a developing nation like Pakistan.

Despite the oppression and violence that Pakistani women have endured, the fight for women's empowerment in Pakistan has not yet produced equal and notable outcomes. Unfortunately, a woman is still not expected to be treated equally to men in traditional Pakistani society. The social role theory, mandated roles, and society cultural norms appear to limit and hinder women from exerting themselves as the men can which is supported by the theoretical framework.

Therefore, Rasul S.(2014) mention that the issue is made worse by the appearance that Pakistani female lawmakers are constrained by patriarchal ideals

and norms when, in reality, they have the opportunity to be empowered. In these circumstances, the idea of empowerment in Pakistan appears to be purely conceptual, lacking any feeling of actualization. (Rasul S. Empowerment of Pakistani women: perception and reality. NDU J. 2014 ;)

Evidence from the past and the present demonstrates that Pakistani women face obstacles to women's emancipation not only in the workplace but also in the home. Pakistani women have had limited opportunities in the last two participation categories. Gender inequality is still very significant in Pakistan since it is a patriarchal society where women's marginalization is largely accepted as the norm.

The main religions in the nation with the largest followings also support the notion that there are cultural restrictions on women using their influence in public. As a result, cultural norms in daily life erect impassable barriers to involvement for women.

The world of the household is dominated by women in the majority of civilizations, particularly in developing nations, while the worlds of the public and of politics are dominated by males. These variations are a result of indirect biological differences between men and women.

Females are able to feed their unborn children after giving birth. Their biology forces them to perform domestic tasks. Males are theoretically more likely to engage in activities like hunting and fighting as well as other socioeconomic activities since they are physically stronger and leave their progeny for long periods of time (Ramesh, 2000).

5.2 Limitations of the Study

The small sample size and one targeted city was a significant drawback. Even though a sample size of 20 was acceptable for this qualitative study, it's possible that not all Pakistani women will be affected by these findings. In addition to this, I only concentrated on the involvement of working-class women in Pakistan. Because of the nature of the study, specific region area should be generalized by this research. The purpose of this study is to enrich the already-existing body of knowledge on the subject.

5.3 Recommendations/ Policy Implications

Gender harassment against women in the workplace is a global issue. Gender discrimination is possible in any nation in the globe as long as women are

employed. The following recommendations are based on Pakistan's fundamental national circumstances and pertinent professional expertise in order to address the issue of gender discrimination in employment for local female employees in Pakistan.

- In order to further encourage domestic economic growth, create more jobs, and reduce the imbalance between the supply and demand of labor, the Pakistani government should expedite economic system reform. Encourage self-employment and offer relevant policy.
- assistance at the same time. Additionally, a range of initiatives are aimed to address regional discrimination against women in the workplace.
- The evolution of the idea of the entire society is accelerated by government leadership. On one hand, it seeks to instill the idea of equality between men and women in the hearts of the populace and demands that the entire society accurately recognize the social standing and social contribution of women. Its goal is to persuade capable women to leave the home and work in social services. Concurrently, effectively lead corporate values. Businesses should take the initiative to fulfill their social obligations rather than pursuing their own interests in an exclusive manner.

- The legitimate rights and interests of female employees must be protected in all facets of hiring, job assignment, compensation, and promotion.
- A lot has to be done at governmental as well as social level to promote women leadership in Pakistan. Workshops should be arranged to create awareness and inspirations for women entrepreneurs. Providing entrepreneurial skills and mentorship will enhance their self-belief resulting in improving women empowerment.
- Safe workplace and commute facilities should also be introduced in workplace and as a policy level change by government.
- Better recruitment procedure, zero tolerance policy on cases of sexual harassment & abuse and strong referral mechanism to handle such complaints, provision of childcare support and services and flexible hours & work from home options are some of the methods through which meaningful leadership roles can be achieved among women

Women should actively and intentionally work to enhance their literacy on the basis of the government's overall construction of a favorable working environment for women including extensive cultural knowledge, as well as professional skills, in addition to active learning. You need to put more effort into

your studies and push yourself to become more proficient in the professional abilities you have previously mastered. Families should also make sure that girls of the right age acquire the education they need so they can develop their skills in the required profession in the future.

The Pakistani government needs to act quickly to strengthen the nation's laws prohibiting discrimination based on gender in the workplace. Make legislation available and clarify what constitutes gender discrimination in the workplace.

The relevant competent departments should also strongly encourage all businesses and citizens to rigorously follow pertinent laws and regulations in their workplace in order to provide the relevant legal system with a solid foundation. The relevant law enforcement agencies are then readily apparent. Find out about any illegal business practices collectively, look into them, and deal with them; never accept them if they effectively guard against infringement of the legitimate rights and interests of female employees.

In conclusion, zoning and other gerrymandering tactics are used to prevent women from achieving women empowerment in the workplace. Other barriers to women's empowerment include socio-cultural biases, low pay, and lack of promotion chances.

The development of religious and cultural prohibitions against women's public roles in the workplace, a lack of financial resources and family support, the use of strong-arm tactics, intimidation and violence, workplace intrigues, the construction of gender to forbid women's active participation in the workplace, and women's acceptance of the status quo. There is also structural collusion and smear campaigns that damage the reputations of women who dare to participate.

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Abstract in Korean

파키스탄 여성 역량 강화의 과제 - 남성 중심 사회의 사례 연구

연세대학교 정경대학원
여성농촌지역개발 석사학위과정

Rehana Yaqoob

지난 30년 동안 양성 평등과 여성 역량 강화에 대한 논의가 중심적인 역할을 해왔습니다. 사회에서 여성의 위치를 고려하지 않는 정책과 프로젝트는 발전에 해를 끼친다는 사실을 인정합니다. 1995년 베이징에서 열린 유엔 여성 국제 회의에서는 성 불평등을 줄이고 여성에게 권한을 부여해야 할 필요성을 강조했습니다. 세 번째 밀레니엄 개발 목표는 성평등과 여성의 역량 강화와 관련이 있습니다. 다양한 국가, 지구 및 다자간 개발 기관은 지속 가능한 재정적 전환의 핵심으로 성 불평등을 줄이기 위해 노력했습니다.

양성 평등과 여성 권한 부여에 대한 파키스탄의 상황은 개인, 가족 및 사회 수준의 사회적, 문화적 관행으로 인해 암울합니다. 남편과 아버지와 같은 사회적, 문화적 장벽은 여성의 삶의 모든 영역을 채널화 하는데 지배적인 역할을 하며 대부분의 여성은 교육, 직업, 가족 계획, 건강 관리 및 심지어 결혼에 대한 결정과 선택을 할 권리가 없습니다(Ali et. al, 2010).

파키스탄은 지난 15년 동안 모든 형태의 여성 차별 철폐 협약(CEDAW)을 실천했습니다. 성 불평등을 줄이기 위해 이 협약은 남성과 여성을 위한 가족 계획 및 생식 건강 서비스를 포함하여 교육, 고용 및 건강 관리에서 동등한 권리를 제공합니다. 파키스탄은 또한 "사회 경제적 개발의 모든 부문에서 불평등과 불균형을 제거하고 모든 개발 혜택과 사회 서비스에 대한 여성의 동등한 접근을 보장"하는 것을 목표로 하는 개발 및 여성 권한 부여를 위한 국가 정책(2002)을 발표했습니다. 파키스탄은 이와 관련하여 거의 달성하지 못했지만 여성은 삶의 모든 영역에서 상당히 과소 평가됩니다. 본 연구의 목적은 인터뷰 가이드를 통해 파키스탄 라힘야르칸 지역 여성근로자의 고용실태를 파악하는 것이다.

특히 파키스탄 라힘 야르 칸(Rahim Yar Khan)에 고용된 여성의 경험을 바탕으로 그들이 직면해야 하는 도전과 장벽의 관점에서 직장에서 여성의 경험을 살펴봅니다. 이 질적 연구는 샘플 선택에서 샘플링 기술을 확신합니다. 연구 질문은 파키스탄 사회에서 여성 권한 부여의 현재 상태에 초점을 맞추고 이러한 권한 부여를 달성하는 데 역할을 하는 사회 문화적 및 경제적 요인은 무엇입니까? 이 샘플 크기와 관련하여 Rahim Yar Khan 지역에서 의도적으로 선택된 20명의 파키스탄 여성을 인터뷰하여 주제를 코딩, 분류 및 분석했습니다. 조사 결과에서 확인된 바와 같이, 여성 고용에 있어 여성의 성차별이 심하고 여성은 직장 뿐만 아니라 이 지역의 다른 삶의 영역에서도 어려움에 직면해 있습니다. 이 연구는 파키스탄 노동계급 여성들의 경험을 바탕으로 성차별을 다루는 데 중요했습니다. 여성이 그렇게 할 수 있다면 국가의 경제 성장에 기여할 수 있을 뿐만 아니라 가족의 더 나은 성장에도 영향을 미칠 수 있습니다.

핵심단어: 양성 평등; 성평등; 여성; 파키스탄; 성차별; 여성 고용.