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## “Problems Faced by Working Women at their Workplace: A Survey Research in Islamabad”

Aneela Khan

Saman Noor

Dr. Amber Ferdoos

Ph.D. Scholar & Visiting Lecturer at Department of Sociology, International Islamic University, Islamabad [at-akshahid78@gmail.com](mailto:at-akshahid78@gmail.com)

MS Scholar & Visiting Lecturer at Department of Sociology, International Islamic University, Islamabad [at-samannoor414@gmail.com](mailto:at-samannoor414@gmail.com)

Assistant Professor Department of Sociology, International Islamic University, Islamabad

### Abstract

This study explored the difficulties faced by Pakistani working women in Islamabad within a sociocultural context where traditional gender standards held influence. It looked into the widespread problems of gender inequality, gender-based violence, and gender discrimination in the workplace to comprehend their significant effects on women's personal and professional lives. The study investigated the complex mechanisms that limited women's access to equal opportunities and undercut their contributions to the workforce, drawing on a wide range of literary works and cultural views. The research clarified the importance of tackling these issues globally through a thorough investigation, especially in light of the current state of the economy and growing inflation. This study aimed to inform policy reforms and actions targeted at building a more inclusive and equitable workplace environment by clarifying the underlying reasons and implications of the challenges experienced by working women. In the end, it aimed to promote gender equality and social progress by advocating for the acknowledgement and empowerment of working women.

**Keywords:** Working Women, Gender Violence, Gender Inequality, Discrimination.

### Introduction

The majority of Asian countries have male-dominated civilizations, which has caused several issues for women in a variety of spheres of life. professions. In such civilizations as Pakistan, women encounter conflicts in various ways. For example, women's original and creative ideas are disregarded during decision-making. Because it is believed that these individuals are weak and incapable of making wise decisions, they are not assigned to positions of authority. In Pakistan, women also deal with issues including physical and sexual harassment. Their traditional families forbid them from working when they desire to (Manzoor, et al. 2013). Since they are expected to

get married soon, they have fewer career options. Additionally, working women are viewed negatively by society. Political women who are enthusiastic are not accorded the respect and dignity that they merit. The main issue that all women face, not just in Pakistan but in many other nations around the world, in my opinion, is gender discrimination.

Pakistani women who are working from middle-class, believe as their duty toward supporting their families' welfare in this era of rising costs and inflation, which has led to economic strain and anxiety. This helps them feel less stressed about living paycheck to paycheck. She is waging the hardest war of her life to ensure that her family has a prosperous and comfortable existence. She needs to keep her home and work lives in harmony and balance. Employed women undoubtedly improve social status, provide for their children, and are financially independent, yet they are nevertheless marginalized in many ways. Various issues, including societal attitudes, discrimination, and the lack of acknowledgment that working women face due to their status and function in the economy, negatively impact the way in which their skills and abilities are put to use. These issues could lower the productivity of working women and prevent them from pursuing other career opportunities. (MAQSOOD et al. / J. Agri. Soc. Sci., Vol. 1, No. 3, 2005 246). M. S. Schotanus (2022). "When women experience violence, their human rights and basic freedoms are violated, hampered, or eliminated. Women and girls experience physical, sexual, and psychological abuse that transcends class, culture, and financial levels in all countries, to varying degrees (Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, paragraph 112).

### **Pakistani Context**

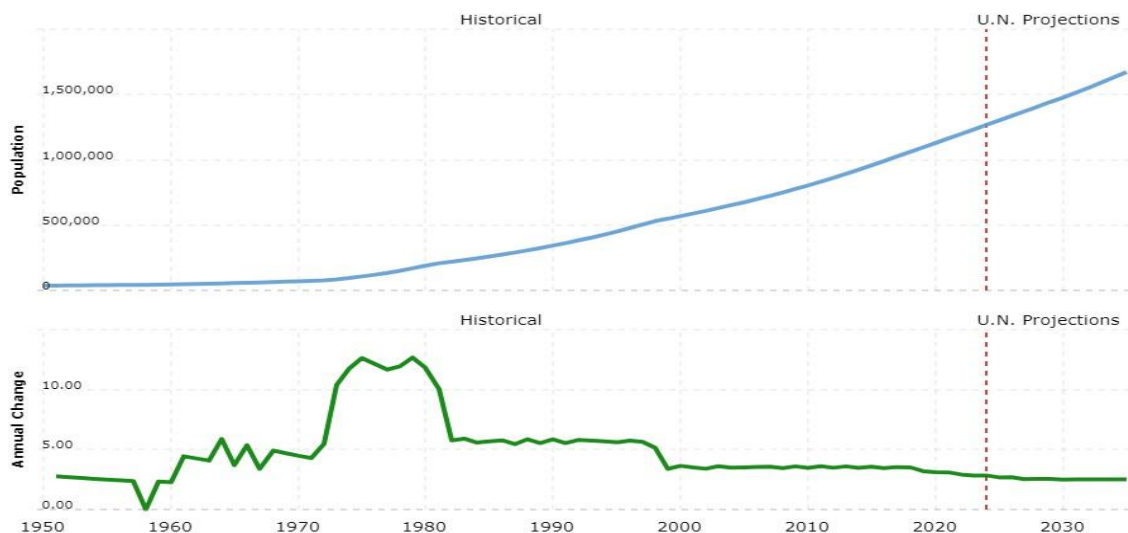
Sexual and gender-based violence have no one set definition or accepted meaning. Understandings vary depending on the nation, the culture, and the legal system. For example, minors are not included in popular definitions of sexual violence. The absence of a widely recognized and unambiguous language impedes the creation of a reliable database and/or reporting system, which in turn limits efforts related to advocacy, monitoring, and prevention (Baker, 2007). Pakistani women have always faced discrimination when compared to men in the same socioeconomic position. Historically, social and cultural issues have prevented the majority of women from entering the workforce. However, as a result of recent societal shifts brought about by heightened financial strains, the growth of educational institutions, and easier access to knowledge, an increasing number of women are joining the workforce at all levels (Nazir, S. 2011).

Islamic law has placed women at the top of the human hierarchy. Islam bestowed a woman with the rank of honor, dignity, safety, and affection that is unparalleled even now. In Islam, women's standing is determined by their equality and honor. Women are just as vital as men in each of the five pillars, and their rewards are the same. Regrettably, there are non-Islamic states in modern times even if there are numerous cultures where the majority of people are Muslims. The Quran gives women the right to intellectual development and establishes their equality with males. According to Bashir (2001), women is comparable to men in her pursuit of knowledge and education.

Women are the same as guys when it comes to of achieving their full potential. Since before our independence, women have struggled to improve living conditions for their fellow country

women and to alter antiquated social beliefs. Still, only 3 percent of these builders of nations are officially categorized by the government as "working women" based on data from the 1981 Pakistani population census. As a result, the true economic contribution of women to the country's output has been drastically distorted (The News, 2001). The majority of working women are most likely crucial to the advancement of the country and the natural world. The labor force of women is just as vital for emerging nations like Pakistan as their material counterparts. According to Haque et al. (2008), women have not been appropriately employed in our country's labor force due to their disorganized supply, lack of training, lack of employment opportunities, unstable social environment, and inadequate financial incentives. Women have the potential to be exceptionally influential in a variety of areas of life. When less developed countries experienced economic crises, woman's perceptions of engaging in wage-earning activities with men increased. Women work equally hard as men do, yet they are only paid half what men are. A portion of them work in vocational fields such as carpet, chair, and basket making, knitting, and sewing clothes (Zia, 2000).

In a lecture on International Women's Day, Dr. Malik, the leader of the Church of Pakistan's Peace, Justice, and Human Rights Commission, said that "society could not be put on the road to prosperity without the progress of women" (Dawn, 2000). It is critical that society reconsider how it views the women who are defending their life. They must be given the deference and standing in society that they genuinely and rightfully deserve (Maqsood; The News, 2001). During a recent workshop on "women's Employment concerns and working conditions organized by the employers" Federation of Pakistan (EFP), Sindh Governor Muhammad Soomro acknowledged that "Integration of women in the development process as complimentary participants, is currently among the most important fields of national regulations that are not only regarding ourselves currently in Pakistan yet on the international level as well". He claims that the employment of women is increasingly acknowledged as a crucial and essential component of the nation's overall economy. The progress of any nation and economy is acknowledged to depend critically on the issues pertaining to women, especially those concerning employment and the development of human resources (Hussain; The News, 18 March, 2001).



Islamabad, Pakistan metro area population 1950-2024. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.macrotrends.net/global-metrics/cities/22042/islamabad/population>

### LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES

Administrative Unit	Total Labour Force	Labour Force Participation Rate-1998			1981 Census
		Both Sexes	Male	Female	
Pakistan	28,734,533	31.98	59.24	2.23	27.6
Rural	18,677,566	31.94	60.19	1.88	28.5
Urban	10,056,967	32.07	57.53	2.89	25.4
N W F P	3,443,432	29.09	55.52	1.64	26.3
Rural	2,805,229	28.86	56.22	1.12	26.5
Urban	638,203	30.13	52.55	4.18	24.7
Punjab	16,602,907	31.98	59.76	2.06	27.8
Rural	5,337,918	31.65	57.77	2.38	25.5
Urban	11,264,989	32.14	60.75	1.90	28.7
Sindh	6,923,766	32.73	58.83	2.96	27.7
Rural	3,342,209	32.56	59.66	2.51	29.4
Urban	3,581,557	32.88	58.07	3.39	25.4
Baluchistan	1,579,215	36.45	65.88	2.07	27.6
Rural	1,208,818	37.23	67.8	2.04	28.5
Urban	370,397	34.13	60.29	2.18	22.3
Islamabad	185,213	30.68	51.89	5.01	27.3
Rural	56,321	28.23	52.35	1.86	26.1
Urban	128,892	31.89	51.68	6.70	28.2

**Labour Force Participation Rate :** It is the percentage of economically active population to the total population aged 10 years and above.

[https://web.archive.org/web/20100827002727/http://www.statpak.gov.pk/depts/pco/statistics/other\\_tables/labour\\_force.pdf](https://web.archive.org/web/20100827002727/http://www.statpak.gov.pk/depts/pco/statistics/other_tables/labour_force.pdf)

Despite facing physical and mental strain from additional workload, working women in Pakistan are often valued more for their contributions to the home than their roles outside it, leading to societal perceptions of them as unconventional. However, despite these challenges, Pakistani women persist in their work for the betterment of their families, themselves, and their country. Recognizing the importance of employment, a study explores organizational options for female employees to advocate for labor rights. In large-scale industries, women receive better pay and timely compensation, benefit from regulated working conditions, and demonstrate greater assertiveness and awareness of their rights compared to those in smaller-scale employment settings (Durrani, The News, June 9, 2002).

#### Statement of the Problem:

Considering the problems faced by working women at their workplace which is a considerable hurdle in their progress and professional achievements. Workplaces are generally structured to meet men's needs, and the dominant culture favors men. Women on the other hand, are exposed to sexual harassment and exploitation, and their needs may be regarded as special in comparison to men's needs, which define the norm. Women workers are subjected to difficulties not

experienced by their male colleagues, such as harassment while traveling in the local transports to access their offices.

### **Objectives of the Study:**

Problems faced by women with reference to overall environment in office premises.

1. To explore gender-based violence faced by women at their workplace.
2. To find out the issues of gender inequality at workplace.
3. To analyze that what are the effects faced by working women on their professional and personal life.

### **Significance of the Problem:**

Problems faced by working women is a worldwide problem because in this age of economic unrest and growing inflation, the female as a member of family try to cope with the financial problems to find out jobs to support their family. But unfortunately, women participation is not given the same consideration as those men receive. The work done by women is often considered secondary and frivolous, women face discrimination in pay, fringe benefits and opportunities for advancement. This research study will help to understand that what are the problems faced by working women to understand the causes of these problems and to study their effects.

### **Review of Related Literature**

A multitude of factors, including societal norms and religious taboos, restrict the ability of women to freely seek employment in large quantities. These limitations are currently easing daily, and people's attitudes are growing more and more supportive (Gupta, 1960). The labor force participation rate of women is not given the same weight as that of males. Even while many women entered the workforce due to financial necessity, their employment was frequently viewed as incidental and trivial. Women experienced discrimination in terms of income, perks, career progression, and employment prospects (Klasen, S., Le, T. T. N., Pieters, J., & Santos Silva, M. (2021). Moreover, regardless of their employment level, women were still expected to handle the majority of household and child-securing tasks. As a result, women's labor is never truly done (Feinstein, 1979). In Pakistan, women were viewed exclusively as housewives who took care of their husbands and raised their kids. Women have been denied the opportunity to participate fully in society as equal and engaged members for generations. She shared the same capabilities and sensitivities as the guys, and she was a good human being. She has the potential to be just as effective and positive a social force as man (Abidie, 1976). Based on the findings from the studies, it is established that women's employment has a positive impact on the socio-economic status of the family, despite traditional thinking and ideas that suggest employed women are not good housewives and neglect their children (Azhar, 1978).

Very few women deal with their husbands' resistance to their careers. The reasons behind male ego issues stemming from neglecting children, housework, and women's health issues are attributed to social and familial criticism. In-laws, or relatives, criticize their paid work because they fear their morals will deteriorate, that they will grow too self-reliant and lose who they really are (Hafiz, 1983). These inconsistencies not only called into question the firm's theory and resolution of the work-family conflict, but they also mirrored a conundrum that has been identified in the work-family literature. Work-family research indicates that a commonly

accepted explanation for the stagnation of women's gains is that the long hours of professional jobs conflict with women's family obligations (Ramarajan, McGinn, and Kolb, 2012; Ely, Stone, and Ammerman, 2014). Policies that offer flexible work arrangements to reduce this conflict have been widely supported as a solution (Galinsky et al., 2010; Perlow and Kelly, 2014).

### **Gender based Violence and Gender inequality**

Gender-based violence is mostly influenced by the unequal power dynamics between men and women. In actuality, gender-based violence frequently serves to uphold traditional gender norms for both men and women as well as gender inequality. Battering, marital rape, sexual violence, dowry-related violence, female infanticide, honor crimes, early marriage, forced marriage, female genital cutting, sexual harassment in the workplace and at school, commercial sexual exploitation, trafficking in girls and women, and violence against domestic workers are just a few examples of the gender-based violence experienced by women and girls (Horton, R. 2020) Beyond its immediate effects, violence against women and girls damages communities and families. An important cause of death and disability for women and girls between the ages of 16 and 44 is violence. According to a 1994 World Bank study on eleven risk factors that affect girls and women in this age range, domestic abuse and rape are more harmful than cancer, car crashes, war, and malaria. Additionally, studies show a growing correlation between HIV/AIDS and violence against women. According to a survey conducted among 1,366 women in South Africa, women who experienced physical abuse from their partners had a 48 percent higher risk of HIV infection than women who did not (Knaul, F. M., Bustreo, F., & Horton, R. 2020). Human rights are violated by gender-based violence, which also impairs economic growth, productivity, and human capital. According to a 2003 report from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the annual cost of intimate partner violence in the US alone is estimated to be over US\$5.8 billion: US\$4.1 billion goes toward direct medical and health care services, and US\$1.8 billion is lost productivity as a result of a lack of attendance (Kaur, P. 2010).

### **Status of Women in Pakistan**

According to Kishwar and Akhtar (1982), women's roles in society are devalued by things like dress codes, employment limits, spectator park participation, and limitations on their freedom of movement and access to education

ii. Pakistan is a culturally closed nation where women still make up a very small percentage of the workforce. For instance, Himayatullah and Parveen (1990) identified the following as a contributing cause to the low rate of female employment in paid labor: The first is that, similar to the majority of other developing nations, Pakistan's labor force statistics frequently understate the number of economically engaged women, particularly when it comes to the unpaid laborers who work on farms and other family-run businesses. The Muslim tradition of Purdah prevents women from working in Pakistan. Currently, women handle the majority of household chores and child care. Women's access to the labor market is restricted compared to men's. The majority of women would rather take care of their families from home. Additionally, cultural trails have an impact on women's reporting of their activities during labor force surveys and censuses, in addition to the degree to which they really engage in income-generating activities (Jalaludin, M. 2008).

## The Status of Women Around the World

The Status of Women in Research on the Status of Women in rural Africa by Sadie (1995) shows that similar developing countries face similar challenges. Regarding the status of women in India, it was reported that the UNDP's Gender Development Index (GDI) was deemed to have an inadequate conceptual framework for measuring gender development, whereas the organization's Gender Development Measure was deemed to have an appropriate system due to its dual operation. For instance, Hirwani and Mahadevia (1996) discovered that the Gender Development Measure in 15 of India's largest states was more thorough, covering all the important facets of gender development, and more helpful to policymakers because it offers sector-specific tailoring indices. Additionally, Ramesh (2000) used 13 gender-sensitive indicators (GSI) to identify districts that were gender backward among 15 major Indian States. The exercise comprised variables that represented the women's social, cultural, educational, health-related, and economic standing. To gather data, a female investigator was hired (Jalaludin, M. 2008).

### Methodology

The research used a quantitative approach with face-to-face interviews and a detailed questionnaire, covering various sectors in Islamabad. It included executive, middle, and lower-level office-working females across socioeconomic strata. Interviews were conducted personally by the researcher for confidentiality. Islamabad's diverse population and opportunities for working women made it an ideal location. The study focused on office-working women aged 25-40 to address gender discrimination and professional growth barriers. Due to constraints, the research was limited to this area, with a sample of 90 women selected using simple random sampling from three sectors. An interview schedule with 58 questions, divided into two parts, was developed to ensure uniform data. It covered topics like cultural norms, education standards, and gender inequality. The schedule was pre-tested on 10 respondents to improve validity and reliability, with final adjustments made based on supervisor feedback.

Table: Total number of offices in three working sectors of Islamabad.

Working Sectors	Total No. of offices
Government offices	41
NGOs	159
Private companies	34

### Field Experience

During data collection, several challenges were encountered:

- Convincing respondents about confidentiality was difficult.
- Higher-position females were not easily available, requiring multiple visits.
- Moving between offices was challenging, requiring the researcher to be accompanied.
- Conducting interviews during office hours was tough due to respondents' busy schedules, making it hard to get their full attention and cooperation.

### Results & Discussion:

This chapter analyzes findings from a detailed field investigation, drawing conclusions based on the results presented in frequency distribution tables. Out of 130 approached women, 90 responded. The researcher focused on identifying gender-based violence and gender inequality issues in the workplace, aligning with the study's objectives.

#### Gender Discrimination

While discussing and analyzing the type and magnitude of the problems faced by women, table 1 shows the gender discrimination at the workplace with the working women in the office environment. According to the data 68.9% respondents said yes that they did face the gender discrimination while having equal competencies. While 27.8% responded in no, and these were the women who were in the institution where the females were in greater numbers and they were not facing this problem in their working set up. Only 3.3% appeared with the response of “do not know”. Table 1 shows the detail of the responses.

Table:1 Gender discrimination.

S.No	Response	Frequency	Percent
1.	Yes	62	68.9
2.	No	25	27.8
3	Don't Know	3	3.3
	Total	90	100.0

#### Official Mobility permission:

Data in Table 2 demonstrates that working women often face family restrictions on traveling outside the city or country for official tours or business meetings. These constraints are enforced by both family and societal norms to avoid dishonoring their families. Society restricts women's mobility and activities, allowing only limited contact. According to Table 2, 21.1% of respondents were allowed official mobility, 66.7% were not allowed, and 12.2% were unsure, having never faced such a situation. Detailed responses are in Table 2.

Table: 2. Official Mobility permission

S.No	Responses	Frequency	Percent
1.	Yes, off course	19	21.1
2.	No, not allowed	60	66.7
3.	Don't know	11	12.2
	Total	90	100.0

#### Family permission affect

The below table 3 shows that the family permission affected the professional growth of the working women. Table 4.15 depicts clearly that 86.7% of the working women were facing the problems due to no permission for official mobility and only 7.8% of the working women



responded in “no” as most of them were the divorced or separated. Only 5.6% of the women did not know as they did never face such situation who were of very low social working or had no job criteria to move out for official purpose. Table 3 shows the detail.

**Table: 3. Family permission affect**

S.No	Responses	Frequency	Percent
1.	Yes	78	86.7
2.	No	7	7.8
3.	Don't know	5	5.6
	Total	90	100.0

### Doubts of ability

Table 4. depicts very clearly that the women who have restrictions from family and due to the social norms for official mobility, face not only the problems in their professional growth but that also shows that created the doubts of their ability despite having the competencies like those of males. Table 4 shows that 66.7% respondents were of the view “yes” and 23.3% were of “no”. while only 10% responded in “don’t know”. Table 4 shows the detail.

**Table: 4 Doubts of ability:**

S.No	Responses	Frequency	Percent
1.	Yes	60	66.7
2.	No	21	23.3
3.	Don't know	9	10.0
	Total	90	100.0

### Appreciation by higher ups

Table 5 indicates that 67.8% of working women received appreciation from their male bosses, with various reasons cited by respondents. Some received recognition for their work performance, while others speculated it was to garner attention from female subordinates. Conversely, 23.2% reported never receiving appreciation, attributed to perceptions of male competence overshadowing female contributions. Additionally, 8.9% responded "don't know," possibly due to being new to their role. Refer to Table 5 for detailed data.

**Table: 5. Appreciation by higher ups:**

S.No	Responses	Frequency	Percent
1.	Yes	61	67.8
2.	No	21	23.2
3.	Don't know	8	8.9
	Total	90	100.0

### Issues of Gender based violence and Gender inequality

While progress against sexism has been made, gender inequality persists. Women face challenges in attaining higher positions and are often paid less than men for equal work, with the Census Bureau reporting a 23% salary gap as of 2002. Gender discrimination manifests in various forms, including biased hiring practices, sexual harassment, and disparities in employment benefits. Table 6 illustrates workplace violence, with 5.6% experiencing physical violence from bosses, 33.3% enduring verbal abuse, 17.8% facing emotional aggression, and 1.1% suffering sexual harassment. Many incidents go unreported, indicating reluctance due to fear of tarnishing reputation. Refer to Table 6 for details.

**Table: 6 Violence from Boss.**

S.No	Responses	Frequency	Percent
1.	Physical (specify please.....)	5	5.6
2.	Verbal (specify please.....)	30	33.3
3.	Emotional (specify please.....)	16	17.8
4.	Sexual (specify please.....)	1	1.1
5.	None	38	42.2
	Total	90	100.0

### Violence from male colleagues.

Table 7 details violence from male colleagues. 14.4% experienced physical aggression, often involving unwanted touching. Verbal abuse affected 25.6% of respondents, occurring during discussions where females were disregarded and subjected to abusive language. Emotional violation affected 10%, with pressure to engage in inappropriate behavior despite marital status. 2.2% endured sexual violence, causing significant distress. Conversely, 47.8% reported no violence, likely due to limited interaction with male colleagues.

**Table: 7. Violence from male colleagues.**

S.No	Responses	Frequency	Percent
1.	Physical (specify please.....)	13	14.4
2.	Verbal (specify please.....)	23	25.6
3.	Emotional (specify please.....)	9	10.0
4.	Sexual (specify please.....)	2	2.2
5.	None	43	47.8
	Total	90	100.0

## Effects of Working Women Problems on Physical and Mental Health:

### Job affects:

Table 8 explains that the job of the responded affect their personal life. It clearly shows that 80% of the respondents said that their job affected their personal life. While only 20% respondents said that their job had no effect on their personal life. Table 8 shows the detail.

Table: 8 Job affects.

S.No	Responses	Frequency	Percent
1.	Yes	72	80.0
2.	No	18	20.0
	Total	90	100.0

### Effects on Health

Table 9 illustrates the impact of work responsibilities on respondents' health. 30% reported positive effects, attributing early routines and cleanliness to their work. Conversely, 42.2% experienced adverse effects, struggling to prioritize health amidst work demands. 21.1% reported no effect, while 6.7% were unsure of any impact. Refer to Table 9 for specifics.

Table: 9. Effects on Health

S.No	Responses	Frequency	Percent
1.	Positive effects (specify please.....)	27	30.0
2.	Adverse effects (specify please.....)	38	42.2
3.	No effect	19	21.1
4.	Don't know	6	6.7
	Total	90	100.0

## Relationship of Gender Violence, Gender Inequality and Major Difficulties in Professional Growth

In this part it is tried to analyze the effect of different variables through cross tabulation, to find the relationship of gender violence, gender inequality and the major difficulties in the professional growth of working women.

### Cross tabulation of Spacing of sitting places and Sitting arrangements

Table 10 examines the correlation between seating spacing and arrangements for working women, revealing significant obstacles to their professional advancement. Among 90 sampled women, 22 faced major spacing issues, while 41 encountered lesser problems. Conversely, 27 experienced no spacing challenges. Additionally, seating arrangements posed challenges for 20 respondents, primarily discomfort around male colleagues. Another 42 reported some difficulties due to mixed-gender workspaces, while 28, often from female-only organizations or holding higher positions, reported no issues. These findings stress the importance of gender-inclusive office environments for women's productivity and well-being.

Table: 10. Cross tabulation of Spacing of sitting places and Sitting arrangements

	Responses	Sitting arrangement			Total
		Up to greater extent	Up to some extent	Not at all	
Spacing of sitting places	Up to greater extent	19	3	0	22
	Up to some extent	0	34	7	41
	Not at all	1	5	21	27
Total		20	42	28	90

**Cross tabulation of Social Executive Position and Major reasons in not attaining**

Table 11 presents a cross-tabulation analysis of social executive positions and the primary reasons for the lack of female representation in these roles. Among 90 surveyed women, 82 identified males as holding such positions, while only 8% were held by females. Regarding reasons for this disparity, 7 respondents cited educational qualifications, 24 attributed it to professional competencies hindered by familial and societal restrictions, aiming to safeguard family honor. 17 mentioned the patriarchal system favoring males, while 34 noted cultural norms as barriers to female attainment of such positions. Only 8 respondents highlighted other major reasons.

Table: 11. Cross tabulation of Social Executive Position and Major reasons in not attaining:

	Gender	Major Reasons					Total
		Educational qualification	Professional competence	Patriarchy	Cultural acceptance	Any other (specify please.....)	
Social Executive Position	Males	5	24	15	32	6	82
	Females	2	0	2	2	2	8
Total		7	24	17	34	8	90

**Cross tabulation of Reporting Boss and Major difficulties**

Table 12 examines the relationship between reporting bosses and challenges for working women. Among 90 respondents, 71 reported male reporting bosses, with only 19 having female bosses. Challenges included 14 citing family time constraints, 31 mentioning social constraints on official mobility, and 11 attributing issues to patriarchal beliefs favoring males. Additionally, 28 noted

limited opportunities for females under male bosses, who displayed inconsistent support or occasional seductiveness, or avoided female staff. Six respondents mentioned other unspecified difficulties in gaining favor from their bosses.

Table: 12. Cross tabulation of Reporting Boss and Major difficulties:

	Gender	Major Difficulties					Total
		Time limitations	Social Constraints	Patriarchy	Less chances for females	Any other....	
Reporting Boss	Male	12	25	10	20	4	71
	Females	2	6	1	8	2	19
Total		14	31	11	28	6	90

**Cross tabulation of Boss interaction and Major difficulties**

Table 13 presents the correlation between boss interactions and challenges encountered by working women. Of the 90 respondents, 10 experienced harsh treatment from their boss, while 72 described their boss's behavior as friendly. Five reported seductive behavior from their boss, and only three indicated avoidances of female staff. The main difficulties cited included time limitations, social constraints, patriarchy, limited opportunities for females, and other unspecified challenges. See Table 13 for details.

Table: 13. Cross tabulation of Boss interaction and Major difficulties

		Major Difficulties					Total
		Time limitations	Social Constraints	Patriarchy	Less chances for females	Any other....	
Boss Interaction	harshly/strictly	2	4	0	4	0	10
	Friendly	12	24	9	21	6	72
	seducing behavior	0	3	0	2	0	5
	avoid to see & discuss with female staff	0	0	2	1	0	3
Total		14	31	11	28	6	90

**Cross tabulation of Male and Female treated equally with major difficulties faced by working women**

Table 14 reveals disparities in how males and females are treated in the workplace. Among 90 respondents, 43 felt they were treated equally, while 41 disagreed. Six were unsure, mainly due to being new on the job or lacking direct boss interaction. Regarding major difficulties, 31 cited social constraints as hindering equal treatment, while 14 attributed it to time limitations imposed by family responsibilities, impacting professional growth. Eleven respondents pointed to the patriarchal system as a barrier. See Table 14 for detailed results.

**Table: 14. Cross tabulation of Male and Female treated equally with major difficulties faced by working women**

		Major Difficulties					Total
		Time limitations	Social Constraints	Patriarchy	Less chances for females	Any other.....	
M & F treated equally	Yes	5	18	6	11	3	43
	No	8	13	5	13	2	41
	Don't know	1	0	0	4	1	6
Total		14	31	11	28	6	90

**Cross Tabulation Difficulty in Professional growth & Major difficulties**

Table 15 analyzes the relationship between major difficulties and obstacles in professional growth. Of the 90 sampled working women, 76 reported facing significant challenges in professional advancement due to time limitations, social constraints, patriarchy, and limited opportunities for females. Thirteen respondents disagreed, and one was unsure, likely due to being new to the job.

**Table: 15. Cross Tabulation Difficulty in Professional growth & Major difficulties**

		Major Difficulties					Total
		Time limitations	Social Constraints	Patriarchy	Less chances for females	Any other.....	
Difficulty in Professional Growth	Yes	6	25	11	28	6	76
	No	7	6	0	0	0	13
	Don't know	1	0	0	0	0	1
Total		14	31	11	28	6	90

## **Salient Findings**

Salient findings from the research are as follows:

1. The majority (74.4%) of working women surveyed were aged 21-30.
2. 62.2% of respondents held postgraduate qualifications, hindered by social constraints and limited educational opportunities.
3. 56.7% of working women were unmarried, while 38.9% were married, facing challenges balancing family responsibilities with work.
4. Married working women tended to have fewer children, with only 13.3% having more than three.
5. 60% lived in nuclear families, lacking support for childcare during work hours, while 37.8% lived in joint families.
6. 46.7% had worked for 2-4 years, with few working over six years, suggesting discouragement as they advance in age.
7. Only 7.8% of females held Director/Deputy Director roles, with 42% serving as Assistant Managers.
8. Just 13.3% earned over 50,000, highlighting gender pay disparities.
9. 63% contributed to household budgets, reflecting their role in economic stability.
10. 68.9% faced gender discrimination at work, being treated unequally.
11. 92% of executive positions were held by males, neglecting female representation.
12. Verbal violence was reported by 33.3% from bosses.
13. 25% faced verbal violence, and 13% experienced physical violence from male colleagues.
14. 80% reported personal matters affecting work, reflecting family responsibilities.
15. 70% faced family-imposed timing restrictions, reflecting societal norms.
16. While 67.8% received work appreciation, it lacked significance.
17. 63.3% believed promotions were not merit-based but influenced by politics or favoritism.
18. 52% lacked family time due to work commitments.
19. 22% faced family restrictions on official mobility, while 61% did not.
20. 67% feared family refusal for official mobility would cast doubt on their abilities.
21. 86.7% believed family refusals for mobility would affect their job.
22. 42.2% experienced adverse health effects due to overwork.
23. Despite equal competencies, 76% felt their work was undervalued compared to male colleagues, indicating discrimination.

## **Summary**

An investigation into the "Problems faced by working women at their workplace" was conducted in Islamabad, aiming to understand the interconnectedness of obstacles hindering their professional development. The following goals were designed to be achieved by the study:

1. Explore the challenges working women encounter in the overall office environment.
2. Investigate instances of gender-based violence experienced by women in the workplace.
3. Examine issues of gender inequality within the workplace.
4. Analyze the effects of these challenges on the professional and personal lives of working women.

It was conducted across three job sectors - Government, NGOs, and Private - the study utilized proportionate sampling, with a sample size of 90 working women. Data was collected through interviews, facilitating the achievement of study objectives. Analysis revealed that the challenges faced by working women are a global phenomenon. Factors such as time constraints, familial restrictions, social barriers, parental attitudes toward education, and the patriarchal societal structure were identified as major obstacles to professional growth. Additionally, within the office environment, women face challenges where their work is often undervalued compared to male counterparts, and they may experience various forms of violence - physical, verbal, emotional, and sexual. This investigation sheds light on the multitude of difficulties faced by working women globally, highlighting the complex social and cultural dynamics that contribute to their challenges.

### **Conclusion**

The study's findings led to the conclusion that working women's difficulties are a global problem. While the study noted differences in office environments within industries, it also noted recurring themes of discrimination against women in terms of wages and benefits, limited prospects for growth, and an undervaluing of women's contributions to the workforce. Furthermore, the research identified a correlation between professional growth and gender inequality and violence. Gender-based discrimination and violence were highlighted as major factors impeding the progress of working women. The study also determined that social constraints, time limitations, cultural norms, and sexual harassment contribute to weakened interpersonal relationships, decreased organizational commitment and job satisfaction, increased job stress and absenteeism, and higher turnover rates among working women. It was concluded that these ongoing challenges, including non-physical forms of violence, significantly hinder the professional development of working women, perpetuating inequalities in the workplace.

### **Recommendations**

The research suggests several areas with potential for future action:

1. Problems faced by working women should be treated as a significant social problem.
2. Due to the huge influx of international media, Pakistan's cultural norms have drastically changed to become more liberal, and Pakistani women have quickly embraced these standards. Both the informal social setting and the workplace explicitly demonstrate this. A lot of actions that were deemed as sexual harassment ten years ago might not be relevant today. Yet with this existing social issue related to gender-based violence faced by working women at their workplace is needed to be addressed through awareness campaigns to promote changes in community's attitude, knowledge and behavior towards the women due respect and dignity as a human being.
3. A crucial topic that requires investigation in the field of gender studies is the impact of intimacy on a man's tendency for sexual harassment. We suggest that having a reciprocal relationship with someone of the opposite gender can greatly lessen a man's predisposition for sexual harassment. The study was mainly concerned with the causes of men harassing women; further research is required to examine harassment of men by women, men by men, women by women, groups harassing one another, and dominating groups harassing subordinate groups.



4. To emphasize the significance of the problems faced by working women at their workplace, further research in urban as well as rural settings must be conducted.

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