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DOES GENDER DIFFERENCES MATTER! INVESTIGATING THE PREJUDICED PRACTICES AND GENDER-ROLE CONFLICT AMONG FEMALE PROFESSIONALS WORKING IN MALE-DOMINATED PROFESSIONS

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the perceptions of gender role conflict, prejudice practices, office stress, and their impact on female professionals working in male-dominated professions. The paper's concepts and contexts are grounded on the role of congruity theory and transactional theories of stress. A survey was conducted in different institutions of Pakistan and Malaysia. A conceptual model was then developed on five crucial hypotheses on broad-ranging literature analyses using statistical analyses and structural equation modeling with Smart-Partial Least Square (PLS). The findings reveal that females find it difficult to seek the top executive positions as assertive and decisive behaviors in them are seen as obligatory traits. Moreover, the personal experiences of females working in different male-dominant professions in both countries related to discriminatory practices, office stress, role, work-family conflicts are somewhat similar. However, the ways, approaches, and intensity of those experiences are different. Therefore, it is recommended that radical changes be required in terms of stereotypical behavior, psychological and social belief systems for genders to mitigate and replace the old thumb rule concepts.

Keywords: Male-dominated professions, female professionals, gender-role conflict, work-family conflict, discriminatory act, emotional & psychological disorder.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The studies related to gender are always appealing and engaging. Many researchers have examined the significance of understanding societal gender roles' anticipations to avert the role conflict (Eagly & Karau, 2002) and stress at the workplace. However, different researchers conducted numerous research studies related to role conflict, work-family conflict, discriminatory acts, practices, and office stress. Only a few research studies on gender role conflict and office stress among females working in traditionally male roles monopolized professions. However, none of the research studies focused on females working in the male-

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dominated professions in Pakistan and Malaysia with a comparative viewpoint, which is one of the most considerable contributions of this study.

The industries and occupations which accommodate women less than 25 percent are considered as male-dominated ones. Most of these male-dominated organizations are gearing up to strengthen male stereotypes that make things even harder for females to rise and shine (Campuzano, 2019). Approximately 5 percent of female employment has been increased worldwide during 2016 and onwards in the male-dominated professions (Kolko & Miller, 2018); however, this increase in employment is not significant in the developing countries. In Malaysia, the total population of females is almost half, i.e., 15.9 million out of the total population of 32.6 million, but they only share 46 percent of the total national labor force (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2020). Although the participation and statistics showed that Malaysia is amongst the lowest in women labor force participation compared to other Far-East Asian countries. Pakistani women comprise 48.98 percent of the total population of Pakistan, but their labor force participation is only 22.81 percent (Bureau of Statistics Pakistan, 2021), which is among the least in comparison to other under developing countries (Amir et al., 2018).

This study summarizes the challenging issues of prejudiced practices and gender-role conflict among female professionals working in male-dominated professions (Sarwar & Imran, 2019). Further it summarizes the stressed conditions which can be caused due to prejudice treatment, sexual harassment, gender stereotypes, glass ceiling, career advancement issues, and work-family conflicts at workplaces, experienced by these females in Pakistan and Malaysia. The content of this paper is not only based on survey outcomes and interviews conducted with respondents in Pakistan and Malaysia but also based on their personal and professional experiences and observations. Apart from this, review of literature, webinar discussions, academic colleagues, students, relatives, and family friends shared their experiences. During the interviews, extreme levels of stress, financial and severe health issues and situations were observed because of the varied circumstances they were going through. Some of the related issues also came out but were not discussed in detail.

The contribution of this study is that it gives an insight into the challenges and issues female professionals face while working in the male-monopolized professions in two different countries, and hardly any research study was found in perspectives of these two Muslim countries regarding prejudice practices, office stress and gender-role-conflict. This study will become valuable literature and give an added advantage to the people and future researchers to gain insight into female professionals and their struggling lives. Moreover, government officials and policymakers of both countries might notice the difficulties and problems highlighted in this study regarding women, and even a minute change towards easing their problems and difficulties would be an outstanding achievement.

The scope of this study is to examine the gender-role conflict and office stress among females working predominantly in men-dominated professions and organizations. This enables the study to narrow the research focus on a significant social issue in two Muslim countries related to females. This study also opens doors for other researchers in many ways. They can conduct comparative research on the role, work-family conflict, office stress level, and perceptions of females working in male and female-dominated professions. The researchers can also select

many more occupations in which males work in female-dominated jobs. The researchers can also apply the concept of this study to other cultures and societies of the world.

2. LITERATURE ANALYSES

The differences in genders are inherited. Usually, these differences are persuaded in most societies and become the patriarchal societies where men become the inherited owners of the title and property. They rationalize the domination, traits, and qualities as their fundamental biological differences between males and females. Patriarchy can be explained as the social norm in which males possess the primary power and authority to dominate in political leadership roles, principled mandate roles, and property control roles. Unfortunately, Pakistan and Malaysia belong to such a society, where these inherent and social differences among gender making things complicated and challenging for females in all aspects of life.

Gender rules, norms, and values play an essential role in understanding the gender's standings and position in society (Endut et al., 2020). During the process of socializing and interaction within a society, gender creates its individualistic identity (Endut et al., 2020). As this identity and norms of gender are dynamic, so they keep on developing and changing their shape with the passage of time and space throughout their life (Endut et al., 2020). However, with the changing global scenario, Pakistan and Malaysia have started empowering women and helping them seek primary education and work for their families. Despite hard work and effort, most females in Pakistan still find it difficult to get fair chances of advancements in their careers for various reasons, and it may take their whole life to touch equality with men (Shabbir et al., 2017). It was observed that females who manage to become managers are rebellious as they are more stubborn when they refuse to adapt to the traditional image (Shabbir et al., 2017). In the case of Malaysia, women are open and have the freedom to work in comparison to Pakistani females. This research is grounded on the theoretical perspective given by Eagly and Karau (2002) and Lazarus and Folkman (1984). Eagly and Karau examined gender role incongruity.

2.1. Females' Working in A Male-Dominated Profession

Nowadays, women entering almost every field and occupation and progress to attain commanding positions more than before. Based on empirical data analysis, Malaysia’s gender gap index has a huge cavity between male and female professional participations, i.e., 70.9 percent in 2019. The gap was mainly in financial and economic participation, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2020). Although the participation rate of women in the labor force remains at the lowest place, i.e., 55.4 percent, employment-population ratio of 52.8%, share of industry 20.5% and share of managers, professionals, and technicians was 30.4% (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2020; ILOSTAT, 2021b; Jamil et al., 2019).

In Pakistan, the gender gap index is even more immense than in Malaysia, and there is only minute change observed over the past two and a half decades. The female labor force participation is 22.81% in comparison to 77.19% of male participation (Bureau of Statistics Pakistan, 2021) and the employment-population is also at the minimal level, i.e., 22.3% with the share of industry 14.6% and share of managers, professionals, and technicians was 11.1%

(ILOSTAT, 2021a). There is minute doubt as well that female labor force participation is following a mounting route. However, females of today's age are more career-oriented and enthusiastic towards building their careers from the previous ages (Amir et al., 2018). These female professionals face enormous barriers and challenges like marriages, safe mobility, and the attitudes are the reasons for decreased level of women participation in the workforce (Amir et al., 2018).

2.2. Discriminatory Practices and Glass Ceiling Effects

Gender expectations lay on both males and females placed by society in a standardized manner both in the workplace and home (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Discrimination is among those first factors that are evident as gender typecast (Iwasaki et al., 2004). Females may experience sexual harassment, biased work evaluations, restricted job, and feeble chances of promotion in organizations because of gender stereotyping and the existence of a glass ceiling (Iwasaki et al., 2004). However, only a handful of women manage to overcome the barriers and obstacles present in their career advancement by making situational friendships with their bosses to take favors. The gender equality index of Malaysia is far better than Pakistan. Pakistanis are among the highest end of gender disparity because gender discrimination, harassment, social inequality, and glass-ceiling effects are standard practices in Pakistan. Further research was conducted from the perspective of Pakistan related to glass-ceiling effect. The finding confirmed that females were exploited and were promoted to leadership roles when all their male counterparts proved to be helpless in the situation (Shabbir et al., 2017). In Pakistan, out of 22.81% female workforce, only 0.14% females working as managers and only 1.93% working as professionals (Bureau of Statistics Pakistan, 2021). In case of Malaysia, it lies on the end of the gender-disparity index and research showed that glass-ceiling factor is quite widespread in the country (Sharif, 2015). However, only a few research studies conducted in the Malaysian context related to the obstacles and barriers to females' advancement and it was found that females in Malaysia are keen and motivated related to work and progression, but unforeseen obstacles and barriers always come in between, and usually, they are not promoted to the positions they deserve (Sharif, 2015).

2.3. Work-Family Conflict

Males and females are different creatures, and when they come to work together in an organization, they can experience varied workplace role conflicts. The main reason is their family life after marriage, and they leave their jobs after they start their family and rarely come back to work. Those who come back to work faced a high level of anxiety, stress, and pressure, and as in most cases, these females face work-life conflict because they are unable to manage effectively and balance their family and work-life (Berger, 2018). Many research studies showed that when the married female professionals try to balance their work and family responsibilities and demands, they face more conflicts (Berger, 2018). Female professionals in Malaysia face lots of conflicts to balance their work and familial life, and data from different research showed that career-oriented females need to manage and balance their family and work life because of the presence of stereotypes roles (Arham et al., 2019). Therefore, constantly working under pressure and stress to attain family and work-life balance can result in poor performance and outcomes (Arham et al., 2019). Numerous studies suggest that family and work conflict is the fundamental reason for extreme stress and mental pressure among women in Pakistan, and this has been transformed into a problem that organizations today cannot ignore (Khursheed et al., 2019).

These problems and issues can be tackled only by eliminating the conflicts from both family and work fronts. Facilitation, the introduction of more friendly policies, work environment, and flexibility in time and space would lessen their burden and stress appropriately (Khursheed et al., 2019).

2.4. Emotional, Psychological Imbalances and the Role of Financial Needs and Household Responsibilities

Women, no doubt, worked hard, made some progress, got recognition in many male-monopolized organizations, and successfully attained high-ranking managerial and administrative positions (Eagly et al., 2003). However, workplace stress in female professionals is common and cannot be exaggerated. The impact of organizational stress and strain on females is severe and can lead to a psychological imbalance in corporeal manifestations like high blood pressure, migraine, heart strokes and, much more (Beehr et al., 2010; Bowling & Beehr, 2006).

The conflict at the workplace and home arose when females tried to balance their home and workplace responsibilities (Abdul Wahab, 2019). These females work under immense stress and pressure as they have the commitment to fulfill their domestic responsibilities with the growing financial needs and cost of living (Abdul Wahab, 2019). However, the study conducted by Wahab in 2019 did not find any connection or role of financial needs, household responsibilities, and women's earnings. Further, it is pretty evident that no considerable impact found that financial needs and household responsibilities have any considerable impact on getting balanced work-home life (Abdul Wahab, 2019; Rowley & Ong, 2012).

2.5. Theoretical Framework, Hypotheses Development, and Linkage to the Research Study

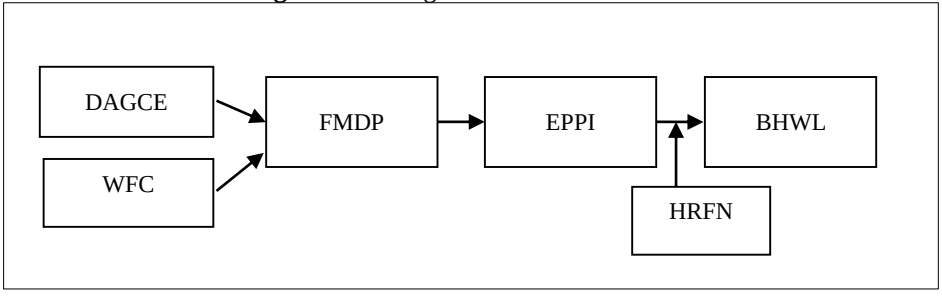
This research is grounded on the perspective of role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002) and transactional theories of stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Two theories provided the basis for this research study to scrutinize the impact of role conflict and office stress for professional females in professions that males dominate. Theory of role congruity proposes that when a person has faith in the societal norms and values of a particular social grouping and is not being shadowed as it should be, then, in that case, individual bigotry can arise (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Role congruity theory suggests that two forms of prejudice were perceived due to incongruity between women's gender roles and leadership roles. One form of prejudice is that females are perceived as less favorable and more minor potential candidates in leadership roles than males. Secondly, a female behavior to a leadership role is less favorable and does not fulfill the required behavior and characteristics when it comes to performing as a leader (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

The theoretical framework of office stress is provided by transactional theory (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The theory proposes that ecological demands create stress among individuals when these demands and pressures prevail over their aptitude and ability to manage environmental demands and pressures. Psychological stress and pressure can be explained as a specific affiliation between individuals and the environment in which they are working (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Lazarus and Folkman further observed that the way the individuals evaluate their circumstances ascertain their stress responses and overcoming struggles both. These coping efforts in such circumstances constantly altering the mental, behavioral, and interactive struggles to accomplish demands which are evaluated as challenging or surpassing the capitals of the individuals (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Therefore, taking these studies as the founding stones, the current research study was planned to examine the issues and challenges female professionals face in male-dominated professions. The hypotheses were constructed by addressing the issues and challenges female professionals face in their daily work lives. I hypothesized that difficulties exist for females and their gender traits and qualities and are seen as pessimistic and unfavorable traits for leadership roles while working in male-populated organizations. However, males are more involved in gender-related decisions and matters of discrimination, work-family conflict, and deteriorating females' emotional, physical, and psychological health. During the current studies, it was observed that discriminatory acts and glass-ceiling effects were common phenomena for females working in male-dominated industries and they usually suffered from psychological and emotional disorders (figure-1). Therefore, it was felt necessary to include the indirect effect as this concept was taken from the research studies of Beehr et al. (2010), Bowling and Beehr (2006), Stoeva et al. (2002) and Winefield et al. (2014). The financial needs and household responsibilities were added as moderators to balance the home-work life. The concept was taken from the research studies of Kim and Gordon (2014) and Ford (2011). Hence, all the rationale exhibited above in this study preceded me to formulate the following hypotheses:

H1: Discriminatory act and glass ceiling effect (DAGCE) has a significant impact on female in male dominated profession (FMDP)
H1a: DAGCE has an indirect effect on emotional, psychological imbalances (EPPI)
H2: work-family conflict (WFC) has a significant impact on FMDP
H2a: WFC has an indirect effect on EPPI
H3: FMDP are significantly vulnerable to EPPI
H4: EPPI has a significant impact on balanced home and work-life (BHWL)
H5: Household responsibilities and financial needs (HRFN) moderates the relationship between EPPI & BHWL

Figure 1: Linkage Model of the Research



Source: Developed by the author.

3. METHODOLOGY

Detailed quantitative and qualitative sources of data collection techniques were applied in this study. The quantitative method with positivism research was utilized (Sekeran et al., 2010). A self-administered survey was conducted as a firsthand information collection along with emails and social networking contacts in Pakistan. Whereas in Malaysia, survey questionnaires were distributed through emails and social networking contacts (LinkedIn & Facebook) only. These

surveys were conducted using convenience and snowball sampling methods. The questions were mainly close-ended with a five-point scale to measure the stress-generating factors and their intensity and possible outcomes.

Along with primary data collection, qualitative sources were also utilized. For this purpose, ethnographic and phenomenological methods were used. These methods are based on interviews, observations, explanatory, and exploratory techniques of collecting data and due to covid-19 pandemic convenience and snowball sampling methods were utilized to reach the relevant respondents. It was hard to get permission and visit the premises pandemic situation. Therefore, it has impacted the initial plan of the author to contact the high officials of the government and respondents from industries like construction, waste management, transport, and aviation industries apart from logistics and financial institutions. Due to lockdown, the author hardly found any connection to reach them, though some were contacted, and their responses were also included. relevant respondents were approached based on the personal and professional contacts of self, colleagues, friends, and friends-of-friends to create a link and reach appropriate respondents. The author assigned a paid moderator, who interviewed females and collected significantly related incidents briefs from the male-dominated organizations in Malaysia. The author studied many conceptual papers and articles published in reputed journals to examine this specific topic's outcomes based on the theories that give foundations to the assumptions and observations of this study. Log diaries, events, and incidents that happened in the companies were also helpful in drawing conclusions and interpreting outcomes.

3.1. Sample Size and Demographics

Females working in logistics and financial institutions of Pakistan and Malaysia were the main target of this study, but there are always two sides to a story. It was felt necessary to know the point of view of male professionals as well. Therefore, male professional respondents were also included to make this study a rationale and try to reach the root causes and possible solutions. G*power was used to calculate the required sample size for this research (Faul et al., 2009). The t-test was run to compute the required sample size with given α, power, and effect size using G*Power software. The G*power computed total sample size of 252, with 126 samples each for Pakistan and Malaysia (Faul et al., 2009). To receive the desired number of samples, 370 survey questionnaires were distributed, out of which 200 were in Pakistan and 170 in Malaysia.

156 responses were received (Pakistan), out of which 141 were found complete and fit to include in the study, with a response rate of 70.5%. From Malaysia, 149 responses were received, and 117 were found complete and suitable for this study, with a response rate of 68.8% (Table1). Therefore, a total of 258 samples were found suitable for the study from both countries. Based on small sample size, PLS-SEM is preferred, and there is no need to meet any model assumptions and requirements (Hair et al., 2016). There were 27 & 20 in-depth interviews were conducted in Pakistan and Malaysia's logistic and financial institutions, respectively.

Prior permissions, promise for keeping personal and professional information confidential, and confirmation calls were made well before time. However, 25 participants (Pakistan) shared their experiences and perspectives ultimately and two interviewees made their minds not to appear for the interview. In Malaysia, paid moderator visited different companies and conducted in-depth interviews. However, 17 were found fit and 3 showed unwillingness to answer most of the

questions asked. The keywords technique was used to measure and analyze the results of the interviews. It facilitates the author to examine the literature and design the final constructs and model of this study.

Table 1: Demographics of the Respondents:

		Pakistan (141)		Malaysia (117)	
Research Demographics		**Frequency**	**Valid Percent**	**Frequency**	**Valid Percent**
Gender	Female	93	65.96	67	57.26
	Male	48	34.04	50	42.74
	Total	141	100	117	100
Age	18 – 24	38	26.96	29	24.79
	25 – 40	55	39.01	45	38.46
	40 & above	48	34.04	43	36.75
	Total	141	100	117	100
Education	Bachelor	51	36.17	43	36.75
	Master	66	46.81	48	41.03
	Others	24	17.02	26	22.22
	Total	141	100	117	100
Designation	Senior manager	24	17.02	19	16.24
	Manager	49	34.75	42	35.89
	Junior staff	41	29.08	31	26.5
	Others	27	19.15	25	21.37
	Total	141	100	117	100
Experience	0 – 5 years	59	41.84	43	36.75
	6 – 10 years	37	26.24	39	33.33
	11 – 15 years	26	18.44	23	19.66
	15 & above years	19	13.48	12	10.26
	Total	141	100	117	100
Marital Status	Married	55	39.01	61	52.14
	Divorced	32	22.69	12	10.25
	Widowed	13	9.22	8	6.84
	Single	41	29.08	36	30.77
	Total	141	100	117	100

Note: frequency & valid percentage of each respondent

3.2. Instrument Design

The appropriate survey instrument design is divided into three units; in the first unit, many descriptive statistics were run based on socio-demographic factors to identify the sample population and characterization. In the second unit, the study's constructs were measured with closed-ended questions based on a five point-Likert scale ranging from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). In the last unit, the study variables have confirmed after conducting the pilot survey and follow-up revisions to improve the survey instruments and content validity. These were based on the feedback received from the experts and university faculty members familiar with the research methodology and working in male-dominated professions. For the in-depth interview, open-ended guidelines were designed. Most of the females in both countries were hesitant to give recorded interviews. However, assurance was given that their identities and record would be kept confidential.

3.3. Descriptive Analysis

A total of 141 &117 responses were received from Pakistan and Malaysia, respectively. Table 1 shows the following details of the survey respondents. There were 65.96% females and 34.04% male respondents from Pakistan, whereas 57.26% of females and 42.74% were males' respondents from Malaysia. Different age group distribution among the respondents like; 26.95% and 24.79% of respondents belong to age between 18-24; 39.01% and 38.46% between the age group 25-40 years and 34.04% and 36.75% between the age group 40 & above in Pakistan & Malaysia respectively (Table 1). The respondents' designations are as follows: 17.02% & 16.24% were senior managers, 34.75% and 35.89% were managers, 29.08% and 26.5% were at the junior posts with some other designations of the respondents were 19.15% and 21.37% in Pakistan and Malaysia respectively. Concerning the experience level, 41.84% and 36.75% of the respondents have experience in between 0-5 years, 26.24% and 33.33% respondents have 06-10 years of work experience, 18.44% and 19.66% of the respondents have 11-15 years of work experience, and 13.48% and 10.26% of the respondents have more than 15 years of working experiences in Pakistan and Malaysia respectively (Table 1).

3.4. Measurement

The survey was conducted to examine the proposed model that aims to explore the effects, impacts, challenges, and issues of stress female professionals face while working in a male-dominated profession of Pakistan and Malaysia. The measurement of (DAGCE) & (FMDP) combined units of the proposed structural model were adopted from Eagly and Karau (2002); Shabbir et al. (2017), Sharif (2015), Endut et al. (2020), and Amir et al. (2018). These units address discriminatory acts, practices, glass-ceiling effects, and impacts. Five-point Likert scaling methods were used, ranging from strongly disagree to agree strongly. The composite reliability (CR) for discriminatory acts and glass ceiling effects (DAGCE) in Pakistan is 0.905, alpha is0.870, and average-variance-extracted (AVE) is 0.65. In Malaysia, the composite reliability (CR) for DAGCE is 0.870, alpha is 0.813, and the average-variance-extracted (AVE) is 0.574. The CR for females in male-dominated professions (FMDP) in Pakistan is 0.930, alpha is 0.900, and AVE is 0.769. In contrast, the CR for FMDP in Malaysia is 0.901, alpha is 0.855 and average-variance-extracted (AVE) is 0.694 (Tables 2a & 2b).

The measurement of (WFC) & (EPPI) combined units of the proposed structural model were adopted from Lazarus and Folkman (1984), Iwasaki et al. (2004), Eagly and Karau (2002), Berger (2018), Arham et al. (2019) and Khursheed et al. (2019). The units in these sections address the impact of role conflict, office stress, and work-family conflict that leads to emotional, physical, and psychological imbalance. The CR for work-family conflict (WFC) is 0.884; alpha is 0.827, and AVE is 0.655 in Pakistan. Whereas in Malaysia, the CR is 0.817, alpha is 0.730, and AVE is 0.536. Pakistan's CR for emotional, physical, and psychological imbalances (EPPI) is 0.922; alpha is 0.895, and average variance extracted (AVE) is 0.704. In Malaysia, CR for EPPI is 0.887, alpha is 0.840 and AVE is 0.611(Table 2a & 2b). The measurement of (BHWL) & (HRFN) combines units of the proposed structural model was adopted from Abdul Wahab (2019) and Rowley & Ong (2012). The units addressed the balanced home-work life (BHWL) by female professionals. The units also cover the moderating role of household responsibilities and financial needs (HRFN). The CR for HRFN in Pakistan is 0.925; alpha is 0.878, and AVE is 0.804. Similarly, the CR for HRFN in Malaysia is 0.895, alpha is 0.825, and AVE is 0.740. The

CR for BHWL in Pakistan is 0.908, alpha is 0.849, and AVE is 0.767. Whereas CR MHWL in Malaysia is 0.853, alpha is 0.744 and AVE is 0.659 (Table 2a & 2b).

3.5. Partial Least Square PLS-SEM

To investigate the proposed model, PLS-SEM was used to forecast the variables and identify the relationships between variables (Hair et al., 2016; Reinartz et al., 2009).

3.5.1. Assessment of Measurement Model

The validity and reliability of the constructs are assessed by deploying a measurement model and structural model to evaluate the relationships between constructs (Chin, 2010; Hair et al., 2011). In the present analysis, two reliability coefficients were considered for appraising variables; Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability CR (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Chin, 2010; Gotz et al., 2010). Table 2a & Table 2b shows that CR for all latent variables in the measurement model of Pakistan and Malaysia is more than 0.8. Therefore, the measurement model has internal consistency and is reliable. CR, Cronbach alpha (CA), and AVE are used to measure the internal consistency of the items included in the construct and latent variables, and at least 0.70 CR & CA and 0.50 AVE values are recommended. Usually, the range of CR, CA & AVE is 0-1. Table 2a & 2b shows the moderating effect in both Pakistan and Malaysia as 1. It is calculated 1 for CR, CA, and AVE because of the self-generated standard value-1 by the software, which is a system error, and usually, it is not reported in the tables as per the available literature. Therefore, the revised tables 2a & 2b are given below.

Table 2a: Results of the Measurement Model for First-Order Constructs
Pakistan Measurement Model

Construct	CR	Cronbach's Alpha	AVE
Discriminatory Acts and Glass Ceiling Effects (DAGCE)	0.905	0.870	0.657
Emotional, Physical and Psychological Imbalances (EPPI)	0.922	0.895	0.704
Females in male Dominated Professions (FMDP)	0.930	0.900	0.769
Household responsibilities & Financial Needs (HRFN)	0.925	0.878	0.804
Balanced Home & Work Life (BHWL)	0.908	0.849	0.767
Work-Family Life Conflict (WFC)	0.884	0.827	0.655

Note: Desirable CR/ Cronbach's alpha 0.70 – 0.90.

Table 2b: Results of the Measurement Model for First-Order Constructs
Malaysia Measurement Model

Construct	CR	Cronbach's Alpha	AVE
Discriminatory Acts and Glass Ceiling Effects (DAGCE)	0.870	0.813	0.574
Emotional, Physical and Psychological Imbalances (EPPI)	0.887	0.840	0.611
Females in male Dominated Professions (FMDP)	0.901	0.855	0.694
Household responsibilities & Financial needs (HRFN)	0.895	0.825	0.740
Balanced Home & Work Life (BHWL)	0.853	0.744	0.659
Work-Family Life Conflict (WFC)	0.817	0.730	0.536

Note: Desirable CR/ Cronbach's alpha 0.70 – 0.90.

The degree to which each variable is separated from the other in the model is the discriminant validity (Chin, 1998; Hair et al., 2016). Two measures need to be checked to test the discriminant validity. Therefore, first, any latent variable (LV) in the model should be less than the highest

squared correlation of the construct and the AVE of each construct. Secondly, the indicator's loading with its related LV must be higher than its loading with other LVs (Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2011; Chin, 2010). Additionally, tables 3a & 3b demonstrates the comparison of the correlation of each variable with the square root of AVE of each variable.

Table 3a: Discriminant Validity (Pakistan) - Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Construct	DAGCE	EPPI	FMDP	HRFN	BHWL	WFC
DAGCE	0.810					
EPPI	0.579	0.839				
FMDP	0.655	0.388	0.877			
HRFN	0.381	0.681	0.247	0.897		
BHWL	0.441	0.571	0.318	0.776	0.876	
WFC	0.713	0.686	0.567	0.543	0.554	0.810

Table 3b: Discriminant Validity (Malaysia) - Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Construct	DAGCE	EPPI	FMDP	HRFN	BHWL	WFC
DAGCE	0.758					
EPPI	0.709	0.782				
FMDP	0.573	0.474	0.833			
HRFN	0.467	0.665	0.478	0.860		
BHWL	0.567	0.665	0.420	0.609	0.812	
WFC	0.788	0.796	0.412	0.485	0.502	0.732

Figure 1a & 1b construct validity as evaluated using factor loadings and AVE, and it is significant to note that the outcomes assessment of convergent validity, specify that all the standardized loading values are above the cut-off level of 0.5 (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988) (Figures 2a & 2b).

Figure 2a: Measurement Model (Pakistan)

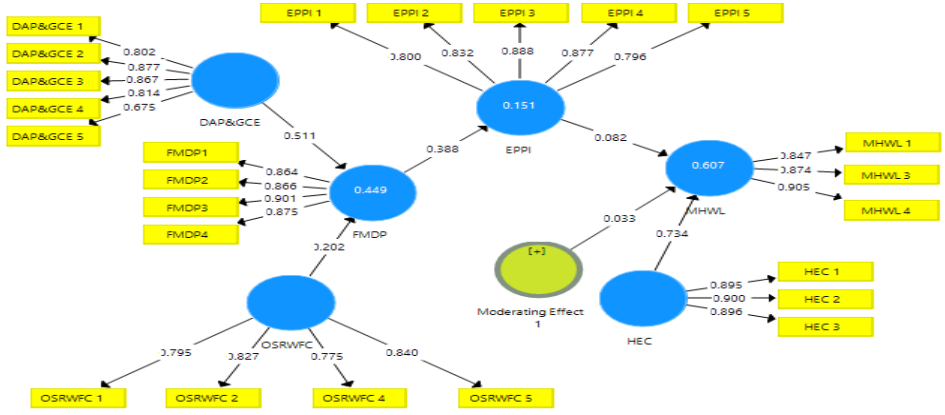
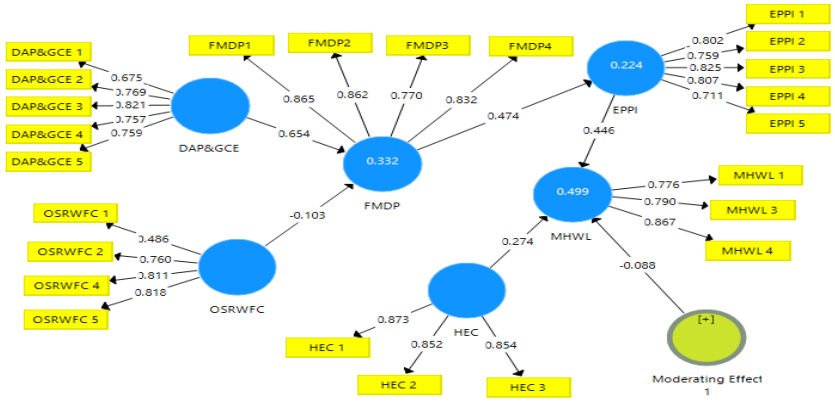


Figure 2b: Measurement Model (Malaysia)



3.5.2. Assessment of Structural Model

The relationships based on the objectives between the constructs, i.e., DAGCE, FMDP, WFC, EPPI, HRFN & BHWL, have assessed. Below are two criteria appraised for an initial assessment of the inner-structural model: R2 (R-Square) measure of path coefficients and endogenous constructs (Hair et al., 2011; Chin, 2010). R2 much relied on the research area and path coefficients, and they must be significant. It has been suggested that 0.67, 0.33, and 0.19 measures for R2 be considered substantial, moderate, and weak, respectively (Chin, 1998). This study's R2 value for endogenous construct (BHWL) is 0.607and 0.499 for Pakistan and Malaysia. Therefore, the values are considered substantial and moderate, respectively. Most of the path coefficients in both countries are highly significant; therefore, most hypothetical relationships are significantly supported, except Hypotheses H2, H2a, and H5 (Malaysia) were rejected as the path coefficients were not significant. In Pakistan, the hypotheses H2a, H4, & H5 were not supported and dismissed as the path coefficients were insignificant (Tables 4a & 4b).

Table 4a: Summary of the PLS Regression Results-Pakistan

Relationships	Variables	Coefficient	T Statistics	P Values	Decision
Direct relationships	DAGCE -> FMDP	0.511	4.749	0.000	H1: supported
	EPPI -> BHWL	0.082	1.260	0.208	H4: Not supported
	FMDP -> EPPI	0.388	4.925	0.000	H3: Supported
	WFC -> FMDP	0.202	1.741	0.079	H2: Supported
Moderating Effect	Moderating Effect 1 -> BHWL	0.033	0.870	0.379	H5: Not supported
Indirect relationships 1	DAGCE->FMDP->EPPI	0.198	3.290	0.001	H1a: Supported
Indirect relationships 2	WFC->FMDP->EPPI	0.079	1.472	0.142	H2a: Not supported

Note: *p< 0.05.

Table 4b: Summary of the PLS Regression Results –Malaysia

Relationships	Variables	Coefficient	T-Value	P- Values	Decision
Direct Relationships	DAGCE ->F MDP	0.654	6.243	0.000	H1: supported
	EPPI -> BHWL	0.446	4.430	0.000	H4: Supported
	FMDP -> EPPI	0.474	6.038	0.000	H3: Supported
	WFC -> FMDP	-0.103	0.946	0.346	H2: Not supported
Moderating Effect	Moderating Effect 1 -> BHWL	-0.088	1.183	0.206	H5: Not supported
Indirect relationship 1	DAGCE -> FMDP -> EPPI	0.310	4.659	0.000	H1a: Supported
Indirect relationship 2	WFC -> FMDP -> EPPI	-0.049	0.966	0.334	H2a: Not supported

Note: *p< 0.05.

A bootstrapping method was also used to calculate the t-values of the model. The t-values equal to or more than 1.96 show a significant level of the recommended relationships with a p-value of less than 0.1. Detailed analyses of the full-size sample of both countries (Pakistan-141 & Malaysia-117) respondents showed somewhat unlike affiliations. In the context of Pakistan, the direct relationship between DAGCE and FMDP was significant (β=0.511*, t=4.749, p<0.01), thus supporting hypothesis 1. Similarly, the relationship between FMDP and EPPI was significant (β=0.388*, t=4.925, p<0.01), therefore supporting hypothesis 3. Likewise, the relationship between OSRWFC and FMDP was substantial (β=0,202*, t=1.741, and p<0.01), supporting hypothesis 2. The indirect relationship between DAGCE, FMDP, and EPPI also had significant (β=0.198*, t=3.290, and p<0.01), thus supporting hypothesis 1a. In contrast to the expectation, HBFC has no significant role and relation as a moderator on BHWL (β=0.033, t=0.870, and p>0.05), hence not supporting hypothesis 5. Similarly, the relationship between EPPI and BHWL was not significant (β=0.082, t=1.260, and p>0.05), therefore not supporting hypothesis 4. Equally, the indirect relationship between WFC, FMDP, and EPPI was also not significant (β=0.079, t=1.472, and p>0.05) hence not supporting hypothesis 2a (Table 4a).

In the context of Malaysia, the direct relationship between DAGCE and FMDP was significant (β=0.654*, t=6.243, and p<0.01), therefore supporting hypothesis 1. Similarly, the relationship between EPPI and BHWL was significant (β=0.446*, t=4.430, and p<0.01), supporting hypothesis 4. Likewise, the relationship between FMDP and EPPI was significant (β=0.474*, t=6.038, and p<0.01), supporting hypothesis 3. The indirect relationship between DAGCE, FMDP, and EPPI was significant (β=0.310*, t=4.659, and p<0.01), supporting hypothesis 1a. In contrast to the expectation, HRFN has no significant role and relation as a moderator on BHWL in Malaysia (β= -0.088, t=1.183, and p>0.05), not supporting hypothesis 5. The direct relationship between WFC and FMDP was insignificant (β= -0.103, t=0.946, and p>0.05), thus not supporting hypothesis 2. Similarly, the indirect relationship between WFC, FMDP, and EPPI was not significant (β= -0.049, t=0.966, and p>0.05) hence not supporting hypothesis 2a (Table 4b).

4. DISCUSSION

This study investigates the perceptions of prejudice practices and the severity of office stress on female professionals working in male-dominated professions. Convenience and snowball sampling methods were used to conduct a survey to target the relevant respondents. Hypothesis

(H1& H1a) examines the relationship between DAGCE and FMDP. It shows a direct connection between females when joined any male-dominated organization, would have come across discriminatory acts and practices, discouraging and demotivating decisions with prominent glass-ceiling effects. The result concluded that unfair acts and practices are prevalent. However, the presence of glass-ceiling effects at the managerial and above level usually did not get the desired results and outcomes. The hypothesis is supported by the information collected and hence validated. The findings are relevant to the prior empirical studies of Eagly and Karau (2002), Shabbir et al. (2017), Sharif (2015), Amir et al. (2018) and Endut et al. (2020).

The hypothesis (H2) gave a positive result. People in Pakistan feel that females generally receive demotivating and discouraging behavior, which leads to specific outcomes (work-family conflict). The hypothesis supported the information collected, validated, and shows direct relations between females suffering from office stress, role, and work-family conflicts when working in male-dominated professions. These findings are in line with the research studies of Berger (2018), Arham et al. (2019), Khursheed et al. (2019) and Eagly and Karau (2002). Whereas hypothesis (H2a) has an indirect relationship and gave a pessimistic result. People in Pakistan feel that females suffer from emotional, physical, or psychological imbalances that are more significant when working in male-dominated professions. The respondents reveal that female workers face immense pressure from varied sources. Hence the assumption was rejected and revealed that most females face and bear lots of other significant consequences that often lead them towards extreme EPPI situations. The outcomes and findings of these assumptions are validated and in line with the previous empirical studies of Lazarus and Folkman (1984), Eagly and Karau (2002), Bowling and Beehr (2006), Berger (2018), Khursheed et al. (2019) and Shabbir et al. (2017).

In Malaysia's context, the hypotheses (H2 & H2a) are not supported with the information collected and, hence, rejected both the assumptions (direct & indirect relations). People in Malaysia believe that their society is liberal and open for working females, and both genders share equal responsibilities of work and household responsibilities. Moreover, there are two more possible explanations for rejecting both direct & indirect hypotheses (H2 &H2a); the first is that females in Malaysia are now getting more favorable job opportunities and comparable salary packages than in previous years. The second possibility is that females are satisfied with the job environment, corporate culture, and their relations with management and their decisions. Hence, the findings align with the previous empirical studies of Eagly and Karau (2002), Beehr et al. (2010), Endut et al. (2020) and Amir et al. (2018).

The hypothesis (H3) shows positive results both in Pakistan & Malaysia. Most of the respondents in both countries agreed that females working in male-dominated professions are more exposed and vulnerable to emotional, physical, and psychological imbalances than females working in occupations that are comparable in numbers. The respondents also agreed that the repercussions of the treatments they received would adversely impact women's workforce in the long run. Due to the gradual increase in stress, tension, and disappointment, makes them vulnerable to various severe emotional, physical, and mental disorders. The outcomes and findings of this assumption are in line with the previous research and transactional theory of Lazarus and Folkman (1984), Beehr et al. (2010), Bowling and Beehr (2006), Endut et al. (2020), Shabbir et al. (2017) and Amir et al. (2018).

The hypothesis (H4) shows positive results in Pakistan and pessimistic results in Malaysia. Though both countries come under Islamic ideology, the differences in societal norms and beliefs are quite distinct. In context of Pakistan, the respondents agreed the impact of office stress, work-family conflicts, discriminatory acts and practices, and glass ceiling effects are pervasive and exist at almost every level. In the long run, this situation affects their well-being. The respondents emphasize that this is high-time to formulate/ revise policies and laws to safeguard and empower women, bring gender equity in social norms and mindset, and change the stereotyping behavior limiting females to excel in their work-home lives. The previous studies of Keleher and Franklin (2008), Hakim (2006), Rowley and Ong (2012) and Abdul Wahab (2019) are consistent and favor the assumption and concept. In Malaysian context, the hypothesis (H4) has been rejected because respondents feel that things are not that difficult for females working in male-dominated professions compared to females in Pakistan. The respondents think they usually do not have any office stress or family-related issues that harm their well-being. However, the respondents accept that they often face discriminatory practices and glass ceiling effects regarding performance evaluations, trust, acknowledgment, and promotions and agreed to empower women and revise or formulate new legislation, policies, and regulations related to gender equity and empowerment of women workforce concepts. The previous research studies of Hakim (2006) and Rowley and Ong (2012) also validated this assumption.

Hypothesis (H5) shows pessimistic results both in Pakistan and Malaysia. There was no significant moderating role of HRFN found in the current study that females are dependent on the household burden and financial constraints in managing home and work life better. The findings are consistent with the previous research studies of Rowley and Ong (2012) and Abdul Wahab (2019). The rejected hypothesis builds the foundation based on transactional theory (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), which posits that there is no set criteria or rule is defined that what will be seen as stress generating factors in people at the workplace. Moreover, there are two more potential explanations for the rejected hypothesis (H5): females might still be respecting their jobs, bosses' behavior, and organizational environment, and accepting the reality. Secondly, female employees show pretentious behavior like extreme nervousness, distress, and fear of losing their job in front of their bosses, colleagues. The findings confirmed from the research studies of Abdul Wahab (2019) that imply HRFN has no role in inspiring women towards well-being and maintain a balanced home and work life.

During the current study, qualitative results were also analyzed. Most of the females exhibited their concerns both in Pakistan and Malaysia that female professionals have been treated as an outcast, and it was felt and observed that they need to prove their skills, capabilities, and themselves to hold even their current positions in the organization. They further revealed that they need to demonstrate high performances consistently to maintain their positions and progression despite all difficulties and challenges. During the interviews, it was further observed that they need to struggle a lot to make their “voice heard." Some females during the interview disclosed that “whether it is an obvious form of discrimination or a subtle and explicit bias, male-dominated professions like financial markets and logistics companies creating challenges for female professionals as they usually did not or somewhat get specialized work." However, the viewpoints of male respondents were quite different from these females. According to most of the male respondents, some females do possess somewhat specialized and leadership qualities, but as they have been promoted, they showed rigidness and inflexibility that create lots of hurdles and obstacles to carry out even routine work as these females promoted to the next level were

mostly because of their friendship and close connections with their bosses, which are not appreciated at all. Further, they feel that unjust and discriminatory acts were common with these female professionals, and even deserved females do not get the righteous positions & work in most cases. As a result, their performances were affected due to high levels of pressure and stress, which in turn affected their health and well-being.

5. CONCLUSION

The exploration and evaluation of this study have provided enough proof about the challenges faced by female workers in male-dominated professions and industries. The findings reveal that female workers' incidence of gender role conflict and office stress is due to many reasons. One of the critical reasons for role conflict is because females act incongruently with social norms and expectations regarding proper and expected gender behavior. Secondly, most women have not been treated as valuable resources as they have not been considered the right choice for leading positions because they generally do not possess solid and assertive skills that are supposed to be the most suitable and desirable traits for the top executive positions. These perceptions, challenging issues, and behaviors usually give huge set-back to female professionals. Therefore, it has been recommended that organizations and the professionals at the top positions consider these matters seriously and come out of the old thumb-rule perception that women do not have the potential, courage, and persuasive skills to manage complex and crucial situations. Fundamental changes are required related to policies, rules, and regulations to safeguard female professional rights to work freely even in male-dominated industries with no apprehension and stress of gender-based conflicts. Moreover, it is high time not only formulate/revise policies but also make sure to execute these policies, rules, and legislations that alter the social belief systems for gender, empower women, bring gender equity in social norms and mindset because this can bring parity, fairness, and a stress-free environment for everyone and especially females to work and perform at their best.

5.1. Limitations of the Study

The current study shows several limitations, i.e., the participants were representing two male-dominating professions and may not generalize to other populations of working females. Furthermore, the participants' selection might not have been an archetypal sample of working females associated with two male-dominated professions. Moreover, the two male predominant occupations are not supposed to represent all the other male-dominated occupations. The respondents and female interviewees were selected based on convenience and snowball sampling methods, resulting in selection, and sampling errors. Further, the responses and feelings shared by the respondents and interviewees might include perspective biases and human errors. Additionally, this study focuses on female professionals associated with predominant male organizations conceptually in two countries only. These limitations will open doors for future researchers to extend their intellectual efforts to investigate the similar social issues and challenges of working females empirically with different contexts and countries, which is the positive side of the current study.

Ethical Approval:

- This article does not contain any studies with animals performed by the author.
- All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with ethical standards of the institutional and/ or national research committee with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable standards.

Informed Consent:

- Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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