

Perceived Gender Discrimination and Job Satisfaction: Gender Differences

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ABSTRACT: Pakistan is a country where gender discrimination is often observed in daily life; however, this issue has received limited attention in scholarly research. The aim of this study was to address this gap in the indigenous literature by examining the differences in perceived gender discrimination and job satisfaction between male and female employees working in the public and private sectors. Participants were at least 19 years old, had a minimum of one year of work experience, and had completed at least an intermediate or A-level qualification. Purposive sampling was employed to collect the data. The study utilized standardized instruments to measure the study variables. Correlation analysis revealed a significant negative relationship between perceived gender discrimination and job satisfaction among both male and female employees. An independent-samples *t* test indicated that women scored significantly higher on perceived gender discrimination than men; however, no significant gender difference was found in job satisfaction. The study emphasizes the role of the government, policymakers, and mental health professionals in taking effective measures to reduce gender-based discrimination in Pakistan.

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Introduction

Gender discrimination is an essential issue in contemporary organizations as the employees' perception of fairness can affect their attitudes, experiences, psychological wellbeing, and mental health (Abid & Jafree, 2024; Shahid et al., 2024; Triana et al., 2019). Perceived gender discrimination can be defined as the employees' perceptions that they get unfavorable treatment from the employer or boss because of their specific gender in areas like recruitment, promotion, salary, recognition, workload, and professional opportunities (Temizel, 2022; Tariq et al., 2023). Such experiences may shape how employees assess their workplace and their overall satisfaction with their job roles (Abid & Jafree, 2024; Shahid et al., 2025). Job satisfaction is an essential factor of employees' psychological affiliation to their job and may affect organizational commitment, satisfaction, motivation, and intention to retain within the organization (Shaffer et al., 2000; Zaitoun et al., 2025).

Existing literature have repeatedly suggested a negative association between workplace gender discrimination and job satisfaction (Asif & Rehman, 2021; Temizel, 2022; Shaheen et al., 2023). For instance, Shaffer et al. (2000), in a cross-cultural study of working women in the United States, mainland China, and Hong Kong, demonstrated that gender discrimination was inversely associated with commitment, while being associated with increase in turnover intentions and life stress. Similarly, Sawyer et al. (2020) reported that gender perception regarding discrimination was negatively associated to job satisfaction among female military employees (Rim & Kim, 2024).

The relationship between gender and job satisfaction is not that much obvious and clear as the previous research has demonstrated that job satisfaction between male and female is associated by the characteristics of the job being assigned to them, suggesting that these differences may be shaped by the description of the job, expectation as well as the social context (Clark, 1997; Zaitoun et al., 2025). For example, Clark (1997) reported that women in Britain demonstrated higher job satisfaction than men regardless experiencing comparatively less favorable employment conditions, indicating that gender differences in job satisfaction may comprise differences in expectations and relative assessment of work. More recent studies similarly emphasized the importance of evaluating gender and workplace injustice combinely rather than evaluating job satisfaction as a unique experience among employees (Abid & Jafree, 2024; Ali et al., 2024).

The issue is specifically relevant in Pakistan cultural context, where organizational operations and gender-related workplace experiences may influence perception of discrimination and satisfaction differently among employees, particularly through organizational culture, workplace inequality, and gender-based treatment that may shape perceptions of fairness and overall job satisfaction (Shaheen et al., 2023; Tariq et al., 2023)). A recent study among female academics in Pakistani higher education found that perceived gender discrimination was significantly associated with job satisfaction and emphasized the importance of gender-equitable workplace practices (Tara & Hong, 2023). Another research of university teachers in Punjab demonstrated a negative relationship between perceived workplace disparities and job satisfaction and mark high perceived gender discrimination among female lecturers (Tariq et al., 2023). Although previous studies have examined gender discrimination and job satisfaction in Pakistan, limited research has comparatively examined perceived gender discrimination and job satisfaction among male and female employees across both public and private sectors.

Hypothesis

H1: There will be a significant gender difference in perceived gender discrimination and job satisfaction among employees.

H2: Perceived gender discrimination will be significantly and negatively associated with job satisfaction among male and female employees.

Methodology

The study employed a cross-sectional, correlational-comparative research design to examine the relationship between perceived gender discrimination and job satisfaction and to compare these variables between male and female employees. The study employed purposive sampling to recruit employees from the public and private sectors in Lahore, Islamabad, and Gujranwala who were at least 19 years old, had a minimum of one year of work experience, and had completed at least an intermediate or A-level qualification.

Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

A total of 220 participants were invited to participate in the study, of whom 180 completed the questionnaire, resulting in an 81.82% response rate. The participants had a mean age of 32.54 years ($SD = 11.59$). The sample

comprised an equal proportion of men (90, 50.0%) and women (90, 50.0%). Regarding organizational sector, 97 participants (53.9%) were employed in the public sector, whereas 83 (46.1%) were employed in the private sector. In terms of years of work experience, 52 participants (28.9%) had 1–3 years of experience, 57 (31.7%) had 4–7 years, 16 (8.9%) had 8–11 years, 20 (11.1%) had 11–15 years, and 35 (19.4%) had more than 15 years of experience. Regarding residence, 94 participants (52.2%) were from Lahore, 39 (21.7%) were from Islamabad, and 47 (26.1%) were from Gujranwala.

Questionnaires/ Measures

The Workplace Gender Discrimination Scale developed by Kim et al. (2019) consists of 6 items assessing discrimination in recruitment, promotion, pay, deployment, training, and lay-offs. Items are rated on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. The original study reported Cronbach's $\alpha = .78$, indicating acceptable internal consistency. The Cronbach's α in this study is reported as 0.74, which is satisfactory and reflects satisfactory internal consistency among participants' responses.

Job satisfaction was measured using the Brief Index of Affective Job Satisfaction (Thompson & Phua, 2012). The measure comprises 4 items with a Likert range from 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly agree*). The scale reported good reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha of .84 in the original study. The Cronbach's alpha in this study is reported as 0.74, which is satisfactory and reflects satisfactory internal consistency among participants' responses.

Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles of the Helsinki Declaration and the APA 7th ethical guidelines throughout the research procedure. Permission from the relevant department was obtained, and the authors were contacted via email for permission to use their questionnaires. Participants were provided with a consent form that clearly outlined voluntary participation, the right to withdraw, confidentiality, and anonymity. Upon providing their written consent, participants were given a demographic questionnaire comprising age, gender, qualification, type of organization, work experience, sector type (public or private), and current residence.

Results

Table 1

Correlational Analysis between Study Variables among Men (n = 90)

Variables	1	2
1.Perceived Gender Discrimination		-.50***
2.Job Satisfaction		

Note: *** p < .001

The table above demonstrated significant negative association between perceived gender discrimination and job satisfaction among males.

Table 2

Correlational Analysis between Study Variables among Females (n = 90)

Variables	1	2
1.Perceived Gender Discrimination		-.40***
2.Job Satisfaction		

Note: *** p < .001

Among females, perceived gender discrimination negatively and significantly associated with job satisfaction.

Table 3

Gender Differences among Study Variables (N = 180)

	Men (n = 90)		Women (n = 90)		t	P	Cohen's d
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation			
PGD	14.34	3.83	15.66	3.54	-2.40	.01	3.69
Job Satisfaction	10.96	4.36	10.51	4.25	.70	.47	4.31

Note: ** $p < .001$, PGD = Perceived Gender Discrimination

An independent-samples t test showed a significant gender difference in perceived gender discrimination, $t(178) = -2.40$, $p = .01$, with women ($M = 15.66$, $SD = 3.54$) reporting higher discrimination than men ($M = 14.34$, $SD = 3.83$). No significant gender difference was found in job satisfaction, $t(178) = 0.70$, $p = .47$, with men ($M = 10.96$, $SD = 4.36$) and women ($M = 10.51$, $SD = 4.25$) reporting comparable levels.

Discussion

The present study assessed the relationship between perceived gender discrimination and job satisfaction among male and female employees in Pakistan. Perceived gender discrimination was significantly and negatively related with job satisfaction ($r = -.50$, $p < .001$) among men. A similar significant negative relationship was found among women ($r = -.40$, $p < .001$). These findings demonstrate that employees who perceive greater gender discrimination may exhibit lower satisfaction with their jobs. This finding is aligned with previous studies conducted in Pakistan, which have revealed that workplace gender discrimination has an inverse relationship with job satisfaction, as well as commitment towards the organizational objectives (Asif & Rehman, 2021; Channar et al., 2011).

The independent-samples t test further demonstrated that women reported significantly higher perceived gender discrimination ($M = 15.66$, $SD = 3.54$) than men ($M = 14.34$, $SD = 3.83$), $t(178) = -2.40$, $p = .01$. This finding may suggest the different workplace experiences of men and women in the cultural context of Pakistan, where women may experience higher exposure to gender-based hindrance and unequal treatment. Previous Pakistani studies have similarly reported high scores of female employees experiencing discrimination (Cheema et al., 2022; Noor et al., 2023; Sarwar & Imran, 2019). Furthermore, no significant gender difference was reported in job satisfaction, $t(178) = .70$, $p = .47$. Although women reported slightly lower job satisfaction than men, the difference was not statistically significant. One possible reason is that job satisfaction may be affected by many workplace factors beyond just gender discrimination, such as organizational support, leadership behaviour, workplace justice, promotion opportunities, pay, and working conditions. Research conducted in Pakistan has demonstrated that leadership behaviour and perceived organizational support are significantly associated with job satisfaction (Munawar et al., 2023; Shahid et al., 2024; Shahid et al., 2025; Shahid et al., 2026).

Conclusion

The findings showed a significant negative relationship between perceived gender discrimination and job satisfaction among both male and female. Furthermore, women reported significantly higher perceived gender discrimination than men, whereas no significant gender difference was found in job satisfaction. Thus, the study hypothesis was partially supported.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretically, the findings support the perception that perceived gender discrimination is negatively associated with job satisfaction among both men and women. The greater discrimination demonstrated by women also emphasizes the importance of gender when comprehending workplace experiences in the cultural context of Pakistan. The findings fill the gap in the limited indigenous literature related to the relationship between workplace gender discrimination and job satisfaction. Practically, organizations should ponder equal opportunities in recruitment, salary, promotion, training, and workload. Human resource departments should specifically develop unambiguous policies regarding gender discrimination and provide safe measures for reporting unfair treatment. Mental health professionals can spread awareness and provide counselling to the employees being facing discrimination. Government and organizational policymakers also need to come up with the proper implementation of gender-equity policies and legislation, include them in the labor laws of Pakistan, and ensure timely actions.

Limitations and Recommendations

The data were collected from only a few cities, i.e., Lahore, Islamabad, and Gujranwala, based on the authors' in-person accessibility. Future studies are suggested to include more cities of Pakistan, such as Karachi, Faisalabad, Multan, etc., for generalizability purposes and collect data via Google online forms. Future studies must utilize culturally appropriate and adapted questionnaires because not every intermediate-qualified individual in Pakistan has that much understanding of English. Future studies are required to include demographic characteristics such as the designation of employees and the organizational type, i.e., education, healthcare, etc. Future studies may also include the mediating factors of personality traits between perceived gender discrimination and job satisfaction.

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