

EXPLORING THE PROBLEMS OF WOMEN AT WORKPLACE

Abdul Malik Abbasi¹, Iqra Abbas², Shehnila Malik³

Abstract

The research paper is basically an attempt to explore the problems of a woman at workplace in Pakistan. The study was conducted to investigate factors behind the unfair attitude of the society towards working woman at workplace. The definitive attitude resists provision of equal opportunities for a woman in and outside of her workspace. Other main investigation of the study was to evaluate the vision of future generation about the current scenario of a woman difficulties. The mixed-research method was applied as a nature of the study. The Likert scale was used in a quantitative setting whereas, qualitative method was based on focus group interviews from male and female respondents in an informal setting. The primary data were collected by exploring the minds of respondents (N=54) from different universities through questionnaires developed online on Google form. The study discovered that Pakistani woman faces tons of problems. These problems hamper woman's contribution towards economy of the country however, the women who are resilient they step out of their comfort zones to make their identity. The findings of the study indicate that majority of respondents were aware of the problems faced by a woman at workplace and showed strong disagreement to the embarrassing attitude of the society towards a woman. The study prospects positive attitude for a woman in all spheres of life in times to come.

Keywords: working women, society, workplace, future generation, labor force.

Introduction

The women of Pakistan have played their roles in various professional fields since 1947. The women actively participated in the independence struggle and proved their mettle and talent as a leading force. Many of them realized their potential roles and began contributing to the fields of education, medicine and engineering etc. After the separation, women of Pakistan took active part in terms of economic development and played a significant role in building Pakistan from scratch. At that time government had also encouraged them to participate in all sectors of production and services. Employment Rights for woman was included in the article 27 of 1973 constitution. The article 27 of 1973 states 'there should be no discrimination on the basis of race, religion, caste or gender for appointment on the services of Pakistan' (Shaheed, 2009). Unfortunately, under the martial law regime in 1977, freedom of women to work was limited, and all efforts were made by the government to restrict women to their houses and eventually they left their jobs and preferred to stay in houses in order to protect themselves from unfair treatment of workplace. Eventually, *Martial Law* ended, and democratic government took control. Women were again encouraged to play their roles in the development of Pakistan.

Women of Pakistan represent 49 percent of total population but their contribution in labor force is only 24 percent and this difference is huge when it is compared with the male labor force which represents 82.5 percent of the total. The global gender gap index report ranks Pakistan as the third worst country where women have limited access towards economic opportunities, education sector and health services. It is amongst 10 countries where women's contribution is a pretty low in workforce. The root cause of this low contribution of women in labor force is ignorance of society and government in terms of the talented and skilled women of Pakistan. This negligence disallows a woman to take the opportunities and resources needed to stand on their own. It is very difficult to be a woman in male dominant

¹ English department of Allied Subjects, SMI University, Karachi. Email: amabbasi@smiu.edu.pk.

² Student, SMI University, Karachi.

³ Government College for Women, Shahra-e-Faisal, Karachi.

society, where woman in office feels scarier, even though a woman wants to contribute to the labor force and all she needs is a little support and acceptance. In Pakistan, the situation does not seem to be in favor of the working woman. When a woman chooses the profession of her own choice, she is discouraged to pursue either medicine or education fields as her profession. Other professions are not accepted by the society as there is a perception that a woman is too weak to pursue in male dominating professions. Nevertheless, this trend seems to be changing as the women of Pakistan select other professions i.e., engineering, business, media, IT and many more. Still there is a long way to go since most of their decisions are made by their families. During job recruitment process, the women are again judged by recruiters and only a few get the opportunity to work on the top companies. Quite a lot of companies do not consider a woman for the top position. Even after getting jobs, the women are treated discriminately at workspace because of their gender, so they need to prove their mettle time and again. Several women try their level best to simplify all the stereotypical aspects related to them and similarly, some think that the stereotype mindsets might change in times to come.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine and evaluate the problems of working woman in Pakistan.
2. To explore the mind of youth on the negative attitude of society toward working woman.
3. To predict what will be the future of working women in Pakistan

Research Questions

1. Does working woman face difficulty at workplace?
2. Does society support the working woman?
3. Do prospective employees know about the problems of working woman?

Hypothesis

- The prospects of a working woman seem to be very positive in Pakistan.

Literature Review

Malik (2017) argues that eastern women have an extra burden of raising and educating their children. In this traditional setting, women are expected to stay at home and are burdened with the responsibility of house-keeping. Whereas, the male family member is considered to be head of a family. He is supposed to take care of financial matters resulting the dependency of a woman over man. This attitude of society creates disproportion in financial growth and development of a family specifically and the country in general. Quddos (2018) states that in spite of representing half of the total population, women of Pakistan are exposed to difficulties in social and financial aspects of life. This creates disparity of income for a woman, because they do not have control to the income of the house and the assets like food, health, education, employment opportunities and all other important aspects of life. In this context, this gender discriminative attitude reduces the chances of a woman to perform in a Pakistani society. Ahmad (2018) discusses that women of Pakistan can play a vital role in development of country. They can increase their GDP by 9 percent only by reducing gender gap by 25 percent which will result into a profit of \$135 billion much more than IMF loan and CPEC investments. Hecareer (2013) argues that it is a proved fact that women are more dynamic, productive and loyal to their company as compared to men. Still in top companies, the female only represents 10 percent of the total employees and only 4 percent females are on top executive positions. The women workforce is increasing in Pakistan whereas, their difficulties grow with similar pace. Hasan (2011) reports that more than 70 per cent women face harassment at their workplaces but they choose to stay silent because raising voice will shut the doors of work for them by their families. The pay gap is also getting a wider as women are paid half of what their male colleagues earn. Overall women share only 15 percent in the wage employment because they are basically involved in family work (54 percent) and get nothing in return (Ahmad, 2018).

United Nation Development Progress (UNDP) (2017) states that 63 percent of total population of Pakistan is below the age of 30, and around 30 percent of population is between ages of 15-29, the report argues that Pakistan has a great opportunity to grow economically, politically and socially. Therefore, country should place youth at top priority. Najam (2018) highlights the increasing visibility of youth in economic activities. He states that the youth began appearing everywhere at shops, workplaces, streets, and on screens. Furthermore, Sagheer (2016) deliberates that a decade ago young people were shy to express their opinions but now they have discovered the talent of speech power. They also began sharing their opinions and gained confidence to participate in every walk of life with more enthusiasm, vigor relatively to their predecessors. This morale is expected to do miracles in order to lead country toward new heights.

Methodology

The present study is based on a mixed research method where qualitative and quantitative methods have been applied on the primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected from the respondents from different universities in Pakistan. For this, the present study developed the questionnaire based on *Likert Scale*: five points scale for each of the investigating items: Encircle the response that best characterizes how the respondents feel about each statement, where: 1= Agree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4= Strongly Agree, and 5= Strongly Disagree. Later, online *Google form* was developed to collect the data from five universities of Karachi, Sindh i.e., Iqra University, Bahria university, Dawood University of Engineering, the University of Karachi and SMIU University, Karachi. The sampling size was total 90 from different universities whose ages ranged from 19 to 28 years. 40 respondents from business administration, 15 from engineering, 15 from Computer software, 20 Social Sciences and medicine. Since it was online *Google form*, 54 respondents submitted their responses. Out of 54, 40 participants were female and 14 were male. Secondary data were collected through online journals, personal blogs and, articles. From the secondary data a questionnaire was developed based on twenty statements and distributed amongst the participants.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Data were analyzed through percentages of responses given by the respondents. Respondents were categorized in five departments. Fig.1 illustrates count of the departments including their respondents’ numbers as follows:

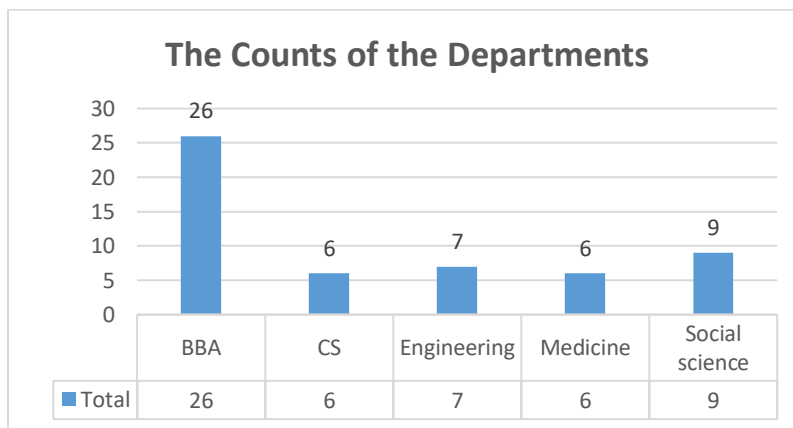


Figure 1. illustrates the count of five departments from different universities

The Traditional Role of Women

In Pakistan, female family members are restricted with some limited roles. As a daughter they are assigned with the role of taking care of their younger siblings and helping their mothers at home. Talking about education, their parents usually do not prefer to invest on their education with the mindset that only a son can support them in their old age.

Women after marriage, as a wife, are supposed to be a caretaker of home and children only. They are perceived to be a weak physically, intellectually and emotionally by the society. They think that women cannot do the work that requires physical and mental efforts that is why they are just left to do the household chores. Therefore, many talented women prefer to stay at home because of the social and cultural perspectives (Hussain, 2008). At workplace, women hear the similar comments, they are not appreciated for their intellect. Figure 2. illustrates that *Women are only good at household chores...* as follows.

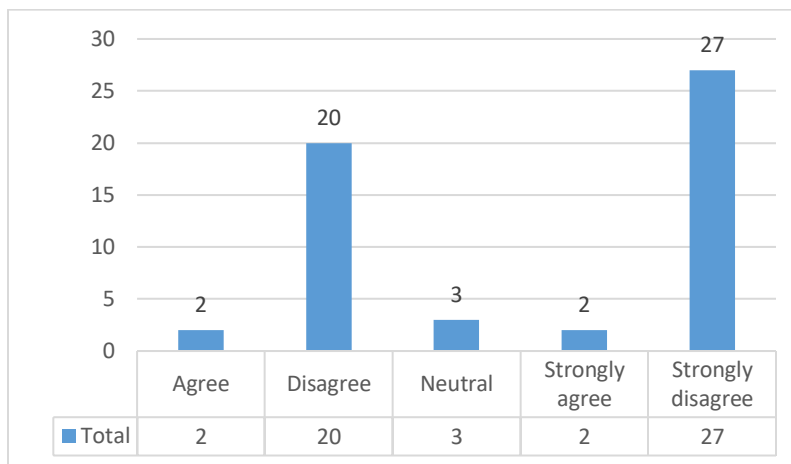


Figure 2. illustrates the responses of the statement: *Women are only good at household chores...*

For this statement the results are quite positive since respondents both male and female (86.7 percent) disagree with the perception of the society. It is further discovered that most of the future employees are against this negative attitude of the society. They are not in support of portraying women in limited roles and acknowledge that women have abilities and skills to perform well in every aspect of life. Whereas, only 7.6 percent of people still support the traditional perspective that is attached with the women. It is a point of concern that with the small sample size of 54 people, only 4 respondents still think that women are not capable enough to perform other roles outside of their domestic duties.

Importance of Women in Economy of the Country

Educating women and providing them with equal opportunities to make them stand on their own is always the first priority of most of the developed countries (Careerride.com, 2014) and this can be seen in their women labor force participation. In China, the women participation in the labor force is 61 percent, in Canada, it is 61percent, Australia 59 percent, UK 57 percent, Germany 55 percent, France 51 percent, and in Japan 50 percent (World bank, 2018). These are the countries with highest GDPs. Whereas, in Pakistan women made 49 percent of the total population, in labor force, their representation is only 24 percent. This is one of the main reasons that Pakistan’s economy stands at 42th position.

According to the economic survey of 2017-18 literacy ratio of women is only 48 percent. It means the majority- 52 percent of Pakistani women do not have the access to education. The remaining who luckily are enrolled in schools and universities do not get opportunity to practice their professions. In Pakistan, according to an estimate 60 percent of female doctors leave their profession after marriage. Furthermore, 80 percent of business female respondents prefer to stay at home and only 10 percent of women are entrepreneurs (Hussain,2014). This shows to what extent a family, society and government provide women their basic rights of education and employment. The Fig. 3 illustrates the responses as follows: for the development of the economy both male and female contribution is important, only the male labor force cannot achieve the required target.

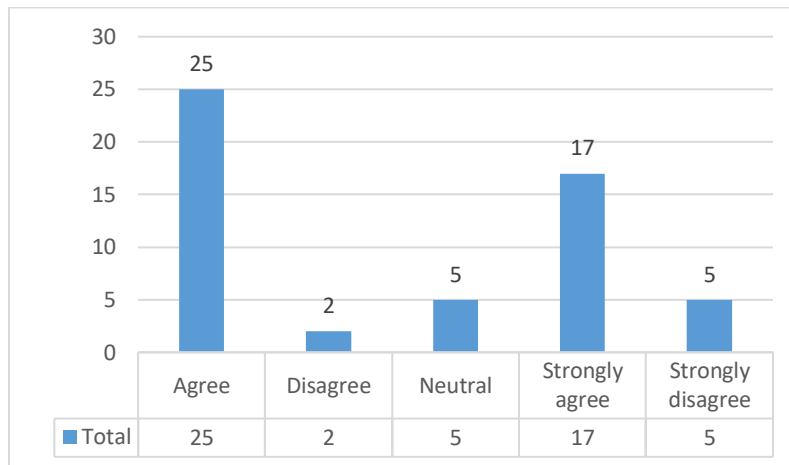


Figure 3. illustrates the responses for the development of the economy...

The results show that most of the respondents know the significance of women’s participation in economy. The 31.5 percent of respondents strongly agreed, 46.3 percent accepted the women’s role, 9.3 percent decided not to comment, and 13 percent disagreed. Overall majority knows that what is needed to develop the economy of Pakistan. Though, the results indicate for this statement that a large group does not consider a woman as a significant factor for the development of the country.

Unpaid Women of Pakistan

According to United Nations Rural women of Pakistan status report (2018), 67 percent of the women in rural areas contribute to the agriculture sector and out of that, 60 percent of women do not receive a single penny for it (Kaleem, 2018). Whereas, no efforts are being made to educate them, as literacy ratio of women in these areas is below the average. The data clearly illustrate the mindset of the Pakistani society where women can work in the farms for sake of their families without getting anything in return. On the contrary, women cannot contribute in the professional fields because of the so-called honor that is attached with the house-women. Countless women perform the role of a cook, cleaner, and accountant for the small businesses of their fathers and husbands and in return they hear the remarks that it is their responsibility. Thus, this aspect of working women has been added to the questionnaire. The Fig. 4 illustrates the statement: In our country people do not have any problem with women working in farms but they have a problem with the women working in offices as follows:

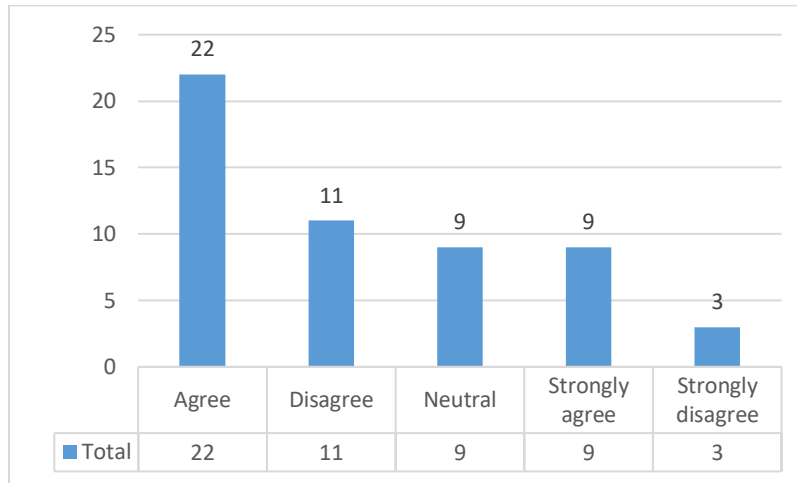


Figure 4. illustrates the responses that people do not have any problem with women

The results show that 57.4 percent respondents have experienced the situation where families do not have any issue with working in farms, but they do have issues with the women working in a professional setting. The remaining 26 percent disagree and as if they did not experience anything. While, 16.7 percent of respondents were neutral.

Family Support and Concerns

In Pakistan, the parent's decisions are affected by the culture, norms, values, the views of their relatives and neighbors regarding their daughters. Parents usually decide the profession for their daughters and only give them two choices i.e., medicine and education. These two professions according to the society is safe for a woman as in these fields segregation of sexes can easily be maintained (Hussain, 2008). This is one of the main reasons that most of the women are constrained to both fields. The girls are brought up under this perception of society as a result they usually choose the profession by keeping in mind the same opinion and choose only between these two fields. However, only few decide to pursue male-dominated professions and mostly face discouragement from their parents and society. Under this statement, the respondents are asked to share their point of view regarding the parent's influence on woman's career. The Fig. 5 illustrates the responses as families do support and encourage their daughters to pursue profession of their own choice as follows:

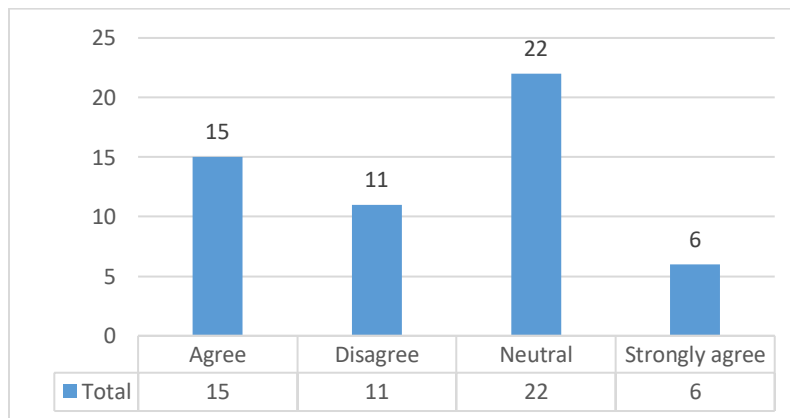


Figure 5. illustrates the statement responses families do support...

The results are quite complex as (39.6 percent) respondents chose neutral option. Total 21 respondents preferred to stay silent out of which 17 are females. It seems to be a quite disturbing that females who are going to be in the workforce, are not comfortable in sharing their experiences that indicate that they must have faced difficulties in choosing the fields of their own choice. Twenty-one percent expresses openly that families are not that much supportive. Whereas, 39.6 percent agrees with that the families are supportive and encourage their daughters to choose the profession of their own choice.

Working Women and Judgmental Society

In Pakistan, every woman who works outside is an easy target of society judgement. The marriage and motherhood are regarded to be the only important aspects of their life. When a woman tries to do something else for their own sake, then the society labels her with inadequate words and does not hesitate to question her character. Moreover, women are bound with some specific role and the burden of family honor are placed on them. Working women according to them fail to protect that honor and bring shame to the family. Even at the workplace women are judged because of their appearances more than a man. A woman in jeans is too modern and a girl in hijab is too religious. They are not willing to accept woman in any attire. This is not about a woman; it is entirely about the society attitude about women that needs to be changed. Therefore, the respondents are asked to share their point of views. The Fig. 6 illustrates responses, society draws negative conclusions about the character of working women and this needs to stop as follows:

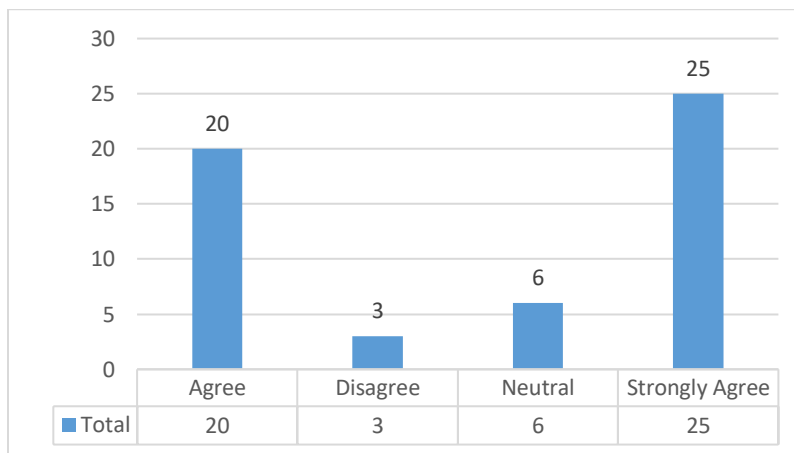


Figure 6. illustrates the statement that the society draws negative conclusions

Most of the respondents (83.3 percent) are in favor of the view that society should stop judging working woman. The 11.1 percent of respondents chose not to comment, whereas, 5.6 percent disagreed. The results indicate that the society of the future which will not judge a woman only because of the reason that she works outside.

Job Hunting Difficulties

Women in Pakistan face a lot of difficulties while searching for jobs. Firstly, they need to select a job according to their parents' or husband's choice. Then they need to make recruiters understand that their marriage or personal matters will not affect their performance. The situation is even worse in the male-dominated professions where woman's chances of getting jobs are even lower. There is a misconception that woman gets jobs easily because of their gender, but reality seems to be very different. The Fig. 7 illustrates the responses for the statement as compared to men, women get jobs easily because of their gender as follows:

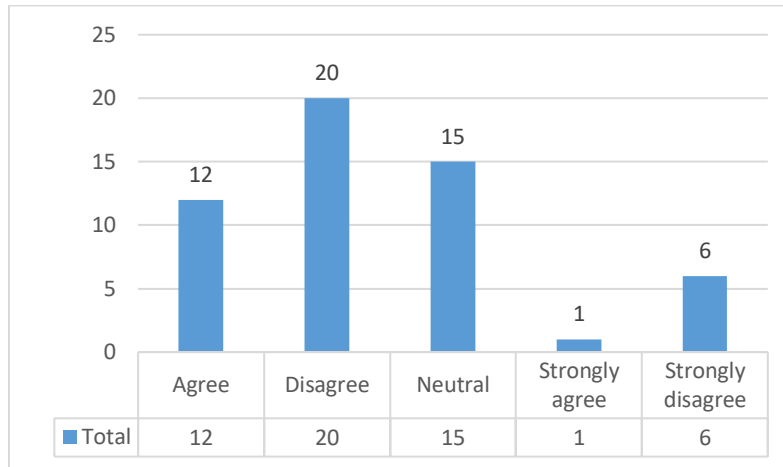


Figure 7. illustrates the women get jobs easily because of their gender...

The results illustrate that most of the respondents (48.1percent) both male and female know reality of workplace. They are aware that gender can never be a reason for getting job specifically for the female that aims for the executive and other high posts. It is a disadvantage that the 27.8 percent respondents choose to stay quiet whereas, 23.1 percent of respondents support the statement. In Pakistan, women work as the health worker, education professionals or clerical workers. The women’s contributions in these sectors are only higher because they are less attractive to men (Hussain, 2008). The women in Pakistan are limited to only a few sectors and they do not have access to the jobs that help them build their careers on lucrative posts. According to the UN labor force organization report (2017) Pakistan is one of the countries that provides very low employment opportunities to women. Only 10 percent of women work in multinational companies since top companies never prefer to hire female employees. This is one of the reasons that women’s contribution is still low in Pakistan. This query is added to the questionnaire to highlight the difficulties they face for success. The Fig. 8 illustrates the responses that women do not have the access to career-making jobs as follows:

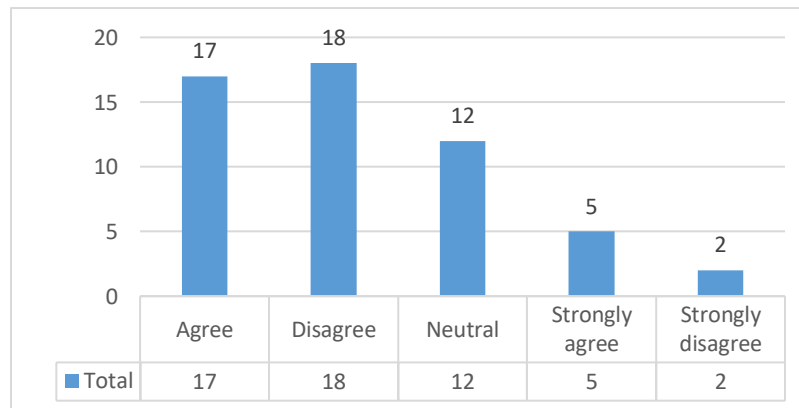


Figure 8. illustrates the responses

The respondents (40.8 percent) agree with the fact that women do not have the access to career-making jobs, 37 percent disagree, and 22.2 percent are neutral.

Wage Pay Gap

Globally the wage difference between male and female is 22.9 percent that means that women earn 77.9 percent of what men earn (Talpur, 2017). Particularly in Pakistan, the wage pay gap is almost 36 percent (International labor organization) while the average monthly salary of women in Pakistan is 9746 rupees, as compared to 15884 rupees of the average man salary (labor force survey 2014-15). This gap is huge, and the reason is gender inequality not because of less contribution at work. Even after performing the same task and responsibilities with men they do not get the same pay. There is no proper policy and legislation regarding the concept of income equality. There are some small legislations to protect women from the late-night work and excessive burden that seem to work as a disadvantage for women by making them less attractive to the recruiters. This wage pay gap needs to be narrow and this will only happen when the current and prospective recruiters understand the talent of a woman and offer them the equal pay as they offer to a male employee. Therefore, the gender pay gap has been included in the questionnaire. The Fig. 9 illustrates responses for the statement, women salaries are less as compared to men because they do less work than a male employee as follows:

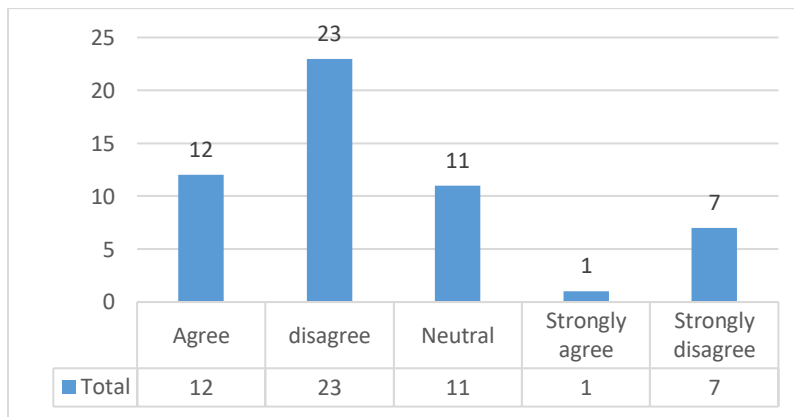


Figure 9. illustrates the statement women salaries are less as compared to men

Respondents (55.6 percent) do not agree with this reason, 24.1 percent respondents agree, and 20.4 percent are neutral.

Male Chauvinism at the Workplace

The traditions develop a strong perception that a man is a symbol of domination and he has the right to lead and female role is to follow the orders. When these roles are exchanged at workplace it is very difficult for a man to accept it. There is a male dominancy in most of the professions, so men consider taking orders from a female boss as a matter of their ego and are not comfortable. Thus, for addressing the issue of male ego in the workplace, the following statement is added to the questionnaire. The Fig. 12 illustrates the responses for the statement, male employees are not comfortable in taking orders from the female boss as follows:

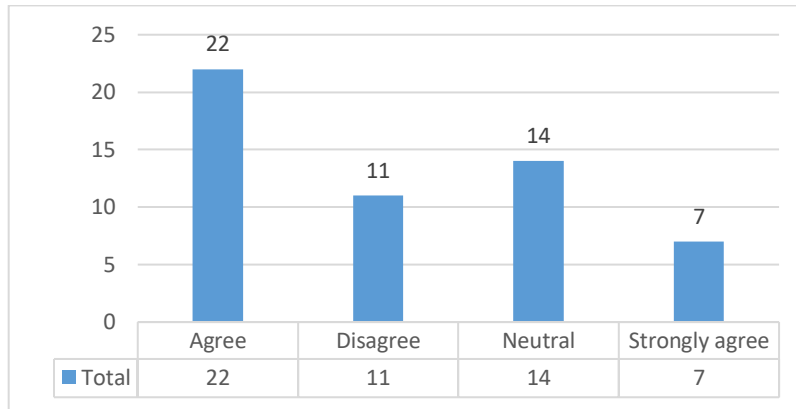


Figure 10. illustrates the responses that male employees are not comfortable...

The results show that 54.7 percent of respondents agree with the issue of male ego at workplace, 24.5 percent choose not to comment, 20.8 percent disagree with the fact and it can be assumed that they did not experience any kind of incident where male feels uncomfortable while taking orders from female boss.

Gender Inequality in Workplace

Women are treated indifferently by the management and male colleagues. They consider them unreliable, emotional, irrational, weak, timid, and just a follower. Women rarely get the opportunity to lead a project because they think that women lack the skills that are required to be a leader. Their own colleagues demotivate them. They always try to convey them the message from their actions that they are inferior to them, and this is one of the issues that needs to be addressed. The Fig. 11 illustrates responses for the statement that at workplace women are treated differently because of their gender as follows:

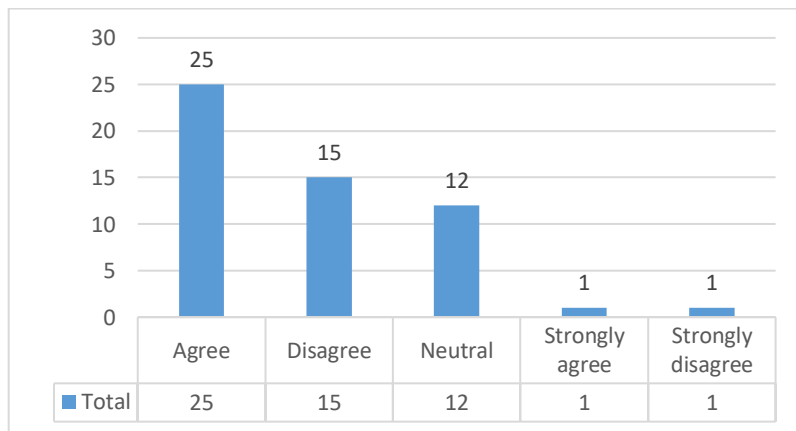


Figure 11. illustrates the responses that at workplace women are treated differently...

The results show 48.2 percent of the respondents agree, 22.2 percent choose to stay neutral and 29.7 percent respondents disagree with the statement.

Women and Harassment at the Workplace

Harassment at the workplace is a global issue. Even after lots of efforts and laws have been made to sort out this issue, but still it is a matter of serious concern for all the developed and developing countries. Pakistan is also one of the

countries where working women are facing this issue. According to the study in 2008 about 50 percent of working women face harassment in Pakistan (Awan, 2017). This harassment has different forms like inappropriate way of staring, vulgar comments, molestation and some form of unwanted physical contact. When the issue turned out to be very serious in 2010, the government made the law titled as the ‘*Protection against Harassment at the workplace*’ (Khan,2017). But the legislation failed to address the issue because only a single step is not enough to solve it. The question is one of the main problems that women face at the workplace. Unfortunately, no serious preventive measure has been taken by authorities concerned. The Fig. 12 illustrates responses that at workplace women are safe and they do not face any kind of harassment as follows:

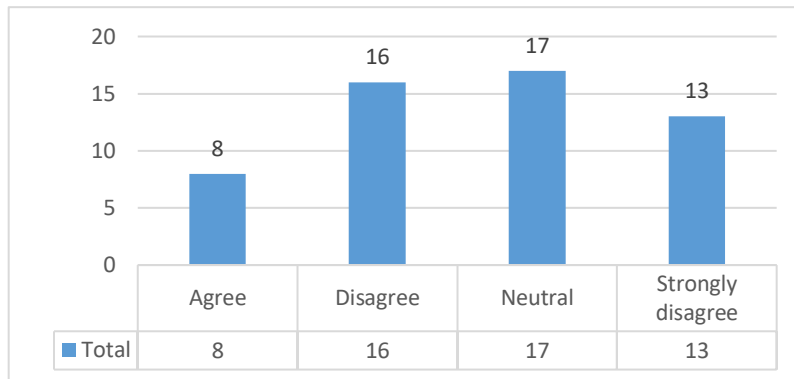


Figure 12. illustrates the statement at workplace women are safe...

The results are quite interesting, 31.5 percent of respondents decided to stay silent, 53.7 percent disagreed so, do not consider the workplace of Pakistan safe for women while the remaining 14.8 percent are in the favor.

Women Silence against the Harassment

According to the survey done by *Dawn* newspaper, 54 percent of women said yes to the question that women should quit the job where they face harassment. The reason behind this opinion is the non-serious attitude of the management in the office. Similarly, the majority of women confessed that they did not complain about this issue and chose to stay quiet about it and about 16 to 17 percent who reach out their management to share the harassment incidents because they themselves are not trusted people. Therefore, the respondents are exposed to options that are given to a harassment victim woman and asked to react to it. The Fig. 13 illustrates the responses against the statement: If a female employee is facing any kind of harassment in office, she should quit that job as follows:

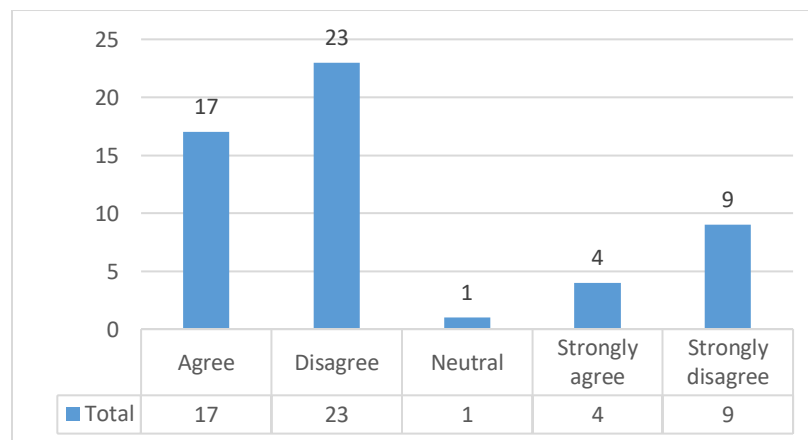


Figure 13. illustrates the responses if a female employee is facing harassment...

The results are quite unexpected as 38.9 percent of the respondents agreed with this suggestion. While asking to explain the reason behind this choice, they responded that the owners of the companies are often the culprit in the harassment cases. Therefore, women have no choice other than to quit that job. Therefore, 59.2 percent respondents did not agree with this option. They do not consider this option as a solution for the harassment and one respondent chose to stay quiet.

Unsafe Environment for the Women

Many women are not allowed to step out of their houses and the ones who luckily get some freedom they are again bound with limited time. After the sunset they are not supposed to stay out of house. In addition, it is not about conservative mentality of families, but also the insecure environment for the women neither in daylight nor in the dark. Furthermore, women have to be ready for the inappropriate comments from strangers while travelling to work. For parents, it is bigger issue to allow their daughters to travel for a work to other cities. Most women loose career making jobs just because they do not get the permission to move out to another city alone and the purpose of this question is to present yet another disturbing problem woman faces. The Fig. 14 illustrates the statement that women can travel anywhere at any time alone for work as follows:

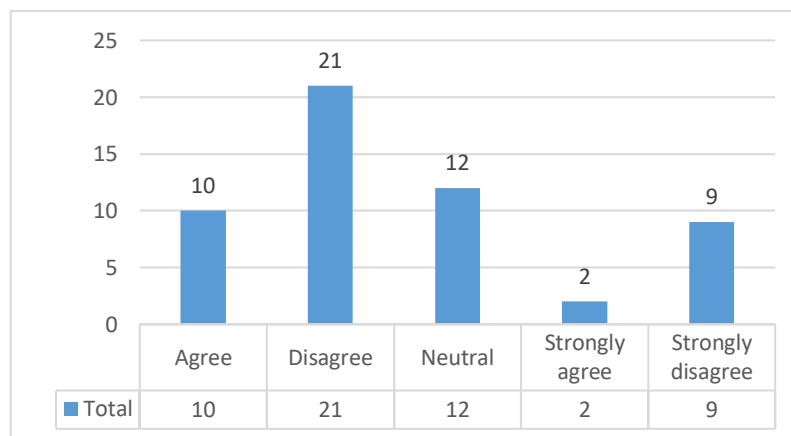


Figure 14. illustrates the statement that women can travel anywhere ...

The results show 55.6 percent of respondents disagree with the option that travelling alone for work is not a safe option for a woman, 22.2 percent respondents decided to stay quiet and 22.2 percent agreed with the statement.

Conclusion

To conclude a very significant study that develops an idea that respondents realize the significance of a woman’s role and understand the negative attitude towards a woman at workplace. It is a quite satisfying and encouraging to note that they disagree with the actions that degrade working women. They also know about the problems that working women face in various professions. The findings of the study can predict that the society’s attitude towards woman will bring a positive change in the society and workplace. This positive attitude will make a work environment better where women rights will be protected. The neutral community of respondents were also identified who preferred to stay silent about the controversial issues. Eventually, the study discovered that there is also a majority of respondents think that women are empowered enough therefore, they do not face difficulties at the work environment. Hypothesis of the study proved to be true that the future workforce prospects for the support of a woman in the labor force.

The parents need to understand the consequences of their behavior and should treat their daughters fairly and make them that independent and strong in order to boost up their morale so that they can fight back. The matter of concern is the lack of awareness of a woman herself about the women’s rights. This is the main reason of a woman that she

remains silence against inequitable behavior. Therefore, the women need to be aware of their rights. For fighting against the biased behavior, the women first have to understand their own rights and value. In addition, many respondents did not share their views in detail about the harassment, gender inequality, and male chauvinism through informal interviews from male and female as a focus group. It seems not to be a good sign. The study wanted to propagate this very significant issue to the today's youth in order to play their roles in countering the problems. This awareness will empower women to stand against the unfair behavior of the society at large.

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