

From Discrimination to Demotivation: Analyzing the Linkages between Gender Disparity, Harassment, and Employee Motivation

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Abstract

Gender discrimination and harassing behaviour have evolved as the complex phenomena in today's multicultural diverse organizations. This gender based inequality affects employees' motivation and is a heavy cost to the organization in the form of higher turnover ratio, less productivity and profitability. The purpose of this study is to analyze the relationship and effect among gender disparity, harassing behavior and employee motivation & enthusiasm. This study checks the applicability of the organizational justice theory and Adam's equity theory. Using quantitative research approach, cross-sectional method and convenience sampling, data was collected from 385 workers comprising white collar and blue-collar ones working in various sectors in all provinces of Pakistan. The data were analyzed using PLS-SEM technique in SMART PLS. The findings of this study indicate that both the factors i.e., gender disparity and harassing behaviour decrease employee motivation and enthusiasm in the workplace. Moreover, the findings depict a picture of the impact of discrimination and harassing behaviour on employees' motivation & enthusiasm in the form of cost and loss to the organization's productivity. The study's findings would support the government, policymakers, and business owners in devising the policies to make a conducive workplace environment free from discrimination and any kind of harassment so that the employees may work diligently for the benefit of their organization.

Keywords: Gender disparity, harassing behaviour, employee motivation, workplace environment

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(Online) 2409-6520 (Print) 2414-8393, published by the ILMA University, Pakistan.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Gender disparity is one of the major issues experienced in workplaces that highly affect the motivational level of the employees. Gender disparity takes many forms in the organizations or workplaces such as racism, unequal pay, disparity in promotions, incidents of different types of harassment, and giving importance only to a particular gender i.e. male or female (Bilan et al., 2020). Gender disparity can be defined as the inequality in perceptions of behaviors of the employees or senior management or the organization towards another employee of that organization based on his/her gender, color, poor lifestyle, etc. Despite the numerous potential factors that may be responsible for sustaining gender inequality in the workplace, research indicates that gender discrimination is a major contributor (Heilman & Caleo, 2018). Organizational factors can create barriers for women to gain access to senior management positions, as these opportunities are often given more to men than to women. This can reduce the chances of women working in senior management roles, as evidenced by situations such as men being assigned to attend meetings outside the city before women (Imadoğlu et al., 2020).

Previous studies have found a strong link among gender disparity, harassing behaviors, motivation and enthusiasm (Gilbert & Walker, 2001; Starnarski & Son Hing, 2015). In the past, the research on Gender Discrimination was conducted in term of only formal workplaces but not in in-formal workplaces i.e., based on blue-collar workers who work in non-office settings such as workshops, warehouses, or any outdoor areas, etc. This research is conducted on both formal and informal organizational levels so that the disparity would be determined on both levels. Moreover, earlier studies (Dharmawardhane & Navaratne, 2019; Merkin & Shah, 2014; SteelFisher et al., 2019) only include a particular type of harassing behaviors i.e. sexual harassment, whereas this research is conducted on overall harassing behaviors that could differently be experienced at different workplaces by different genders including both males and females. Moreover, the studies on this topic with reference to Pakistan are rare; one of such studies conducted by Channar (2010) was confined to only two departments; Health and Education of both the public and private sectors of the Hyderabad and Jamshoro districts. Another study by Nauman & Abbasi (2014) that was particularly conducted on the sexual harassment at workplaces was a cross-sectional study and data collected from the banking sector of only Lahore city, and only from female participants, which limits the study's generalizability to only one gender i.e. female. Rare research includes the data that should be collected from the employees of different workplaces in Pakistan. This study attempts to fill the gap by collecting data from the employees of different organizations and/or workplaces in all Pakistani provinces.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations (UN), Pakistan is the sixth most populous nation in the world, with a population of more than 212 million people (FAO, 2023). Approximately 64% of Pakistan's population (136 million people) resides in rural areas (FAO, 2023). With only 20 percent of its workforce consisting of women, Pakistan ranks among the lowest percentages of female labor-force participation in South Asia and the world. Poor levels of education, mobility constraints, and traditional gender roles are all

obstacles that prevent women from joining and staying in the formal job market. As a result, a substantial percentage of female employees are seen in informal sectors such as in home-based work (Tâm et al., 2016). Therefore there is a high need of data to study on this area to understand the dynamics of problems of gender discrimination and harassing behaviour on employee motivation.

This study may be fruitful to understand the behavior of superiors/top management and employees towards other employees' work. It helps organizations treat their employees especially women employees fairly and without any discrimination for assuring the positive outcomes. This study will help the HR management team to avoid gender-biasness in their organizations. This will help other researchers, philosophers, and policy makers to understand the recent facts and figures about the gender disparity, impacts of gender disparity on employees motivation, stress level of employees, and about the ratio of harassing behaviors in the workplaces of Pakistan. This research will provide the especial help to the scholars of the departments: Management, business administration, gender study, social science, and organizational behaviors etc., in term of understanding the concept of gender disparity, its impact, and current figures about it.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Underpinning Theories

2.1.1 Organizational Justice Theory

Greenberg (1987) defined organizational justice as the equitable distribution of resources among employees. In addition Yean (2016) associate organizational justice with workers' behaviors, the justice may include financial or non-financial appraisals, fair treatment, promotion or advancement on an equal basis, incentives, and fair compensation. Considering the relationships between gender disparity in perception of harassing behaviors and employees' motivation and enthusiasm and their stress level during the job, the organizational justice theory is very important. The reason is that it demonstrates the equitable treatment of employees at work, which improves organizational justice in employees and organizational justice demonstrates the unfairness of how employees are handled or treated by their manager, boss, or supervisor at the workplace in an organization (Iqbal et al., 2013). In addition to that, reducing gender disparity and harassing behaviors might reduce disputes and issues between employers and employees. On the other hand, if reacting negatively to perceived unfairness, employees or workers would not focus on the outputs or results at the workplace or how decisions are made and conveyed; this is because it refers to interpersonal concurrent decisions (Cojuharencu & Patient, 2013) . Utilizing the distributive and interpersonal components of the organizational justice theory, research has been done on how employees' unfairness, gender disparity/inequality, and workplace behavior might be impacted in the work context of Pakistan.

2.1.2 Adam's Equity Theory

Adam's equity theory asserts that employees are motivated to keep a balance between their own conceptions of justice and those of the people around them. As an outcome, if people perceive they are being treated unfairly, they will be less motivated to put in the extra effort (Adams & Freedman, 1976).

2.2 Hypotheses development

2.2.1 Gender Disparity in the workplace and Employees Motivation & Enthusiasm (EME)

According to Heilman & Caleo (2018), gender disparity in terms of inequalities in the workplace remain prevalent, and experts attribute them in part to gender discrimination. The latest (Hausmann et al., 2022) released by the World Economic Forum (WEF) ranked Pakistan as the second-worst state in achieving gender parity. The report placed Pakistan at the rank of 145 out of 146 states in the Global Gender Gap (2022) Index. The previous discourse implies that Pakistan is a society, which is male-dominated, or patriarchal with deeply entrenched sociocultural norms and Islamic religious values (Ali & Kramar, 2015). Gender discrimination, disparity, or inequality in the workplace negatively impact organizational enthusiasm and commitment, corporate citizenship, and work satisfaction (Ensher et al., 2001). Research by Vu & Yamada, (2018) indicates that those employees who have been treated unfairly often feel anger and develop a negative attitude towards their job; may act strangely, such as working less diligently, displaying anger or hatred, or they might have depraved motives. Because of a decrease in their psychological sense of empowerment, dysfunctional conduct and a hostile work environment, there may be a substantial impact on employees' motivation towards their jobs.

H1. Gender disparity in the workplace is negatively correlated with Employees Motivation & Enthusiasm.

2.2.2 Gender Disparity and Harassing Behaviour

Harassing behaviors are unwelcome and inappropriate actions faced by individuals in the workplace. Harassing behaviors easily take place in an uncivil workplace, which lead to demotivation and dissatisfaction among the employees, and reduce their commitment towards their duty. A survey by Moradeke (2014) revealed gender disparity in respondents' views and sexual harassment experiences, with more female respondents identifying the gender disparities with each of the five characteristics of sexual harassment namely: verbal harassment, physical harassment, intimidation, enticement, and the physical assault. Sexual harassment is an insidious form of discrimination and can have serious psychological and physical repercussions for those affected by it (Ali, 2011). The research findings from Pakistan indicate that physical attractiveness, privacy in the work environment, work ethics, and organizational policy are all-important components that affect the level of sexual harassment in the workplace while the organizational policy is a minor factor in exacerbating or reducing the occurrence of sexual harassment in the workplace

(Nauman & Abbasi, 2014).

H2: The gender disparity in workplace and the harassing behaviors in workplace are both positively correlated to each other.

2.2.3 Harassing Behaviour and Employees Motivation and Enthusiasm

Harassing behaviors of any kind can have serious consequences on an individual's mental and emotional health. Studies have shown that harassment like sexual harassment in the workplaces can lead to the decreased job satisfaction, reduced organizational commitment, and decreased productivity, demonstrating its detrimental effects on overall well-being (Klap et al., 2019).

Most harassing theories described in scholarly literature begin by assessing and expanding on the antecedents, causes, and effects of harassment, with a heavy emphasis on the characteristics of both offenders and victims. Second, they investigate the experience of harassment from the viewpoints of both the perpetrator and the victim. Finally, they investigate the impact of environmental variables. These ideas are often associated to sexual harassment since it is the most common kind of harassment, they are also known as the classical theories of sexual harassment.

H3: Harassing behaviors in the workplace decrease the employees' motivation & enthusiasm level.

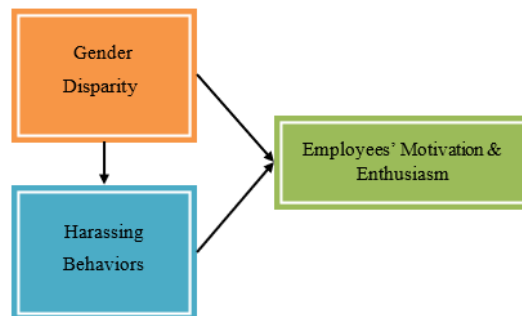


Figure 1 Research Framework

3.METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study is quantitative, cross-sectional in nature and conducted to determine the impact of gender disparity and harassing behavior on employee's motivation and enthusiasm.

3.2 Participants, data collection and sampling

Using convenience sampling technique, participants include all levels of employees in this study; including upper-level management, lower-level management, white-collar or office workers, and blue-collar or non-office workers. The data was collected through personal and professional contacts via emails and phone numbers. It was specifically collected online with the help of Google Forms. Mainly we got access to the young age respondents.

3.3 Sampling Process

Sampling process is a process that is fundamental to the design of all pulse-modulation systems. The sampling process includes a targeted population, sampling frame, sampling technique, and the sample size, etc. According to World Bank, the total labor force in Pakistan was reported to be 73,780,029 or almost 74 million persons in 2021 (Tradding Economics, 2021). This has been considered as the population size for this study, from which the sample has been drawn. For finding out the required sample's size of this study, the study of Krejcei & Morgan (1970) was considered; the authors provided formulas for calculating the required sample size for any survey from the known as well as from the unknown population size. For the known population size, the authors also provided the already measured sample sizes for various populations in table in the article. Their table suggests a number of 383 or more samples for the known population of 1 million or more. Therefore, sample size of 385 has been decided for responses in this study.

3.4 Instrument

In the current study, one independent variable, one mediating variable and a dependent variable have been used and included in the framework. The measurement items of these constructs were adapted from the study by (Channar, 2010). A questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) was used.

3.5 Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using PLS-SEM with SMART PLS 4 to test the hypotheses. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) proves valuable in analyzing subjects and assessing variables within the structural model. SEM technique has been proven successful largely due to its capacity to check and assess the measurement of latent variables while also examining the associations between latent variables (Babin et al., 2008). A two-step process of PLS-SEM has been applied to scrutinize the results; first Measurement Model (outer model) has been used to assess the reliability of items, convergent and discriminant validity. Second, Structural Model (inner model) has been used to assess the path analysis to test the hypotheses (Schuberth et al., 2023).

4.RESULTS

The results are divided into two sections; the first section describes the demographic statistics of the respondents while the second section maps out the outcomes of measurement model. After that, the outcomes of structural model to test the hypotheses are presented.

The demographics profile of the respondents is presented in Table 1. Out of the total active participants male respondents were 211 (54.8%) and female were 172(44.7%). This shows that the female workers are less compared to their male counterparts. The age wise responses included most of the respondents were young between 20 to 30 years constituting 364(94.5%) of the total respondents, 9(2.3%) respondents were below 20 years, 8(2.1%) participants were between 31 to 40, 2(0.5%) participants were between 41 to 50 years, and 2(0.5%) were above 50 years. In terms of marital status, 353 (91.7%) respondents were single, the remaining 32 respondents were either married, divorced or widow. When asked about number of children, the respondents.

Table 1
Profile of Respondents

| Demographic Variable | Categories | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------------------|--------------------|-----------|------------|
| Gender | Male | 211 | 54.8 |
| | Female | 172 | 44.7 |
| Age Group | Less than 20 years | 9 | 2.3 |
| | 20 to 30 years | 364 | 94.5 |
| | 31 to 40 years | 8 | 2.1 |
| | 41 to 50 years | 2 | .5 |
| | Above 50 years | 2 | .5 |
| Marital Status | Single | 353 | 91.7 |
| | Married | 29 | 7.5 |
| | Divorced | 1 | .3 |
| | Widow | 2 | .5 |

| | | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|-----|------|
| No. of children | No | 370 | 96.1 |
| | 1-2 | 11 | 2.9 |
| | 3-4 | 4 | 1.0 |
| Domicile Province | Punjab | 253 | 65.7 |
| | Sindh | 88 | 22.9 |
| | Baluchistan | 6 | 1.6 |
| | KPK | 30 | 7.8 |
| | AJK | 8 | 2.1 |
| Job/Workplace Provinces | Punjab | 263 | 68.3 |
| | Sindh | 79 | 20.5 |
| | Baluchistan | 6 | 1.6 |
| | KPK | 25 | 6.5 |
| | AJK | 4 | 1.0 |
| | Islamabad | 8 | 2.1 |
| Highest Education | Secondary School | 11 | 2.9 |
| | Higher School | 4 | 1.0 |
| | University | 370 | 96.1 |
| Work/Job Position | Senior/Department Manager | 62 | 16.1 |
| | Junior/Group Manager | 101 | 26.2 |
| | White-Collar Worker | 133 | 34.5 |
| | Blue-Collar Worker | 89 | 23.1 |

4.1 Measurement Model Assessment

According to Thiele et al. (2016), a measurement model is assessed for factor loadings, composite reliability, alpha and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). These tests were run using SMART PLS and the results so extracted are presented in Table 2 and Figure 2. First, the factor loadings are the measures of strength and direction of relationship between a latent variable and its indicators. The values of factor loadings as presented in Table 2 are more than the threshold value for acceptance i.e., 0.50 (Hair, et al., 2016). While many researchers argue that the factor loading greater than 0.70 should be preferred (Vinzi et al., 2010), researchers in social sciences commonly find lesser outer loadings (< 0.70). Second, the measurement model was assessed for Composite reliability which is a measure of how well the indicators of a latent variable adhere for the same concept. Most of the values of Composite reliability are above the acceptable value of 0.70 as presented in Table 2, and for AVE almost all values are above the threshold value of 0.50, thus there is support for convergent validity (Hair et al., 2014; Weston & Gore, 2006).

Discriminant validity is another metric in the measurement model. It is the degree to which a construct genuinely differs from other constructs, or, in other words, the amount to which a construct measures what it is supposed to measure, is known as discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2014). Discriminant validity can be measured using Fornel and Larker Criterion or HTMT ratio. The Fornel and Larker Criterion can be used but the method does not give a true picture of discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015). However, The HTMT ratio has been used by many scholars as it is robust check for discriminant validity. The threshold or cut-off value for HTMT ratio has been disputed in the literature to date; Teo (2011) indicates a liberal threshold of 0.90 or less, whereas Kline et al. (2012) suggests a threshold of 0.85 or less. Since the HTMT ratio for this study is far lower than the necessary threshold of 0.90, as indicated in Table 3 below so the discriminant validity cannot be challenged.

Table 2
Convergent Validity

| Construct | Items | Loadings | Alpha | CR | AVE |
|--------------------|-------|----------|-------|-------|-------|
| Gender Disparities | GD1 | 0.756 | 0.785 | 0.854 | 0.594 |
| | GD2 | 0.715 | | | |
| | GD3 | 0.814 | | | |
| | GD4 | 0.794 | | | |

| | | | | | |
|---------------------------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Harassing Behaviors | HB1 | 0.703 | 0.930 | 0.940 | 0.612 |
| | HB2 | 0.779 | | | |
| | HB3 | 0.792 | | | |
| | HB4 | 0.773 | | | |
| | HB5 | 0.743 | | | |
| | HB6 | 0.816 | | | |
| | HB7 | 0.828 | | | |
| | HB8 | 0.775 | | | |
| | HB9 | 0.845 | | | |
| | HB10 | 0.762 | | | |
| Motivation and Enthusiasm | ME1 | 0.836 | 0.857 | 0.889 | 0.537 |
| | ME2 | 0.811 | | | |
| | ME3 | 0.646 | | | |
| | ME4 | 0.787 | | | |
| | ME5 | 0.697 | | | |
| | ME6 | 0.692 | | | |
| | ME7 | 0.633 | | | |

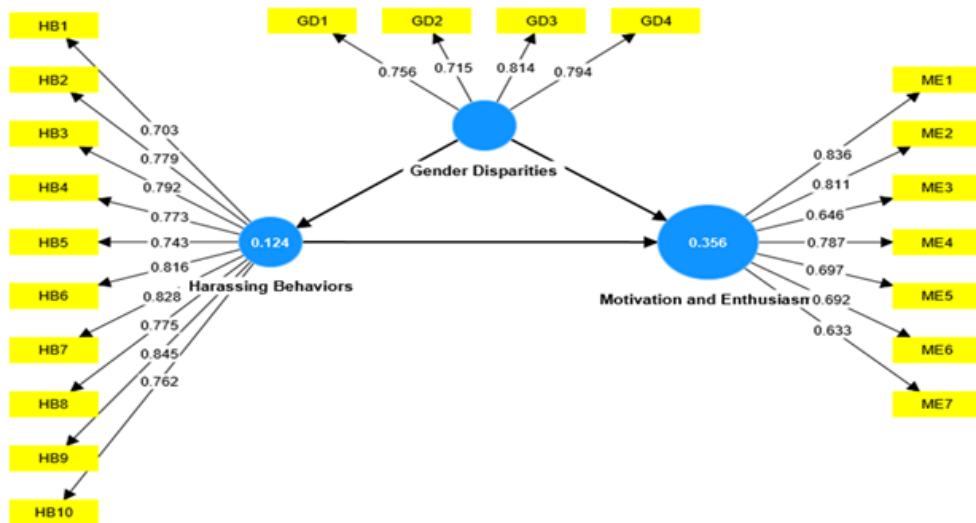


Figure 2 Measurement Assessment Model

Table 3
Discriminant Validity (HTMT Ratio)

| | Gender Disparities | Harassing Behaviors | Motivation and Enthusiasm |
|---------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|
| Gender Disparities | | | |
| Harassing Behaviors | 0.383 | | |
| Motivation and Enthusiasm | 0.495 | 0.523 | |

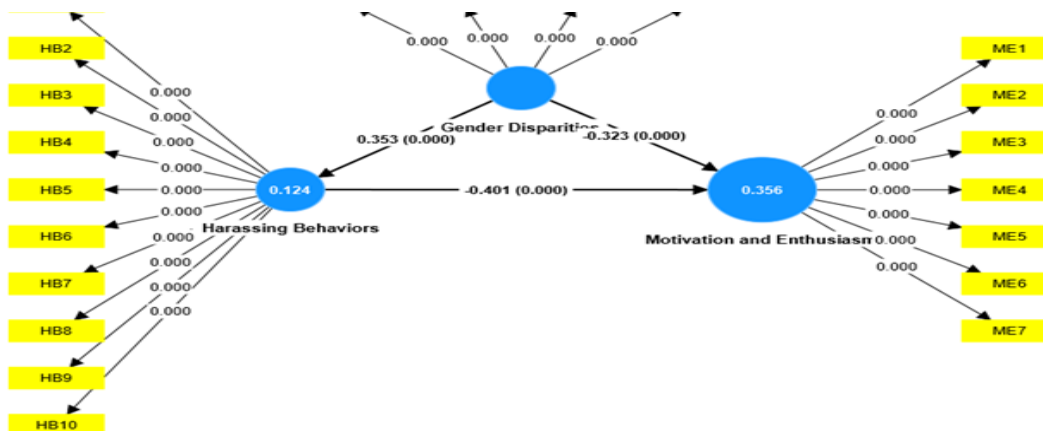


Figure 3 Structural Assessment Model

4.2 Structural Model Assessment

After the measurement Model assessment, the second step of PLS-SEM is Structural Model assessment which is used to test the hypotheses. The associated metrics in structural model encompass path coefficient, standard errors, and t-value. The bootstrapping process in the software Smart PLS is run to extract the aforementioned metrics values. Similarly, the acceptance or rejection of hypotheses is determined based on the path coefficient values. The results are presented in Table 4 and Figure 3 demonstrate that significant relationship exists among variables. The H1 is supported ($\beta = -0.323$, $t=6.632$) p value is greater than 0.05 meaning the gender disparity in work place negatively affect the employee motivation and enthusiasm. The H2 is also supported ($\beta=0.353$, $t=6.576$) meaning that the gender disparity positively affect the harassing behaviour. Similarly, the H3 is also supported ($\beta=-0.401$, $t=9.507$) which means that the harassing behaviour negatively affects the employee motivation and enthusiasm..

Table 4
Path Analysis

| Hypotheses | Path | Beta | SD | t-value | P-value | Findings |
|------------|----------|--------|-------|---------|---------|-----------|
| H1 | GD -> ME | -0.323 | 0.049 | 6.632 | 0.000 | Supported |
| H2 | GD -> HB | 0.353 | 0.054 | 6.576 | 0.000 | Supported |
| H3 | HB -> ME | -0.401 | 0.042 | 9.507 | 0.000 | Supported |

5. DISCUSSION

The current research presents empirical evidence of the workplace factors gender disparity and harassing behaviour that affect employee motivation and enthusiasm. The findings of the research indicate that all hypotheses have been accepted. The variables were found to correlate with each other as hypothesized.

In the initial finding, it was seen that the original value of this correlation is negative, as shown in the Table 4, which means that the gender disparity in the workplace have a negative effect on the employees' motivation and enthusiasm. This is what is stated in the hypothesis. This finding is consistent with studies by Channar (2010), Ensher et al. (2001), Ramzy et al. (2018), Vu & Yamada (2018) who also revealed that the gender disparity and the employees' motivation and enthusiasm have negative correlation.

The second finding of the study indicate the original values of this correlation are positive, as shown in both the tables, which mean that the gender disparity in the

workplace have a positive effect on the harassing behaviors. This is what is stated in the hypothesis. A study by (Moradeke, 2014) also revealed that the harassment and gender disparities in the workforce are correlated to each other.

The third finding of the study indicates the original value of this correlation is negative, as shown in the table, which means that the harassing behaviors in the workplace have a negative effect on the employees' motivation and enthusiasm level. This is what is stated in the hypothesis. Some scholarly studies such as (Magley et al., 2016) also revealed that the harassing behaviors (HB) and employees' motivation and enthusiasm (ME) have negative correlation.

The above results indicate that the gender disparity has significant influence on the employee motivation & enthusiasm. This implies that the workers who experience gender disparity by their managers and supervisors are less motivated and less productive. This may create severe impact on the organization's overall productivity and health in the form of a certain cost by demotivated employees. Thus, the management may establish indifferent culture in the organization to avoid such heavy cost and loss to the organization.

Moreover, the findings depict a picture of relation between gender disparity and harassing behaviour among employees. The employees discriminated on the basis of gender feel harassing behaviour as it creates stress, tension and resultantly a deviation of employee's focus on the job and career goals. Gender disparity and harassing behaviour have been found to be positively correlated which indicates more gender discrimination leads to more harassing behaviour among the affected workers. This may not only affect employee's well-being and fitness in the job, but also it may heavily effect the organization's overall productivity. This cost in the form of discriminated, harassed and demotivated employees may affect the organization's profitability. Thus, the supervisors and managers may create such organizational culture which adheres to the universal rights of workers free from disparity and discrimination to create motivated and enthusiastic employees.

Further, the harassing behaviour and employees' motivation & enthusiasm have been found to be negatively correlated. This indicates that the harassing behaviour affects workers motivation in the workplaces. The harassed employees become demotivated and non-enthusiastic which again is a cost and financial and human resource loss to the organization.

5.1 Theoretical and practical implications

The study contributes theoretically and empirically to the body of knowledge by highlighting factors that affect employee motivation and enthusiasm. Second, the policymakers may use the findings of this research for their policymaking regarding the gender-related problems, workplace problems, gender equality, job opportunities for females, job opportunities for males, or workplace environment, or even for another related area. Third, the business managers or owners may use the study to make their organizational devise green environmental policies and to better understand and control the gender-related problematic effects on employees'

motivation and enthusiasm in their organizations, so that the employees would not feel under strain. They should understand that according to Adam's equity theory of motivation, what they provide to employees, they would get the same in return.

5.2 Limitations and future directions

Limitations and shortcomings are likely in every research. These limitations may influence the results and their interpretation. The limitations or conditions need to be acknowledged. While in this study the research objectives have been achieved, there are some shortcomings or limitations related to it. First, the study employed primary data by using questionnaire, there is a space to conduct the same study by using one-on-one interviews and focus groups.

Second, the convenience sampling was used in this study, it is advised that the study may be conducted using any other sample approach to avoid skewing the results. Moreover, the use of samples from various firms and organizations across regions and countries may help assure generalizability. Further, Future study might be conducted by employing different variable items, different research instrument or another variable scale.

5.3 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of the gender disparity and harassing behaviour in the workplaces of Pakistan and its impact on employee motivation and enthusiasm. The objective was also to find that how much motivation, enthusiasm were affected by gender disparity and harassing behaviors in the workplaces of Pakistan. The major target was the white and black collar workers in the workplaces of Pakistan. This study also checks the applicability of the theories: the organizational justice theory and the equity theory of motivation. These both theories support the hypotheses of this study and approve the relationships of the variables of this study. The results analyzed in this study are also consistent with the other scholarly studies..

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