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PSYCHOLOGICAL WORKPLACE HARASSMENT AMONG MALE EMPLOYEES IN PUNJAB, PAKISTAN: PREVALENCE, FORMS, AND REPORTING BARRIERS

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Abstract

Harassment in the place of work is an important occupational risk to the well-being of employees across the world, but psychological harassment amongst male employees is an under-researched problem in Pakistan. The paper has looked at the occurrence and types of psychological workplace harassment and how it relates to the mental health outcomes among the male employees in Punjab, Pakistan. A cross-sectional research design was used among 61 male employees at the age of 18-60 years in the government and non-government companies. Short Negative Acts Questionnaire, and Depression Anxiety Stress Scale were used to collect the data. Both instruments had very good internal consistency as revealed by reliability analysis. The results showed that there was a very positive correlation between workplace harassment and psychological distress which was determined by Pearson correlation. Simple linear regression was used to show that workplace harassment is an important predictor of psychological distress, predicting about 48 percent variation. Results have shown that male workers are significantly psychologically harassed and most of the harassment is usually subtle resulting in high levels of stress, anxiety and depression. There are social stigma, fear of retaliation, and masculinity norms as barriers to reporting. This research paper emphasizes that there is a pressing need to have gender inclusive workplace practices and mental health accessing systems in Punjab.

1. INTRODUCTION

Harassment in the workplace history is of growing international importance as a workplace risk factor to employee performance and productivity; not to mention its impact on their psychological wellness. The most common workplace mistreatment occurs in the form of psychological harassment; that is, the repetitive negative behaviors that include humiliation and verbal abuse, threats, and social exclusion. There is international evidence that women have a similar rate of psychological violence as men experience (Mohi Ud Din et al., 2026). The consequences of workplace harassment on both an individual and

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an organization are farreaching and include a decreasing level of job satisfaction, absenteeism, burnout, and decline in mental health. Although this has become more widely known, psychological harassment among male employees is a neglected concern in developing countries, especially in Pakistan. Masculinity culture also prevents men to report harassment and as a consequence, leads to the underreporting and lack of empirical evidence. In Punjab, Pakistan, the study of harassment at the workplace has majorly been conducted on women; hence a gap in the study that reveals the experiences of the male employees. The current research aims to fill this gap by exploring prevalence, types, and psychological effects of work-related harassment in male workers and finding out the obstacles that hinder reporting (Arslan et al., 2023). The nature of these dynamics is important to formulate non-discriminating workplace policies and provide mental health-related support options, specific to male workers (Nawaz et al., 2025).

Materials and methods

A quantitative study method was applied to find the relation between psychological workplace harassment and mental health outcomes in men employees, the cross-sectional survey design was used to explore the line of interrelationship (Martins et al., 2021).

Participants

The research was carried out in Punjab, Pakistan, in both government and non-government organizations, especially in the corporate set up. The population of interest was being made up of male workers in Punjab, Pakistan. There were 61 male participants who were aged between 18 and 60 years old and with varied educational and professional backgrounds (Batool et al., 2026).

The inclusion criteria were male employees in the state of Punjab currently working in the state at least six months, aged 18-60 Hispanic, and volunteered to take part.Out-of-Punjab employees, those who did not complete the survey and those with less than 6 months work experience as well as the unemployed were omitted.

Measure

The workplace harassment was measured using The Short Negative Acts Questionnaire (SNAQ), a questionnaire of nine items. The Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS-21), 21 items, was used to measure the level of depression, anxiety, and stress. The two instruments were very reliable (Ullah et al., 2021). Descriptive statistical summaries were used to describe demographic features and scale distributions. Internal consistency was checked on the alpha of Cronbach. Normal test: analyzed the patterns of distributions. The correlation between psychological distress and workplace harassment were analyzed using Pearson correlation. Simple linear regression was used to ascertain the significance of workplace harassment in predicting psychological distress.

Statistical significance was measured by an alpha of .05 (Cheema & Baruch, 2026)].

Procedure

The study took place with men who had jobs in the Punjab Province of Pakistan. The people who took part were between 18 and 60 years old. They were from Generation Y, which's the Millennials and Generation Z. Only those who had a job for than six months were allowed to join the study. People who worked in the government and those who worked in companies were asked to take part. Data was gathered using a questionnaire that was given online through Google Forms. The questionnaire had the DASS-21 and SNAQ scales to measure the parts of the study. Before they filled out the questionnaire the people were told about the study. Asked to give their permission. Taking part in the study was up to them.The people who were allowed to take part were men who lived and worked in Punjab Province, Pakistan and had than six months of work experience. Anyone who was not working or had than six months of work experience was not allowed to join. After

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collecting the data the answers were. Cleaned. The final set of data was looked at using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, which is called SPSS. Throughout the study rules about being fair and respectful were followed. These rules included getting permission, from people letting them choose if they wanted to take part keeping their information safe and making sure their details were handled properly.

Results

Sample Characteristics

Table 1

Variable	Category	n	%
Age Category	Young adults	44	72.1
	Middle adults	13	21.3
	Older adults	4	6.6
Gender	Male	46	75.4
	Prefer not to say	15	24.6

Note. N = 61.

Table 1 shows the demographic structure of the study participants with most of them aged young adult males with most of them in the employment category of different sectors.

Table 2

Variable	N	*Mean*	*S.D*	Min	*Max*
SNAQ_Total	61	6.80	7.34	0	35
DASS_Total	61	16.52	12.44	0	43

Table 3

Instrument	Cronbach's Alpha	No of Items

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SNAQ	.942	9
DASS	.942	21

Note With Cronbach's alpha values over the permissible level of .942, both instruments showed outstanding internal consistency. While the Student Engagement Survey showed great dependability (α =.902), the PRPSA showed good reliability (α =.887).

Correlation Analysis

Table 4

Variables	1	2
1. SNAQ Total		.69***
2. DASS Total	.69***	

There was a strong, positive, and significant correlation between psychological harassment and psychological distress, r = .69, p < .001, N = 61.

Table 5

Predictor	B	SE	t	p	R^2
Constant	8.572	1.229	6.976	<.001	
SNAQ Total	1.169	0.160	7.325	<.001	.476

Note. Dependent Variable: DASS Total; N = 61.

Table 5 indicates that psychological workplace harassment does indeed predict in detail overall psychological distress in male workers.

Discussion

The current research investigated psychological workplace harassment in male workers in Punjab, Pakistan, and its linkage with mental health outcomes. Both hypotheses were proven correct, as workplace harassment had a major impact on stress levels of the employees and caused anxiety and depression (Malik et al., 2021). The positive correlation (r = .690) between workplace harassment and psychological distress is strong and, defines the point on which the greater the exposure to negative workplace happenings, the greater the symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress levels. The result is in line with global studies which show that psychological harassment compromises mental health and job performance.

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Employing the regression analysis indicated that workplace harassment was an important factor in explaining psychological distress with about 48 percent as a significant predictor of mental health degradation. This highlights why organizations that proactively tackle harassment using policy interventions and mechanisms is urgently needed (Rehan et al., 2023).

Some types of harassment reported consisted of verbal abuse, public embarrassment, threats, emotional control, and social exclusion. All these subtle but with the constant occurrence cause a toxic work environment which compromises the self-confidence and professional functioning of employees. The research also revealed that there are significant barriers to reporting such as social stigma, masculinity norms, and fear of retaliation, insufficient organizational support, and fear of professional reputation (MEHRDIN et al., 2025). The Social Role Theory tells us how male stereotyping, where they are conditioned not to voice their feelings and to be tough, makes them non-help-seeking. Results indicate need to change cultural perspectives and institute confidential and supportive reporting mechanisms. This research presents incomparable evidence of the lives of male employees in Punjab, compared to the previous literature. Although past research has made significant emphasis on the female gender, this study underscores that both men and women are the victims of psychological harassment with similar mental health effects. The motivation aspect both the psychological influence and sociocultural obstacles is well explained by the theoretical framework, which supports an argument supporting gender-inclusive workplace wellbeing efforts (Noor et al., 2024).

Limitations

There are a few limitations of the study. There was limited external validity of the sample to other regions because it was based in Punjab, Pakistan. Response bias may occur with selfreport measures. The cross-sectional design makes it not possible to draw causal conclusions. Statistical power could be reduced due to the relatively small sample size. In future studies, bigger and more diverse samples, longitudinal designs, and mixed methods should be used to examine harassment dynamics in their entirety.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future research ought to incorporate bigger and more geographically balanced sample, to achieve greater generalization. Designs that would allow the investigation of the causal relationship, and the long-term mental health outcome would be longitudinal research designs. Additional variables (coping strategies, organizational culture and intervention effectiveness) would be of greater insight. Psychological harassment in various genders, and various sectors should also be researched, in a qualitative and a mixed-method manner, to capture the lived experiences of the victims of such harassment and to help base evidence-based interventions.

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