Sociocultural Barriers to Empowerment of Female University Teachers: An Exploratory Factor Analysis

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Abstract

The study aimed to build an indigenous scale for measuring sociocultural barriers impeding female academics' empowerment in public universities in Punjab. For this objective, the researcher explored the sociocultural factors impacting female teachers' empowerment status while focusing on the personal, family, workplace, and public domains. A 5-point Likert scale questionnaire was prepared. After pretesting, 21 items were retained for conducting an Exploratory Factor Analysis. A sample was selected through simple random sampling from public universities in Punjab, and data were collected from 224 female academics through Online Survey. Using SPSS (version 25), EFA grouped items into four factors: (a) workplace harassment, (b) coercion on personal decisions, (c) domestic violence, and (d) negative public attitude. The cumulative scores on these four factors were added to the Sociocultural Barriers scale. All factors contributed to measuring the construct of sociocultural barriers as there was a positive correlation between factors and total scale scores. However, a weaker inter-factorial correlation indicated the mutual independence of each component. Scale reliability was α= 0.83, and the range of Alpha Coefficients for factors varied between 0.90-0.85.

Keywords: sociocultural barriers, women empowerment, universities

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Introduction

The beginning of the twenty-first century is revolutionary; it poses challenges to material and human resources across the globe. Women, almost half of the world's population, also face massive challenges despite technological revolution and expansion in material resources. Hence, empowering women in all spheres of life is a challenge for which global platforms, like the United Nations, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, and other foreign and local funding agencies have been allocating financial resources and technical support to upgrade the status of women, especially in emerging economies and developing countries.

The issue of women's empowerment and gender equality was raised predominantly in the last quarter of the twentieth century, starting from the milestone event of the UN Decade for Women (1975-1985), Global Conference of on Population Development (ICPD, 1994), Beijing Conference (1995), and other such landmark happenings that provided the basis for Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for 2005 - 2015. In continuation, the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) expanded over 2015 – 2030 and focused on women's empowerment and gender equality for sustainable development across the globe. However, despite persistent efforts and resource allocations, women's status remains lower than men's, especially in under-developed countries, like Pakistan. The global indices reflect Pakistani women's meager situation regarding their rights, equality, and empowerment. Recently, the Global Gender Gap Index (2020) ranked Pakistan as the third country out of 153 countries; only Iraq and Yemen were below and reported a drastic downfall from 2006, 112th per the GGGI ranking (World Economic Forum, 2019). In a recent scale based on the per capita Gross National Product and Human Development Index, it was found that contrary to Viet Nam, Pakistan had lesser achievement in human development despite having a similar income, as Pakistan now falls among countries with low human development (United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Report [UNDP-HDR], 2022, p. 34). This situation reveals not only Pakistan's poor and insufficient achievements on global indices but also the gap in putting efforts and resource allocations in the right direction, i.e., on human development, especially women's development. One apparent reason for the poor status of women, in general, was the low literacy rate (51.9%) for females (Finance Division, Islamabad, 2022). Another critical indicator was limited female labor force participation (21.4%) at the country level (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics [PBS], 2022). Therefore, the

country strives to increase women's literacy rate and labor force participation.

However, providing education and engagement in paid jobs is only one step toward achieving women's empowerment and gender equality concerns. Equally important is the critical component, which relates to the sociocultural fabric of the countries. Each society has specific social norms, varied forms of gender stereotypes, violent behavior toward women, and prejudiced societal attitudes at large, which is also a hindrance to attaining the goals set by local governments and global agencies. These sociocultural menaces influence the strength of cultural values of a society by imposing their negative impacts on people, especially women, despite their socioeconomic status and achievements.

Pakistan, being a developing country, is not an exception. The prevalent blatant forms of violence, gender inequality, discrimination, and public and workplace harassment have escalated in the country, especially in Punjab (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan [HRCP], 2020). This situation reveals a miserable country situation concerning violation of human rights, especially the vulnerable status of women in general, resulting in the exclusion of women from the development process in the country. Education and employment are considered proxy indicators of women's empowerment in Pakistan. However, women's higher educational level and employment status are not sufficient conditions to secure them from the prevalence of social menaces; they also face challenges in their lives. However, the researcher could not find any indigenous scale developed for assessing the sociocultural barriers affecting highly educated female employees within and outside their households in the sociocultural setting of Punjab. Hence, the purpose of the research was to explore sociocultural factors that affect the empowerment of female university teachers employed in public universities in Punjab.

Literature Review

Empowerment is complex, multidimensional, and context-specific; it is not static as it involves a gradual and gradual process (Cornwall,2016; Kabeer,1999; Malhotra et al., 2002; Oakley,2001; Rowlands,1997). Hence, the impact of empowerment was not found to happen consistently across regions, cultural settings, and dimensions of decisions and choices (Kabeer, 2005, p.4731). Hence, it is difficult to assess empowerment by adopting international indicators only, which may be an unrealistic and improper objective (Zimmerman,1995). The concept of empowerment has been argued in different perspectives and contexts. Kabeer (1999)

emphasized that empowerment was transformative and evolutionary process associated with three broader elements: resources, agency, and achievement. She also differentiated between 'power' and 'empowerment' and characterized empowerment as the first choice denied to women (Kabeer, 1999). Malhotra et al. (2002) differentiated between power and empowerment and emphasized that empowerment was rooted in the process for change over and transformation as well as an agency" (Malhotra et al., 2002, p.4). Chakrabarti and Biswas (2008) focused on the multidimensional nature of empowerment which encompasses all aspects of women's lives and their participation in decision-making. Kabeer (1999) defined empowerment as women's capacity to choose preferences and actions to attain their desired goals and choices.

Most studies advocated for women's educational attainment across the regions for gender equality and empowerment (Allendorf, 2012; Ghara, 2016; Gupta & Yesudian,2006; Khan & Maan, 2008; Malik & Courtney, 2011). Similarly, women's engagement in paid work was associated with their economic empowerment (Malhotra & Schuler, 2005; Kabeer et al., 2018). Studies also revealed a direct impact of employment on women's empowerment in the household as well as on the well-being of family members (Arooj et al., 2013; Bushra & Wajiha,2013; Chaudhry et al., 2012; Malik & Courtney,2011; Shoaib et al., 2012).

However, few studies negate the positive impacts of women's education and employment on their empowerment. Aluko (2015) argued that the relationship between education, paid work, and females' empowerment was quite complicated. The complex role of women's higher education and employment on women's agency was found evident in the forms of increasing public condemnation, family aggression, and intimate partner violence women face across regions (e.g., Awan, 2016; Eswaran & Malhotra, 2011; Gupta & Yesudian, 2006; Jamal, 2017; Tenkorang, 2018). Gender discrimination and harassment in job places also increasingly obstruct women's access to resources and decision-making in work settings. The research found the nature of jobs, infrastructure and facilities, work policies, sexual harassment, and employee relations significant factors for women's empowerment in the workplace (Kabeer, 2008; Pyle & Ward, 2003; Sen & Mukherjee, 2014; Weiss, 2003). Some studies focused on the psychological impacts of workplace isolation and exclusion on the employees (Fatima et al., 2019), which lead to sex segregation and discriminatory treatment of female employees. In case of sexual harassment in job situations, in most of the conditions, women were found unspoken due to their lack of confidence and fear of family's noncooperation and negative attitudes (Sadruddin,2013; Yasmin, 2018; Yasmin & Jabeen,2017). Like others,

sociocultural factors also affected women's involvement in the community as citizens and their legal citizenship rights, which required shifting the underlying structures of constraint (Kabeer, 2008). However, the broader patriarchal systems could not be changed even with changes at individual levels requiring collective community efforts to transform the patriarchal structures (Mahmud & Tasneem, 2014). Therefore, it was necessary to investigate reasons hampering women's empowerment even though they had higher education and economic participation to change the patriarchal constructions of social structures.

In Pakistan, several sociocultural barriers hinder women's empowerment irrespective of their socioeconomic situation. These potential barriers affect women of all socioeconomic groups regarding their decision-making autonomy within and outside families. In Pakistani society, early marriages of girls are commonplace (Noureen & Awan, 2011). Social norms do not allow girls to seek education, lest higher education (Noreen & Khalid, 2012). Older family members (both males and females) have the right to condemn girls' education (Raza, 2007), as the perception of the older and younger generations had a more significant gap in terms of gendered perception (Farooq, 2020). Hence there is a broader gap in family members' attitudes towards women and their education, employment, and empowerment in addition to societal pressures and prevailing norms (Noureen & Awan, 2011). Studies also identified relationships between perceptions of males towards females and social construct of gender and stereotypic roles for men and women (Umer et al., 2016). Generally, parents' anxieties about their daughter's physical protection and fears of public harassment limit females' access to education and work opportunities, especially in a rural environment (Mehmood et al., 2018). Most studies on women's autonomy were taking place in rural areas in Pakistan (Sathar & Kazi, 2000), and studies also established that urban women were more empowered than rural women (Riaz & Pervaiz, 2018). However, limited studies examined sociocultural barriers associated with women's empowerment (Salik & Zhiyon, 2014).

Women with higher education and decent earnings were considered empowerment in general. Hence, the empowerment challenges of urban women with higher qualifications and permanent jobs in the public sector still need to be explored in the larger province of Pakistan, Punjab. Moreover, indigenous scales were not available to measure the sociocultural impediments to the empowerment of female faculty in Punjab. Therefore, there was a need to explore the sociocultural obstacles affecting female university teachers' empowerment in the selected domains. Hence, the study aimed to build a scale for determining

sociocultural barriers hindering the path of empowerment of teaching faculty in cultural setting of Punjab, Pakistan.

Objective

To investigate the underlying sociocultural factors affecting the empowerment of female academics from public universities in Punjab.

Methodology

The study was quantitative and cross-sectional and adopted the following methodology:

a. Sample
- For pretesting the items, thirty-two (32) female participants were selected from a public sector university in Lahore by opting for convenience sampling.
- For Exploratory Factor Analysis, 224 female academics from public universities (Punjab) were chosen using simple random sampling.

b. Development of the Instrument

Research on the connections between women's empowerment and sociocultural barriers worldwide and at the regional level was reviewed and deemed to conceptualize the obstacles to empowerment in sociocultural environments. Likewise, the researcher examined the studies conducted in Pakistan, especially in the context of higher education, Punjab, to conceptualize and develop the survey questionnaire for the present study. Part 1 of the survey pertained to demographic profile of the participants. Part 2 consisted of sociocultural constraints in selected individual, household, organization, and public domains. The researcher formulated positive and negative worded statements and discussed the survey items with three prospective respondents, faculty members, and experts having relevant experience in gender studies. The questionnaire pertained to 25 items created on a Likert-type scale. There were five response categories: *strongly disagree* (1), *disagree* (2), *neither agree nor disagree* (3), *agree* (4), and *strongly agree* (5), and required the participants to select one out of five responses. The survey was named *the Sociocultural Barriers to Women's Empowerment (SBWE) scale*.

c. Procedure

First, the survey questionnaire of 25 items was administered to a small group of female teaching faculty to pretest the items (Dawis, 1987, p. 481).

Then the modified questionnaire with 21 items was used for Exploratory Factor Analysis on a separate group of respondents.

i) Pretesting of items

The statements' pretesting was performed by administering the questionnaire to respondents without letting them know at the development phase of the survey (De Vaus, 2002). Thirty-two (32) female employees who responded positively and voluntarily decided to participate in the field testing. The questionnaire was disseminated to the female employees individually. The time taken by the teachers to complete the questionnaire varied from 15 to 20 minutes. Based on pretesting, twenty-one (21) items were retained after eliminating four items from the questionnaire having ambiguity and inconsistency. In some cases, the researcher made minor changes in the statements agreeing to participants' suggestions and comprehension levels.

ii) Exploratory Factor Analysis

Given the Covid-19 epidemic that required social distancing, the researcher premeditated an Online Survey using Google Form, approached the female university academics, and administered the Online Survey. The Survey Questionnaire had demographic profiles and 21 statements related to the sociocultural barrier scale. The respondents filled out the survey questionnaire. It was mandatory to fill all the necessary sections and items, resulting in completed survey forms. Based on the pretest, it was expected that the participants would take 15 to 20 minutes to complete the form. Initially, the researcher contacted 300 female university teachers through emails and social media, and the responses of 224 participants were considered for the study. The response rate for the online survey was 74.66.

iii) Data Analysis

After screening and preliminary assessment of the datasets, an Exploratory Factor Analysis was conducted to reduce scale items, find the interrelationships among the variables (statements), and group them into various dimensions or factors.

Results and Discussion

A sample of randomly chosen female faculty (n=224) from public universities participated in the EF Factor Analysis. By designation, there were 07 Professors (3%), 14 Associate Professors (6%), 84 Assistant Professors (38%), and 119 Lecturers, and half of them were holding Ph.D. degrees (21 years and above), and another half had at least MS/M.Phil.

(18 years of education). The age of the respondents varied from 28 to 54 years (*M*=39.75, *SD*=7.67). The researcher conducted EF Analysis to develop a valid and consistent measure for assessing the sociocultural factors diminishing the empowerment status of female university academics. First, the researcher checked that the dataset was appropriate for EF analysis. Other EFA assumptions, i.e., the sample size, normality of data, linear relationship between the variables, and factorability. High and low factor loadings were examined to assess correlations between factors and variables (Tabachnick et al., 2007, p.625). Second, the researcher extracted the number of potential factors (dimensions) using the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) technique on the dataset. Initially, factors were extracted based on eigenvalues and scree tests. Parallel analysis was also performed. The researcher retained all items having factor loadings ≥ 0.40, as suggested by Nunnally (1978), and decided the number of factors for rotation after extracting the components (Costello & Osborne, 2005. p.2). After selecting the number of dimensions, the third essential step was factor rotation. The researcher relied on an orthogonal factorial explanation using the varimax technique to view that the potential sociocultural barriers in different domains were independent and uncorrelated.

The results showed the presence of ≥ 03 correlations in most cases in the Correlation Matrix. EF Analysis was conducted on 21 items, having an item-total Correlation of ≥.3. The Cronbach's alpha value was 0.83. When checked the sample adequacy, Kaiser's value was 0.80. Bartlett's test of Sphericity was found significant ($\chi 2$ (210) = 2435.84, $p < .001$), allowing for further analysis. The researcher examined the Scree Plot that revealed five components (See Figure 1).
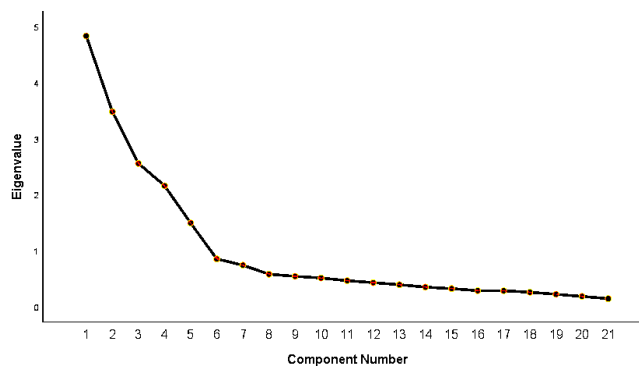

Figure 1. Scree Plot of Sociocultural Barriers Items

The Parallel Analysis of sociocultural variables also supported obtaining five factors. Compared with the actual eigenvalue from PCA to the criterion value from Parallel Analysis, five components were higher from PCA than criterion PA; hence the factors were accepted for further inspection.

Table 1
Comparison of the values of PCA and Parallel Analysis

Component/ Factor	Eigenvalue of PCA	Values of Parallel Analysis	Decision
I	4.83	1.59	Accepted
II	3.48	1.48	Accepted
III	2.55	1.41	Accepted
IV	2.16	1.33	Accepted
V	1.49	1.27	Accepted

Component Matrix displayed the unrotated item loadings on the five components, and most of the items had strong variable-component loadings (>.4), demonstrating a five-factor solution. In the sociocultural barriers to women empowerment data, five components recorded eigenvalues above 1. Five factors having an eigenvalue of more than 1 explained 69.08 percent of the variance.

However, the researcher also inspected Rotated Component Matrix before deciding on the number of factors. It was observed that items related to Component 2 and Component 5 theoretically supported one dimension, i.e., Workplace Harassment; therefore, keeping in view the study's Conceptual Framework, a four-factor solution was adopted. Finally, four components were extracted using the varimax rotation technique. The researcher examined Rotated Component Matrix with a four-factor solution regarding the number of items and their loadings before deciding on the number of factors. The matrix showed an adequate number of variables and strong item loadings on the four components: Component1 had nine variables with items' loadings above .5, and Component 2 had five variables with items' loadings above .7, whereas Component 3 with four variables and Component 4 with three variables had items' loadings above .8. All factors had three or more variables (see Table 2).

Table 2.

Results From a Factor Analysis of the Sociocultural Barriers to WE Questionnaire

	Component				Communality	Item total correlation
	1	2	3	4		
Factor I. Workplace Harassment						
JDV15	.78	-.12	.04	.06	.63	.47
JDV16	.78	-.16	.09	.05	.64	.52
JDV14	.72	-.01	.00	-.12	.53	.46
JDV17	.68	-.14	.10	.03	.50	.46
JDV13	.63	-.04	.17	-.14	.45	.50
JDV10	.61	.17	.05	-.24	.47	.38
JDV18	.61	.04	.04	-.00	.38	.33
JDV11	.55	.19	-.01	-.36	.48	.36
JDV12	.51	.03	-.11	-.29	.36	.34
Factor II: Correction on Personal Decisions						
PDV3(R)	-.01	.85	-.03	.04	.73	.36
PDV1(R)	-.04	.82	-.04	.01	.69	.36
PDV4	.05	-.82	-.03	-.04	.68	.35
PDV2(R)	-.02	.79	-.12	.01	.65	.37
PDV5	-.01	-.78	.07	-.12	.63	.36
Factor III: Domestic Violence						
FDV7	.10	.03	.85	-.06	.74	.35
FDV6	.10	-.05	.82	-.03	.69	.36
FDV8	.05	-.07	.80	-.01	.65	.32

FDV9	.02	-.12	.80	.01	.66		.31

Factor IV: Negative Public Attitude

SDV20(R)	-.16	.09	-.01	.87	.80		.43
SDV19(R)	-.08	.06	-.06	.87	.78		.38
SDV21(R)	-.11	.13	-.04	.87	.79		.42
Eigenvalues	4.83	3.47	2.55	2.15			
Variance (%)	19.16	35.99	49.32	61.98			

Note. N= 224. Used Principal Components Analysis with a varimax rotation technique. All factors having loadings >0.3 were mentioned in bold. An (R) represented the variables that were revered-scored. Maximum iterations for convergence were set at 25, suppressing small coefficients below .40. Rotation converged in 6 iterations. The scale items were created by the researcher originally for primary data collection. PDV denoted Personal Domain Variables; FDV denoted Family Domain Variables; JDV denoted Workplace Domain Variables, and SDV denoted Public Domain Variables.
    Source: Based on primary data of the Author's research.

Next, the researcher compared percentages of variance between the four-factor and five factors. It was observed that the four factors had explained 61.98% of the variance compared with 69.08% revealed by the five-factor solution, so the researcher adopted the four factors. Details are given as follows (see Table 3).

Table 3
Items details, Eigenvalues, Percentage of Variance for the Components (N = 224)

Component	Items	Item details	Eigenvalue	% of variance
1	9	JDV10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18	4.83	19.16
2	5	PDV1(R), 2(R), 3(R), 4, 5	3.47	35.99
3	4	FDV6, 7, 8, 9	2.55	49.32
4	3	SDV19(R), 20(R), 21(R)	2.15	61.98
Total items	21	-	-	-

Describing the Factors in SBWE Scale

Based on the results, components (factors) of sociocultural barriers to empowerment scale were classified as mentioned below:

1. **Workplace Harassment (WH_SB):** Component1with nine items and high loadings on items JDV15, JDV16, JDV14 (e.g., some male colleagues use indecent/improper language in the job situations) was categorized as 'Workplace Harassment.

2. **Coercion on Personal Decisions (LF_SB):** Component1 had five items with high loadings on RPDV3, RPDV1, and PDV4 (e.g., I face emotional torture and criticism from my family on making major life decisions (such as education, health, job, and marriage). That factor was marked as the 'Coercion on Personal Decisions.'

3. **Domestic Violence (DV_SB):** Component3 with four items, and high loadings on variables FDV7, FDV6, and FDV8 (e.g., Like other educated working women, I also face domestic violence if I try to control my salary and savings) was labeled 'Domestic Violence.'

4. **Negative Public Attitude (PA-SB):** Component 4 had three items, and the principal loadings were on statements RSDV20 and RSDV19 (e.g., people think educated working women are not good mothers). That factor was tagged as the 'Negative Public Attitude.'

Descriptive Statistics

Table 4 shows the abbreviations of factors comprising the SBWE scale, number of items, mean, and standard deviations in addition to Cronbach's alpha and KMO values.

Table 4

Descriptive statistics for Sociocultural Barriers to Women's Empowerment scale

Factors/ Dimensions	Items	*M*	*SD*	Cronbach's Alpha	KMO value
1. WP_SB	3	26.25	6.88	0.87	0.81
2. LF_SB	5	12.50	4.90	0.88	0.87
3. DV_SB	4	10.22	3.99	0.85	0.82
4. PA_SB	3	7.94	3.40	0.90	0.75
SBWE scale	21	56.92	11.69	0.83	0.80

Note: N = univeristy teaching faculty

Calculating Total Scores of the SBWE scale

First, the researcher reversed negatively worded items and added the item scores that made up the factors and the SBWE scale. The scores calculated above four dimensions were added together for the

Sociocultural Barriers to Women's Empowerment (SBWE scale). High scores showed a high level of sociocultural barriers to the empowerment of female university teachers, while low scores indicated a low level of the sociocultural obstacles affecting females' empowerment.

Correlation between SBWE Scale and Factors

Table 5 reveals the significant relationship between total SBWE scale scores and its four factors.

Table 5

Relationship between Sociocultural Barriers Scale and various Factors (Dimensions)

Factor/ Dimension	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5
1. WP_SB	26.25	6.88					
2. LF_SB	12.50	4.90	.06	-			
3. DV_SB	10.22	3.99	.16*	.13*	-		
4. PA_SB	7.94	3.40	.28**	.148*	.08	-	
SBWE scale	56.92	11.69	.75**	.54**	.52**	.54**	-

Note: N = 224 univeristy teaching faculty; $^*p< .05.$ $^{**}p< .01.$

Examining the SBWE scale scores, Workplace Harassment ($r(224)$ = .75, $p < .01$.) had the highest contribution to the sociocultural barriers that female university teachers face. The inter-factorial correlation coefficients between five factors of the SBWE scale were between .06 to .28, indicating the distinct nature of each item of the factors. All five aspects were independent and contributed significantly to total SBWE scale scores.

Hence, to improve the socioeconomic status of female university teachers, it was found that four sociocultural barriers that existed in the personal, family, workplace, and public spheres of their lives were required to be addressed. These sociocultural obstacles to the empowerment of female faculty included: workplace harassment, coercion on personal decisions, domestic violence, and negative public attitude.

Workplace harassment is a global social menace that severely impacts the employees' physical and emotional health, including in educational institutions (Gruber & Fineran, 2007; Oni, 2019; Srikanth, 2018). However, these impacts were found severe in the case of female employees in an organization, especially in educational institutions (Ali & Kramar,2015; Bhatti & Ali, 2022; Sadruddin, 2013). Previous studies

found negative impacts of workplace harassment in the form of emotional abuse and psychological trauma on female employees (Chawla & Goyal, 2017; Haddi, 2018). Although the incidences of harassment also negatively influence an organization and work culture (Chawla, 2017; Khaliq et al., 2020), a hostile environment derails employees' commitment to performing their jobs to meet the organizational obligations due to increased dissatisfaction with job place (Khaliq et al. 2020). Hence, meeting the challenge of harassment, especially sexual harassment against women, needs to be addressed and questioned in educational institutions. Likewise, the Anti-Harassment Act 2010 needs to be implemented in letter and spirit in universities and degree-awarding institutions in Pakistan by providing training to women and identifying disturbing elements in the workplace (Sadruddin, 2013). The issue of street harassment is also another factor influencing the empowerment of women outside their homes. In a recent study by Imtiaz and Kamal (2021), street harassment was found frequently happening in major cities, especially against women, commonly perpetrated by men (p.1808). Limited scales have been developed to measure the street harassment of women, especially for female students at universities. In the context of Pakistan, in a recent study, Israa and Ijaz (2021) developed a Street Harassment Scale (p.177). Gender inequality and discrimination prevailed in women's social and economic spheres of life with certain norms and practices. Like other institutions, female university teachers also face incidences of domestic violence. Domestic violence is a complex issue, manifested in various forms of violence (physical, emotional, sexual, psychological, and economic exploitation). A study by Fikree et al. (2005) found that men who experienced violence in their childhood by their families tended to be more violent in the future (p.49). At a personal level, women's ability to make their individual decisions are controlled, controlled personal decisions, especially regarding marriage, professional choices economic control, and these findings were found consistent with other studies conducted in the context of Pakistan (e.g., Awan, 2016; Nasrullah et al., 2014). Hence, understanding the deep-rooted harassment and negative attitudes towards female university teachers outside the home (i.e., workplace harassment and negative public attitude) and within the house (i.e., domestic violence and coercion on personal decisions) must be studied objectively. Such empirical studies would help female university teachers enjoy the empowerment status, which they may enjoy fully after mitigating these sociocultural barriers.

Conclusion

Women's empowerment has been researched widely from different perspectives. Researchers have limited studies on developing a scale to measure the sociocultural barriers to women's empowerment from a gender perspective. Most studies have focused on different sociocultural factors that prevail among all segments of females in general. Limited studies have been done on the sociocultural barriers that highly educated working women face in universities. Studies on sociocultural constraints to the empowerment of highly educated professional women are sparse in Pakistan, as masses and researchers assume that women working in various professional institutions, including universities, are fully empowered and self-sufficient. Very few measurement tools and scales are available to be used in the sociocultural context of Pakistan. Empowerment is a context-specific and multidimensional concept, and there is a dire need to develop an indigenous scale for determining the sociocultural barriers to empowerment, especially for women working in higher education. This argument sets the Sociocultural Barriers to Women Empowerment (SBWE) scale of the sociocultural barriers within and outside households for females. The EFA was conducted on 21 items to explore the sociocultural barriers hampering the empowerment of female university academics in the stated domains of empowerment (Personal, Family, Workplace, and Public), and four factors were extricated, including (i) Workplace Harassment, (ii) Coercion on Personal Decisions, (iii) Domestic Violence, and (iv) Negative Public Attitude. The KMO value was .80 for SBWE scale.

The scale reliability was $\alpha = 0.83$, and the Alpha Coefficients range for three factors varied between 0.90 and 0.84. In a nutshell, eliminating the sociocultural barriers to empowering highly qualified women employees, including those occupying high salaried jobs in higher education, will enhance their productivity as employees, improve the quality of teaching and research in the universities, and uplift their well-being. Freedom from these impediments may also play a significant role in attaining the SDG-5, i.e., Gender Equality and Women Empowerment which further contributes to national development. Researchers must address prevalent norms of gender inequality and discrimination and sociocultural barriers entrenched at the individual and societal levels in households, workplace organizations, and the public to expand the prospects of female faculty's empowerment in the higher education sector. Freedom from these impediments may also play a significant role in attaining the SDG-5, i.e., Gender Equality and Women Empowerment which further contributes to national development.

Delimitation

The researcher did not execute the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) as it was beyond the set goals of the present research.

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