GENDER INEQUALITY IN CORPORATE SECTOR: CASE STUDY OF ISLAMABAD

MPhil Thesis

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Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad

2021-2023

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF PAKISTAN STUDIES
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ISLAMABAD

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This dissertation submitted by **MS. ROBINA BIBI** entitled:

"GENDER INEQUALITY IN CORPORATE SECTOR: CASE STUDY OF ISLAMABAD"

is accepted in this present form by National Institute of Pakistan Studies, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad for the Degree of Master of Philosophy in Pakistan Studies.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my individual research and that it has not been submitted concurrently to any other university for the purpose of any other degree.

Robina Bi Bi

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Thanks, Almighty Allah for guiding me and helping me to achieve yet another milestone in my life.

Table of Contents

Abstract

Gender inequality is a pervasive issue that persists in various sectors, including education, politics, and the workforce. Despite progress in recent years, women continue to face barriers and discrimination in their pursuit of equal opportunities and treatment. The workforce is also plagued with gender disparities, such as unequal pay, limited career advancement opportunities, and workplace harassment. This research attempts to find the reason behind the lack of women as managers in the corporate sectors and to explore the main factors that are challenges for women to be leaders. This thesis explores gender inequality in the labor force sector of Islamabad. Specifically, it examines the disparities in employment opportunities, wages, and promotions between men and women. The study's findings reveal that women in Islamabad face significant challenges in accessing employment opportunities, especially in traditionally male-dominated fields. Furthermore, women earn substantially less than men, even when they have similar qualifications and work experience. Women also face significant barriers to promotion, as they are often overlooked for leadership positions due to gender bias. Overall, this study demonstrates that gender inequality remains a significant issue in Islamabad's labor force sector, and policymakers and employers must take steps to address these disparities. This includes implementing gender-sensitive policies, providing equal opportunities for women, and creating a supportive work environment that enables women to thrive in their careers. By addressing gender inequality, Islamabad can unlock the full potential of its workforce, leading to a more prosperous and equitable society.

Keywords: Gender inequality, corporate sector, workplace attitude

Chapter 1

Introduction

Gender inequality has been an interesting course of research across the globe, but unfortunately, there is a lack of studies on the area of participation of women in management, and gender inequality in organizational leadership and management. That's the reason less data is available on the participation of women in board-level management in Islamabad. This research gap reflects the lack of attention on the issue of women in management, particularly in the corporate sector. Previous studies reveal that women are underprivileged not only in their basic rights but also they are largely excluded from the decision-making process, in the corporate sector. However women are still battling to enter a male-dominated world, nevertheless. These horizontal and vertical segregations are a continuing struggle for women in middle and senior-level management. It has been noted that there are very few women in senior managerial roles.

In addition to being relegated to low-paying and inconsequential work, which is a violation of their fundamental human rights, women are routinely excluded from the decision-making process, which is especially prevalent in the business sector. Both of these actions violate the fundamental human rights of women. Their role in strategic decision-making is undervalued within HR policy and administration, and they are rarely given recognition for it. Women are making progress in fields where they were previously underrepresented. Women in executive positions are always working to eradicate these obstacles. The proportion of women in executive-level management positions is still alarmingly low. It is becoming easier for women with management and technical skills to enter the workforce, However, it is unfortunate that their advancement to upper-level management positions is delayed.

Women's actual participation in decision-making is rarely a topic of discussion, even though much has been said about their capacity to be global decision-makers. Administration of business processes and coordination of organizational structure are roles that have growing importance. In formal institutions that imitate the traditional, normalized, and rational perpetuation of the eons-old social order, misogyny is used to legitimize the power distribution and structure that exist within these institutions. Having women on corporate boards is no longer a novel idea intended to garner attention; rather, it is establishing itself as one of the most urgent imperatives and a strategic necessity for modern businesses (Grosser, 2009).[1] Having women on corporate boards was once a novel concept meant to attract attention. The selected study's title provides a comprehensive overview of its primary objectives.

As the term women employees implies, these working professionals are managers in the business world. The highly organized and institutionalized modern business and office environment is known as the corporate sector, and it is used to describe this environment. According to a study conducted by MathurHelm (2005), men are more likely to hold positions of authority in established organizations.[2] This makes the working conditions difficult and disagreeable for women who perform administrative duties. This leaves these managers both speechless and powerless within the domain of management. According to the research of Clapp and Purugganan (2020), several social, economic, and psychological factors have contributed to the rise of women to executive

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[1] Grosser, K. (2011). *Corporate social responsibility, gender equality and organizational change: a feminist perspective* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Nottingham).

[2] Mathur-Helm, B. (2016). Women in management in South Africa. In *Women in management worldwide* (pp. 359-373). Gower.

positions in business. [3]The name of the study suggests that it will investigate the accomplishments of the participants as well as their impact on their current positions. In contrast, the purpose of this study is to evaluate how effectively these female CEOs manage their employees.

As suggested by the title, the purpose of this study is to ascertain the extent to which these women administrators have contributed to the administration and growth of business affairs. A significant limitation of the study is that the number of women who hold managerial positions in the private sector of Islamabad is unknown. Even though women are underrepresented in management, not enough research has been conducted on the topic. According to a 2002 study, only ten percent of senior executive positions are occupied by women. According to research conducted by Subramaniam et al. only between 3.6% and 5.8% of Pakistani women occupy administrative positions.[4] Separate data indicates that only 2% of Pakistani women actively participate in the economy, and of those, only 2% hold administrative or managerial positions.[5] Pakistan has a much lower proportion of women in management positions than the rest of the world, which is indicative of both the "glass ceiling" and "tokenism." Although women hold only 4% of senior positions in India, in Asia 11% of senior positions are held by women.[6]

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[3]Clapp, J., & Purugganan, J. (2020). Contextualizing corporate control in the agrifood and extractive sectors. *Globalizations, 17*(7), 1265-1275.

[4] Subramanyam, K. R. (2014). *Financial statement analysis.* McGraw-Hill.

[5] Youssef, N. H. (1971). Social structure and the female labor force: the case of women workers in Muslim Middle Eastern countries. *Demography, 8*, 427-439.

[6] Rodgers, Y. V. D. M., & Zveglich Jr, J. E. (2014). Inclusive growth and gender inequality in Asia's labor markets. In *Inequality in Asia and the Pacific* (pp. 127-157). Routledge.

In industries where men are directors, women are just working as the labor force. The vast majority of promotions to management and supervisory positions are granted to males. Men are consistently overrepresented at upper organizational levels, including management and executive positions. Only a minute fraction of corporate committee members are female. This demonstrates that women are still viewed as "tokens" in organizations where men and women occupy equal numbers of managerial positions. Women are more likely to hold "de jure" occupations than males, who are more likely to hold jobs that are "de facto." Female characters are only included in stories to satisfy diversity quotas; they have no genuine agency. Human resources are defined as an individual's innate talents and abilities.

Mother, wife, daughter, and sister are just some of the roles that are expected of women in our society and our families. However, a closer examination reveals that each of their primary responsibilities essentially qualifies them as "managers" of some sort. They are responsible for everything, both at home and at work. They were born with a natural aptitude for leadership. To maximize their profits, they exert control over all aspects of the household, including the members, the employees, and the family members. Similarly, the resources and potentials of individuals serve as the propelling forces behind corporate production. Therefore, it is the responsibility of management to control and shape these assets as they see appropriate. This research is conducted in Islamabad Pakistan. The sample of corporate administrators selected by the researcher consists of both high-level and mid-level executives. It is advantageous to have participants from both the

government and the private sector, as their perspectives are more nuanced. The primary limitation of the study is the lack of data on the proportion of women with managerial responsibilities in the private sector in the metropolitan areas of Islamabad. This is the primary limitation of the study. The topic of gender inequality especially in the corporate sector is not researched well.

Hence this research attempts to focus on the reason behind the low participation of women in managerial positions. As mentioned there has been a lot of research conducted on the topic of gender inequality but this research is unique of its kind because it points out the area of research that is mostly ignored.

1.2 Significance of Study

"Woman" is the cornerstone of society and the foundation of a successful organization's achievements. In today's society, women have etched out their niche in the corporate sphere. They are establishing themselves as innovators, leaders, and administrators in the industries in which they are currently employed. They are genuinely ascending the escalator of struggle and victory, disgrace and fame simultaneously. This is why this research concentrates on the women in Islamabad who are protesting their exclusion from active corporate management and who hold managerial positions in corporations today. These women in the Islamabad operate in both the public and private sectors. Since very little is known about the perspectives and experiences of women in management positions in Islamabad, this thesis will analyze the current environment and describe corporate initiatives designed to reduce employee turnover and increase mobility. Consequently, this is the first study of its kind to examine the function of female administrators in corporate administration. In the majority of cases, women are unable to keep up with their male counterparts because they start late and fall behind quickly. Men advance much further up the

career hierarchy and become top administrators than their competent but underappreciated female counterparts ever could.

This study will demonstrate that a diversified talent pool leads to greater innovation and business success, but that many companies fail to get benefit from their greatest potential resource, their female talent. Inevitably, the investigation will reveal the need for additional research to demonstrate that, although businesses are making some progress by employing women in managerial positions, there is still a great deal of work to be done in this area. This study is motivated by the fact that gender equality and adequate engagement opportunities for women in management are not universal among the highest-quality and most prestigious organizations. This research is specifically motivated by the fact that there are insufficient women in management positions. This study serves as a wake-up call, prompting organizations to redouble their efforts to combat systemic gender equality. This study will motivate the aforementioned efforts. In general, women enter the workforce with confidence and ambition; however, they quickly realize that advancement opportunities are limited and that they do not effectively contribute to the administration of corporations.

Within the scope of this investigation, "Women" is the principal area of focus. As a direct result, they are investigated with the greatest scrutiny. They are referring to women who work in white-collar professions occupy top-level management positions and face significant discrimination due to their gender. As a result of their ambition, professional objectives, and increased exposure to a variety of industries, an increasing number of women are entering the corporate world as managers at all levels of management in contemporary society. As a result of advances in educational attainment, social acceptability of women, and gender equality in the workplace, an increasing

number of women are ascending the corporate ladder and assuming managerial responsibilities. Even though women are underrepresented in executive positions and progress is sluggish and inconsistent, women all over the world are seeking to shatter the proverbial "glass ceiling." Therefore, research is conducted on the credentials, knowledge, skills, management characteristics, attitudes, and relationship-building abilities of female managers. These are the women who face hostility when attempting to assume administrative positions.

1.3 Central Argument

The main reason for gender disparity in Islamabad is that women encounter significant barriers and discrimination while trying to obtain job opportunities across a range of industries, including the public and commercial sectors. Women in Islamabad still experience gender-based discrimination despite recent advancements, which restrict their access to professional opportunities. The gender gap is particularly evident in the public sector, where women are underrepresented in leadership roles and earn less than males.

This research will be focused on examining and illustrating the prevalent gender disparities within the corporate landscape of Islamabad. The thesis would delve into the specific challenges and discriminations faced by women in the corporate sector of the city, exploring factors such as underrepresentation in leadership roles, unequal pay, and other barriers that hinder women's professional advancement. Through a case study approach, the thesis aims to shed light on the extent of gender inequality in the corporate sector in Islamabad, providing insights into the unique challenges faced by women and suggesting potential avenues for improvement and gender equity.

1.4 Literature review

Gender Inequality has been a significant issue all over the world but specifically in Pakistan women are not given enough opportunities to be included in the boards of directors, and even women have no access to managerial positions.

According to Rosaldo, female subordination is a historical phenomenon. Female inferiority has been prevalent in countries where there is a distinct divide between private and public life and where females have been relegated to the house since ancient times. Despite many women fighting for women's rights in the third world, females in the third world are still denied the freedom to make their judgments, select their own lives, pick the job they want, and develop a vision.[7]

In Pakistan, the share of females in upper-level management increased by only 2% between 1988 and 1995, which is very low when compared to European countries such as Norway, which should increase by 30%, and the Republic of Korea, which should increase by 40%. According to Wirth, the explanation for this little rise is the prevalence of rigid glass ceilings in the form of norms and values that restrict girls' activities and their path to management positions. One of the greatest impediments to female admission to executive positions is a lack of adequate education and abilities. Gender disparities in education and employment are prevalent in many parts of the world, including Asian nations like Pakistan. Despite some progress in female education, particularly in fields like business since the mid-1990s, cultural norms and societal expectations continue to limit opportunities for women in the workforce. In Pakistan, traditional gender roles dictate that girls prioritize family care and household responsibilities from a young age. As a result, they often

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[7] Rosaldo, M. Z., Lamphere, L., & Bamberger, J. (1974). *Woman, culture, and society* (Vol. 133). Stanford University Press.

pursue educational paths that emphasize empathy, patience, and housekeeping skills, rather than fields like business or job development. This cultural expectation restricts women's access to economic opportunities and perpetuates gender inequality in the workforce. Even when women do enter the workforce, they face significant barriers to advancement. Globally, women hold disproportionately fewer top executive positions compared to men, despite accounting for a significant portion of the labor force. This underrepresentation is particularly stark in large multinational corporations, where only a small fraction of senior management roles is held by women. [8]

Pakistan has been ranked second worst in the world in terms of gender inequality. In Pakistan, men make up 98 percent of top management positions in banks, other economic institutions, and manufacturing units. This demonstrates that women are not treated equally when it comes to applying for senior management positions. Males are always given priority over females.[9]

Healy and Zucca discovered that just 3% of the most highly rewarded executives are female, that these jobs are predominantly held by men, and that female executives are likely to be grouped in certain business groupings.[10]

In her research study, Amy Reynolds Wheaton & Colleague reveals that despite the growth in the number of women in the workforce, women are still underrepresented and underpaid in positions

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[8] Mathur-Helm, B. (2006). Women and the glass ceiling in South African banks: an illusion or reality?. *Women in Management Review*, *21*(4), 311-326.

[9] Mahwish, R., Fatima, T., Maida, G., Hadiqa, N., & Shaffaq, A. (2019). Gender Inequality: A Case Study in Pakistan. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, *7*(03), 369-379.

[10] Healy Burress, J., & Zucca, L. J. (2004). The gender equity gap in top corporate executive positions. *American Journal of Business*, *19*(1), 55-62.

of top management. Data shows that there are few women in leadership positions across all professions, including industry, nonprofit, education, the military, and the media (Laponsky and Larking 2009; Lennon 2013). For instance, although women make up three-quarters of the workforce in the nonprofit sector, only 40% of CEOs and 48% of board members are female (Board Source 2010). However, women occupy one-third of board roles and one-fifth of CEO posts in big charities (those with budgets above $25 million). According to best estimations, less than 5% of women are managers. Only twenty-two females having an associate degree got the seats in management areas.[11]

Society in the context of Pakistan acts as a barrier for working women. Historically women's entrance into the workforce has been limited due to familial confinements, cultural values, societal norms, world economy, and stringency for women's mobility. The results do show that gender-based discrimination was reported at work, particularly in fields where men predominate. It was also shown that people's attitudes are likely to have an impact on working women's health and family relationships.[12]

In an article on gender inequality, it was said that Pakistan was ranked the second worst country in the world in terms of gender disparity. In Pakistan, men make up 98 percent of top management

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[11] Reynolds, A. (2017). Spheres of gendered inequality: family, religious life, and the workplace. *International Review of Modern Sociology*, 157-177.

[12] Rabia, M., Tanveer, F., Gillani, M., Naeem, H., & Akbar, S. (2019). Gender inequality: a case study in Pakistan. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 7(3), 369-379.

positions in banks, other economic institutions, and manufacturing units. This demonstrates that women are not treated equally when applying for senior management jobs.[13]

Gender discrimination is also strongly embedded in Pakistani society, especially in the fields of education and work. Discrimination regarding wages is not only an issue in developing nations, but it is also prevalent in developed countries such as the United States of America. According to research data from 1972 to 2009, women who were licensed dietitians in the United States earned $45,258 per year, while males earned $50,250 per year, for an average annual earnings difference of $4965.[14]

International law also highlights women's rights to equal opportunity in administration and executive positions. However, the effects are minor. Historically, women have been given less importance in terms of having decision-making authority, and if a woman is fortunate enough to get a high level in her career, she will always face obstacles in her progression. Previous research has shown that males are always looking for promotion as compared to women.[15]

In their book Gillard and Okonjo provide an engaging and comprehensible explanation of how gender affects women's access to leadership roles, how they are viewed as leaders, how their leadership develops through time, and how it ends.[16] Julia and Ngozi offer a road map of important

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[13] Rabia, M., Tanveer, F., Gillani, M., Naeem, H., & Akbar, S. (2019). Gender inequality: a case study in Pakistan. *Open Journal of Social Sciences, 7*(3), 369-379.

[14] Elmuti, D., Jia, H., & Davis, H. H. (2009). Challenges women face in leadership positions and organizational effectiveness: An investigation. *Journal of leadership education, 8*(2), 167-187.

[15] Kinley, D., & Chambers, R. (2006). The UN Human Rights Norms for corporations: The private implications of public international law. *Human Rights Law Review, 6*(3), 447-497.

[16] Gillard, J., & Okonjo-Iweala, N. (2022). *Women and leadership: Real lives, real lessons*. MIT Press.

knowledge to inspire us all as well as a change agenda that enables women to take charge and battle gender prejudice by highlighting the lessons that can be learned from women leaders.[17]

Steffens and Viladot's book provides a thorough exploration of the nuanced relationship between gender and employment, addressing key issues such as work-life balance, gender stereotypes, discrimination, and occupational segregation. Through their analysis, the authors elucidate how gender serves as a fundamental aspect of individual identity, profoundly shaping perceptions and experiences within the workplace. They underscore the influence of organizational practices, cultural norms, and socialization processes in perpetuating gendered standards, emphasizing the need for proactive measures to dismantle systemic inequalities. Moreover, the book offers actionable recommendations for businesses to cultivate inclusive and equitable workplace environments, advocating for the valorization of diversity and gender equity as essential components of organizational success. Drawing on empirical research and theoretical insights, Steffens and Viladot provide a comprehensive framework for understanding and addressing gender disparities in the contemporary workforce, making a significant contribution to the literature on gender and employment.[18]

Powell in his book discusses how men and women handle being in positions of authority at work. The "glass ceiling" and other barriers that prevent women from rising to positions of leadership are examined in the book, along with the experiences of males who co-work with women in management positions. The author contends that gender has a substantial impact on how the

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[17] Sun, X. (2022). Women and leadership: Real lives, real lesson. MIT Press

[18] Steffens, M. C., & Viladot, M. A. (2015). Gender at work: A social psychological perspective. *(No Title)*.

workplace is shaped and can affect how men and women are viewed and assessed for leadership roles. The book also offers insights into the methods women may employ to go over gender stereotypes and succeed in their careers, as well as how businesses can foster inclusive workplaces that value diversity and gender parity. Overall, "Women and Men in Management" gives an in-depth investigation of the gender dynamics in executive roles and offers helpful suggestions for advancing workplace gender equality.[19]

Gender disparity within the realm of employment has captivated the attention of scholars and researchers for decades, with investigations revealing entrenched barriers that impede women's ascent to high-level positions within organizations. The metaphorical construct of the "glass ceiling" has emerged as a salient symbol of these barriers, illustrating the invisible yet formidable obstacles that hinder women's access to executive roles, workplace leadership positions, and corporate board memberships. This phenomenon underscores the pervasive nature of gender inequality within organizational hierarchies, perpetuating a patriarchal paradigm wherein women are systematically marginalized and relegated to subordinate roles. Moreover, a scholarly discourse has illuminated the phenomenon of women leaders being perceived as mere "cogs in the machine," wherein their contributions are undervalued and their authority undermined, further entrenching the narrative of female incapacity for decision-making and leadership. These findings underscore the urgent need for systemic interventions aimed at dismantling the structural and

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[19] Powell, G. N. (2018). *Women and men in management*. Sage Publications.

cultural underpinnings of gender disparity, fostering environments wherein women can thrive and ascend to positions of power and influence commensurate with their abilities and qualifications.[20]

Gender inequality and class are two issues that are mostly confronted by women. Women account for 40% of the global workforce, and despite various measures to promote more board gender diversity, females remain underrepresented on boards in many countries.[21] Even though women want to serve on boards and committees. However, the nominating committee does not frequently include females as active members of the board of directors. As a result, corporate boards are always "male-dominated social networks and clubs."[22]

Females may assist any corporation or organization more with their soft talents and can be better mentors, yet they are often disregarded. The lack of women in high management positions also restricted the availability of female mentors. Furthermore, having women on a board can boost its originality, flexibility, and strategic decision-making skills. Gender diversity may also be beneficial to the business sector, according to academics, because women are more mindful of stakeholders and have a better awareness of continuing market needs.[23]

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[20] Caceres-Rodriguez, R. (2013). The glass ceiling revisited: Moving beyond discrimination in the study of gender in public organizations. *Administration & Society, 45*(6), 674-709.

[21] Viviers, S., & Mans-Kemp, N. (2017). Board Gender Diversity and Corporate Citizenship Actions, Reporting and Reputation. *The Journal of Corporate Citizenship*, (66), 81-105.

[22] Ibid

[23] Kakabadse, N. K., Figueira, C., Nicolopoulou, K., Hong Yang, J., Kakabadse, A. P., & Özbilgin, M. F. (2015). Gender diversity and board performance: Women's experiences and perspectives. *Human Resource Management, 54*(2), 265-281.

Following the #MeToo movement, which began in October 2017, there was a decrease in sexual coercion and unwelcome sexual attention. However, there has been a significant increase in animosity toward women; according to a poll, gender harassment (sexist remarks and inappropriate tales from males) was 76% in 2016 and 92% in 2018.[24]

Erin Eatough's research underscores the presence of weaknesses, biases, misinterpretations, and inaccuracies inherent in previous studies, challenging prevailing notions about the relationship between gender and cognitive abilities. Indeed, emerging evidence suggests that the human brain, irrespective of gender, is profoundly shaped by individual experiences, highlighting the intricate interplay between nature and nurture in shaping cognitive development. While anatomical disparities between male and female brains do exist, contemporary research suggests that their impact on individual talents and capabilities is minimal. This nuanced understanding underscores the need to move beyond reductionist perspectives that attribute cognitive differences solely to biological factors, and instead, recognize the complex interplay of environmental influences in shaping human cognition. Eatough's work contributes to a growing body of literature that advocates for a more holistic approach to understanding gender differences, one that acknowledges the multifaceted nature of human cognition and its intricate relationship with individual experiences and environmental context.[25]

In her study, Maggie Wool discovered a "broken rung" at the manager level: "For every 100 men promoted to manager, only 86 women are promoted." This difficulty is exacerbated at higher levels

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[24] Prothero, A., & Tadajewski, M. (2021). # MeToo and beyond: Inequality and injustice in marketing practice and academia. *Journal of Marketing Management, 37*(1-2), 1-20.

[25] Eatough, E. M., Chang, C. H., Miloslavic, S. A., & Johnson, R. E. (2011). Relationships of role stressors with organizational citizenship behavior: a meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 96*(3), 619.

of leadership: fewer women managers equals fewer prospects to be promoted to department heads, directors, and C-suite roles.[26]

Pakistan was recently ranked third-last in the world for women's economic opportunities and engagement by the World Economic Forum. Despite making up 49% of the country's total population, women only make up 24% of the workforce in Pakistan. And it should come as no surprise that they are much less represented in Pakistani boardrooms. In Pakistani businesses, men continue to dominate the top levels. 550 publicly traded companies on the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) were surveyed for a study in 2017. The end result was just one female director for every nine male directors.[27]

Gender inequality in the workplace manifests itself in a variety of ways, including uneven compensation, disparities in promotions, occurrences of sexual harassment, and racism.[28] Even if their resumes are identical to those of male applicants or childless women, hiring managers are less likely to contact moms and women of reproductive age.

It means that we found gender biases in the workplace, which think of women as mothers and caretakers of the family. This narrative considered women as less dedicated and professional for the high-level management seats. Because they think that women cannot

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[26] ibid

[27] Saigal, R. (2020). Gender diversity in the Pakistani corporate boardroom. *Retrieved August, 12,* 2020.

[28] Woll, M. (2021). Gender inequality in the workplace: The fight against bias. *Gender Inequality in the Workplace: The Fight Against Bias, 15.*

manage properly the executive roles along with the family and children, and they are unable to stay in the office for lengthy hours as compared to their male colleagues.

This gender disparity is a pandemic that affected 2 million working women, particularly the young females who are mothers, considering that they would quit their jobs because of family and children which is why not suitable for managerial positions. [29]

1.5 Gaps in Literature

To explore the role of working women as managers in the corporate sector of Islamabad detailed survey has been done by consulting various books, articles, and journals. On reading and analyzing them in detail researchers have noted various aspects of working women have been covered, but there is little focus on those women who are working in the corporate sector and struggling to achieve leadership roles. It has also been observed that the topic of gender inequality in the corporate sector has been little focus of research in the context of Pakistan. Western studies are not always relevant to Pakistani society its norms and culture. Literature reveals that the tokenism aspect of women in management in Pakistan in not been studied and researched well. Therefore there is a lack of literature is on the women that are working as managers, in the corporate sector.

Studies from the West are not always pertinent in Pakistan due to fundamental differences in social structure and order between the West and Pakistan. In the examined corpus of research, the "tokenism" aspect of women in executive positions in Pakistan received little consideration. There is little evidence in the Bureau of Personnel's archives that women held administrative positions

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[29] Gallardo, M. (2021). Does maternity affect women's careers? Perceptions of working mothers in academia. *Educación XXI*, *24*(1), 405-428.

in any of Islamabad's industrial zones. In Pakistani literature, women's "tokenism" on management committees is an issue that has not been extensively studied. Pakistani women are renowned for their uniquely feminine characteristics. However, no published text from Pakistan addresses the topic of women holding leadership roles. This topic has never been discussed outside the context of quotas and reservations in the research conducted on it. Incorporating women into administrative positions has implications for both gender bias and society as a whole, as it will lead to more equitable policy and decision-making in all fields of the corporate sector.

Therefore this research will explain the reasons why women face the glass ceiling in upper-level management in the corporate sector and determine the factors that create hindrances for women to achieve roles as executives in the corporate sector.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

Contingency Theory

The contingency theory of leadership was proposed by the Austrian psychologist Fred Edward Fiedler in his landmark 1964 article, "A Contingency Model of Leadership Effectiveness." The contingency theory emphasizes the importance of both the leader's personality and the situation in which that leader operates.[30]

This theory holds that a manager in a business can make rational decisions and choices by basing them on the essential facts of the situation and the immediate need at hand. When managers make decisions based solely on what is required, they may give the impression of exercising a great deal

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[30] Fiedler, F. E. (1964). A contingency model of leadership effectiveness. In *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 1, pp. 149-190). Academic Press.

of authority. In other words, there is no one correct way to operate a business or make decisions within an organization; rather, each circumstance requires a comprehensive evaluation of all relevant internal and external factors. This concept will aid in evaluating the outcomes once women in management have developed their leadership styles.

System Theory of Management

Systems theory is a broad interdisciplinary field that originated in the natural sciences but has been applied to various fields, including management. It doesn't have a single originator but rather emerged from the works of multiple scholars across different disciplines. Some key contributors include Ludwig von Bertalanffy, Kenneth Boulding, and Norbert Wiener.[31]

Systems theory offers a comprehensive framework for understanding and addressing gender inequality within the corporate sector. From a systems perspective, gender inequality is not merely a result of individual actions or isolated policies but is deeply embedded within the organizational structure, culture, and practices. It acknowledges that gender disparities are sustained by the interdependence of various factors, including organizational policies, societal norms, economic structures, and individual behaviors. Feedback mechanisms within the corporate system can either reinforce existing inequalities or facilitate progress towards gender equity. Moreover, organizations are open systems that interact with their external environments, meaning that broader social, cultural, and economic factors also shape gender dynamics within the corporate sector. Systems theory encourages examining gender inequality across different levels and departments within organizations, recognizing that it may manifest differently within various subsystems.

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[31] Heylighen, F., & Joslyn, C. (1992). What is systems theory. *Principia cybernetica web, 1.*

By understanding the systemic nature of gender inequality, organizations can develop more holistic strategies for promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion, addressing root causes and underlying dynamics rather than merely addressing surface-level symptoms.

Theory X and Y

In the 1960s, social psychologist Douglas McGregor developed two contrasting theories that explained how managers' beliefs about what motivates their people can affect their management style. He labeled these Theory X and Theory Y. These theories continue to be important even today.[32]

The combination of Theories X and Y is an additional management theory that guides executives and other company leaders. Theory X holds a pessimistic view of employees, assuming that they inherently dislike work, avoid responsibility, and need to be closely supervised and controlled. In a context where Theory X assumptions prevail, gender inequality may manifest through stereotypical beliefs about the capabilities and motivations of different genders. For example, there might be a tendency to perceive women as less committed or less capable of leadership roles, leading to discriminatory practices in hiring, promotion, and task assignment. In contrast, Theory Y assumes that employees are inherently motivated, enjoy work, seek responsibility, and can be creative and innovative. In organizations where Theory Y assumptions are embraced, there may be a more inclusive and egalitarian approach to gender dynamics. Leaders might be more likely to

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[32] Emmanuel, O. O. (2021). The Application of Elton Mayol's Human Relations Theory and Douglas McGregor's Theory X and Y to Achieve Organization Objectives. *Arabian Journal of Business and Management Review*, *11*(4).

recognize and value the contributions of all employees regardless of gender, fostering an environment where women have equal opportunities for advancement and participation.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, this concept emerged as a consequence of women's increasing participation in constitutional and organizational forms of leadership. It is conceivable that the primary focus of this argument is the tendency of female CEOs to highlight and idealize male performance while ignoring male advantages. This thesis demonstrated how underrepresented and disadvantaged voices can serve as a leadership resource.

1.7 Methodology

This study primarily adopts a descriptive approach to comprehensively examine the roles and responsibilities of women in the corporate sector and their contributions to efficient human resource management. By employing qualitative research methodology, the study aims to delve into the challenges faced by female managers in the corporate sector due to gender-related factors. This method facilitates an exploration of the respondents' experiences, perceptions, and understanding of specific issues, thereby providing insights into the research problem area. However, it is noted that the research problem lacks a clear definition and much of the subject matter remains ambiguous, thus positioning the study within a descriptive framework. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather data, enabling flexibility in the manner of inquiry while interacting with the respondents. The focus of the study is on the corporate sector, encompassing various national and multinational organizations. The interviews were conducted in a serene environment, characterized by ten meticulously crafted questions aimed at eliciting comprehensive responses from the participants. To ensure accurate documentation, each

interview session was meticulously recorded using a mobile phone. These recordings were made over one month, allowing for a thorough examination of the research topic.

Following the completion of the interviews, the recorded data was transcribed and subjected to analysis. The analysis process aimed to extract meaningful insights from the respondents' narratives, shedding light on the nuances of the challenges faced by female managers in the corporate realm. It is emphasized that confidentiality measures were diligently upheld throughout the data collection and analysis process, with recorded information being expunged post-analysis to safeguard the privacy and anonymity of the participants.

Hence, this study employs a descriptive research approach to explore the experiences and perceptions of female managers in the corporate sector. Through qualitative research methods, the study endeavors to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and dynamics inherent in the professional experiences of women in corporate administration. The meticulous execution of semi-structured interviews, coupled with stringent confidentiality measures, ensures the integrity and reliability of the study's findings.

1.8 Hypothesis

(1) Participation of women in management is hampered due to gender discrimination and gender bias.

(2) Participation in the management of women in corporate sectors is an outcome of good corporate governance.

1.9 Objectives of Research

The research objective on gender inequality in Islamabad's corporate sectors is to delve into the multifaceted dynamics that contribute to the enduring gender gap in the workforce. By focusing on factors such as societal norms, cultural expectations, economic disparities, and institutional barriers, the study seeks to uncover the root causes of this inequality. Through in-depth analysis and empirical research, the research aims to shed light on how gender biases and discrimination impede women's access to employment opportunities, hinder their career advancement prospects, and perpetuate disparities in the workplace. By examining the experiences of women in the corporate sector in Islamabad, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges they face, ranging from discriminatory hiring practices to limited access to the decision-making process.

Moreover, the research endeavors to assess the efficacy of existing policies and interventions aimed at narrowing the gender gap in Islamabad's corporate sectors. By evaluating government initiatives, corporate diversity programs, and other interventions, the study seeks to ascertain their impact on promoting gender equality and eliminating discrimination in the workplace. Through rigorous analysis of policy implementation, enforcement mechanisms, and outcomes, the research aims to identify areas of improvement and highlight best practices that can inform future interventions. Additionally, by studying the growth in the participation of women in management roles relative to their male counterparts, the research aims to provide insights into trends in gender representation and leadership diversity. By understanding the factors driving or impeding women's advancement into managerial positions, the study can offer valuable recommendations for fostering a more inclusive and equitable corporate culture in Islamabad. Ultimately, the research

aims to contribute to evidence-based policymaking and organizational practices that promote gender equality and empower women in the workforce.

Chapter 2

The Historical Background

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the relevant literature about the geographical area under investigation in this research. This chapter offers a comprehensive overview of the study's descriptive backdrop within the specific context of Pakistan, encompassing its cultural aspects and associated limitations. The rationale for conducting a distinct evaluation of this literature about the preceding chapter stems from its inherent connection to the indigenous aspects of Pakistani society.

2.1 The History of Women in the Workforce

Karen Harlow's scholarly investigation is the pivotal moment in the history of women in the workforce and examines the entry of women into the workplace. Before the start of World War I, women's employment opportunities during the early 20th century were predominantly influenced by their domestic duties. They work mostly in their homes. The emergence of the Suffragettes facilitated an increased participation of women in public discourse, enabling them to advocate for societal transformation. However, it was not until the onset of a worldwide conflict that they began to effectively alter prevailing gender relations. The occurrence of World War I provided women with the opportunity to participate in the workforce, as they played a crucial role in maintaining the domestic front.[33]

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[33] Harlow, K. (2023, March 7). 5 Significant moments in the History of Working Women.

During the period from 1914 to 1918, a substantial influx of women, almost one million joined the labor force to address the labor shortage resulting from the absence of a previous cohort of male workers who had enlisted in the service. Women held jobs as police, mail employees, and drivers. The individuals engaged in the task of cleaning trains within the confines of factory premises while maintaining an upright position. However, despite the expanded range of opportunities, the working conditions were unfavorable and the task at hand was demanding. Despite seeing an increase in income compared to pre-war levels, women continued to face a persistent wage disparity, earning less than their male counterparts for performing equivalent activities. The subject matter in question has been a focus of frequent discussion and analysis throughout the years. In 1941, the employment of women in various roles such as mechanics, engineers, air raid wardens, and fire engine drivers was observed due to a resurgence in the need for labor during wartime. By the middle of 1943, around 90% of unmarried women and 80% of married women were gainfully working in either factories or within the military forces. Princess Elizabeth, who later ascended to the throne as Queen Elizabeth II, underwent training in the field of mechanics and driving before her enlistment as a Junior Commander in the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS).

National Report on the Status of Women in Pakistan, 2023 reveals that the overall labor force participation rate (LFPR) of women in Pakistan at 21% stands well below the global percentage at 39%. At the national level, the refined LFPR of women (aged 15-64 years) is very low at 26% compared to 84% for men. The country has seen improvement in the LFPR of women in the past twenty years, a 10-percentage point increase, however, the pace of progress is stagnating, and in economic participation and opportunity, Pakistan is ranked 145 out of 146 countries by the Gender

Gap Index 2022.[34] Unfortunately, the employment rate for women is only 4.3% in Pakistan. The data presented by the International Labour Organization (ILO) indicates that only 24.8% of the total women population are part of the labor force. On the Global Gender Gap Index Pakistan has been in second last to the last position for the past eight years. This lack of participation by women is at the root of many economic or demographical constraints that the country faces.[35]

In 1922, Ivy Williams achieved the distinction of becoming the inaugural woman to gain admission to the bar in England. Subsequently, in 1923, she further solidified her status by becoming the first woman to obtain a doctorate in civil law from the University of Oxford. The Sex Discrimination Act of 1919 abolished discriminatory practices that hindered women from occupying specific positions based on their gender, hence creating opportunities for them to attain notable levels of achievement.[36] While this development held considerable importance for women in the workforce, it did not signify a shift in societal attitudes. Advertisements that perpetuated gender stereotypes and objectified women in professional settings persisted and were extensively disseminated, reflecting a continuous presence of sexism. The Equality Act of 2010 was approved by Parliament, replacing a range of anti-discrimination statutes, 90 years after their initial implementation. This legislation protected individuals.

The history of women entering the workforce in Pakistan reflects a complex interplay of governmental policies and societal attitudes. Since the pre-independence era, reformers like Sir

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[34] Ahmad, M. F. A., & Bhatti, S. H. (2023). Assessing Women's Rights in Pakistan: An Analysis of Legal & Social Challenges with Potential Solutions. *Pakistan Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, 11*(2), 1014-1026.

[35] ibid

[36] Smith, H. (1984). Sex vs. Class: British Feminists and the Labour Movement, 1919-1929. The Historian, 47(1), 19-37.

Syed Ahmad Khan advocated for women's education as a means of empowerment. Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and his sister, Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah, also promoted positive attitudes towards women's roles in society. Post-independence, successive governments have taken varying approaches to address gender inequality. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's regime in the 1970s initiated liberal policies, including reservation of seats for women in government bodies and constitutional guarantees of gender equality. However, the Islamization efforts under General Zia-ul-Haq in the late 1970s and 1980s brought discriminatory legislation that curtailed women's rights. Despite challenges, subsequent administrations, including those led by Benazir Bhutto, Pervez Musharraf, and Nawaz Sharif, have implemented measures to empower women, such as establishing ministries dedicated to women's development, repealing discriminatory laws, and introducing initiatives to enhance women's participation in the workforce, like the Prime Minister's Youth Loan scheme. These efforts underscore a gradual but ongoing recognition of the importance of gender equality and women's empowerment in Pakistan's socio-economic development.[37]

Women's human rights continue to be restricted when it comes to equal access to leadership opportunities. Although there has been a global increase in women's representation in corporate boardrooms, the number of women leading boardrooms across the globe remains low. Pakistan remains significantly behind in providing gender representation and equal opportunity to women in the corporate board of directors. In 2021, the World Economic Forum (WEF) ranked Pakistan 153rd out of 156 countries on the index – making it one of the worst countries for gender parity. Although, the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) introduced a mandatory

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[37] Kanwal, N., Alvi, A. S., & Iqbal, H. (2021). History of Women Empowerment in Pakistan: A Study from Political Slogan to Practices (1947 to 2008). Global Sociological Review, VI (III), 32-39.

gender quota to increase the representation of women on the corporate boardrooms, it left significant gaps in its intended implementation by not issuing any guidelines to business in order to make a real difference. In September 2019, the SECP (Security& Exchange Commission of Pakistan) issued the Listed Companies (Code of Corporate Governance) Regulations 2019 (2019 Code). Regulation no. 7 stipulates that ''… the Board must have at least one female director when it is reconstituted after the expiry of its current term.'' In Pakistan, patriarchal values are embedded in local traditions and culture, which predetermine the social value of gender. While men are seen in productive roles as breadwinners, women are seen in reproductive roles and as homemakers. For example, the education of the male members of the family is prioritized over the female members. Additionally, the low representation of women in top positions in boardrooms across Pakistan is due to in-built corporate norms, practices of extremely long working hours, and childcare burdens that fall on women. Therefore, very few women can enter into employment. In 2020, female labor force participation in Pakistan stood at only 22%.[38]

The Equal Pay Amendment, enacted by Parliament in 1983, facilitated the achievement of wage parity between women and men in the workplace. This phenomenon does not consistently occur, even in the present context. Despite the progress made in terms of legal equality, there remains a significant gap between the theoretical advancements and the actual implementation of these equalities for women. Persistent gender disparities persist in terms of income and career prospects, with women encountering substantial inequalities in both areas. Moreover, men maintain a

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[38] Hoor-Ul-Ain, S., & Iraqi, K. M. (2022). Gender-inclusive corporate boards and business performance in Pakistan. *Asian Journal of Business Ethics*, *11*(1), 227-273.

dominant presence in certain occupations and positions, particularly in senior management roles, where they consistently receive an average hourly wage that surpasses that of women by 5.45%.[39]

2.2 Women in the Corporate Sector: The Glass Ceiling and Beyond

The concept of the "glass ceiling" refers to the invisible hurdles that women face in their professional advancement. The concept of the "glass ceiling" originated in American management around the early 1980s, referring to an intangible obstacle that restricts upward mobility within an organizational hierarchy. This particular manifestation of discrimination is sometimes referred to as an "invisible barrier" that is both transparent and pervasive, impeding the progress of women and individuals belonging to various social groups within the managerial hierarchy. Women encounter the phenomenon known as the glass ceiling across various hierarchical levels and within diverse organizational contexts. In certain companies, it is possible that the barrier to advancement for certain individuals is not limited to a glass ceiling, but rather extends to a glass wall.

Originally explored within a specialized study featured in The Wall Street Journal, the concept of the glass ceiling serves as a poignant metaphor illuminating the stark underrepresentation of women in leadership roles, despite their notable qualifications and accomplishments.[40] This metaphor underscores the palpable disparity in upward mobility within organizational hierarchies between men and women, along with the often more stringent promotion criteria

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[39] ibid

[40] Bilimoria, D., & Wheeler, J. V. (2000). Women corporate directors: Current research and future directions. Women in management: Current research issues, 2(10), 138-163.

disproportionately encountered by women vis-à-vis their male counterparts. The spatial metaphor employed underscores the notable scarcity of women leaders across various echelons of the societal framework. It is imperative to acknowledge the initial premise that the glass ceiling operates at a significantly elevated level, rendering the substantiation of claims regarding discrimination exceedingly challenging.

Women working in Pakistan's business sector encounter a variety of obstacles, such as a dearth of educational and professional development opportunities, discrimination, and outdated societal conventions. Despite these obstacles, there are a growing number of women who are shattering the glass ceiling and achieving success in their careers. Lack of access to education and training is one of the most significant obstacles that women in Pakistan must overcome. Because many women do not have the same educational possibilities as males, it is difficult for them to qualify for jobs in the corporate sector. This is especially the case in countries where women are underrepresented in the workforce. This is especially true in rural areas, where it is common practice to deny girls the opportunity to receive an education. Discrimination is yet another obstacle that women have to overcome. Women in Pakistan frequently experience discrimination in their jobs, such as receiving a lower wage than men for performing the same duties. They also run the risk of having advancement prospects closed off to them. This is because the conventional gender norms in Pakistan require women to remain at home and take care of their families. Men are expected to work outside the home. It is also possible for social standards to act as a barrier to the advancement of women in the business world. There is a school of thought in Pakistan that maintains women have no business working outside the home and should not be allowed to hold positions of authority. Because of this, it is sometimes challenging for women to be taken seriously in the workplace. Despite these obstacles, there is a growing number of women in Pakistan who

are attaining success in the business world and shattering the stereotype of the "glass ceiling." These ladies serve as inspirational examples for other women, and they are paving the path for the generations who will come after them.[41]

The proposal visually depicts the relative scarcity of women in leadership positions across the entirety of the social system. It is important to acknowledge the remark that, at the highest echelons, the glass ceiling is positioned at a considerable height, rendering the demonstration of discrimination exceedingly challenging. According to Glazer-Raymo (1999), the historical dominance of men in management roles suggests a connection between management and the concept of masculinity.[42] Schein (1975) cites studies that provide evidence supporting the perception that management is predominantly associated with male attributes. Hence, the perception of successful job performance as predominantly masculine results in the expectation for women to conform to this position as well. Masculinity is commonly perceived as encompassing inherent leadership qualities that women, by definition, are believed to lack.[43]

Currently, women occupy only 5% of corporate leadership positions in Pakistan, compared to 12% in Europe. This shows a strong bias towards workplaces dominated by males, where the reluctance to recruit women arises from the expectation that societal and cultural norms will often dissuade

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[41] Mattis, M. C. (2004). Women entrepreneurs: out from under the glass ceiling. *Women in management review, 19*(3), 154-163.

[42] Glazer-Raymo, J. (1999). Taking stock: Perspectives on women and leadership in higher education in the UK and the US. *Society for Research into Higher Education News, 41*, 8-10.

[43] Schein, V. E., & Mueller, R. (1975). Sex role stereotyping and requisite management characteristics: A cross cultural look. *Journal of organizational behavior, 13*(5), 439-447.

women from pursuing their careers due to prioritizing their roles as wives and later as mothers over their professional aspirations.

For Sadia, the answer is simple: "Daycare facilities. Most women will not leave their jobs if they know that their children will be looked after while they are working."[44]

2.3 Women in the Workforce

The formation of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan occurred as a result of the partition of the Indian subcontinent, which was largely inhabited by Hindus. The prolonged coexistence of Muslims and Hindus over several centuries has significantly influenced the belief system of the Muslim community, particularly considering that a significant portion of Muslims were recent converts. The newly converted Muslims tended to retain certain aspects of their pre-Islamic social norms and beliefs, which were initially perceived as innocuous. The status of women was among the topics under consideration. The social and economic position of Muslim women in pre-modern India exerted a significant influence on their standing. Females of noble lineage received their education within the confines of their households, where they were instructed in several disciplines including religious studies, linguistics, literary pursuits like poetry, as well as the arts of calligraphy and painting. Nevertheless, the mobility of these individuals was subject to societal constraints, which restricted their movements exclusively to their palaces and mansions. Infrequently, women belonging to the upper echelons of society assumed the responsibility of

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[44] Khan, S. U., Goldsmith, A. H., & Rajaguru, G. (2023). Status of Women Empowerment in Pakistan: Lessons for D-8 Countries. *Economic Integration Among D-8 Muslim Countries: Prospects And Challenges*, 1, 165.

governing their subjects directly, a phenomenon that can be exemplified in numerous instances. According to Mirza (2013), on August 14, 1947, Pakistan emerged as a sovereign and autonomous Muslim nation, marking its presence on the global stage. Paradoxically, women who actively participated in the liberation movement experienced prejudice.[45] During periods of adversity, these women were summoned for assistance. However, as the political situation became stable in the recently established independent nation, the efforts and sacrifices made by these women were disregarded and neglected. The political unrest that followed through military interventions and the consolidation of power by authoritarian, male-dominated governments exacerbated the suppression of women's rights. Certain strict and authoritative policies about women, motivated by religious or traditional considerations, were not only formulated but also rigorously enforced. The persecution of women in Pakistan has been a recurring issue, exacerbated by successive governments' lack of prioritization of its stated priorities on education, health, and social welfare.[46]

In his renowned Aligarh address in 1944, Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah expressed his concern regarding the confinement of women within the domestic sphere, emphasizing that such restrictions were a violation of human rights.[47] He argued that the prevailing conditions under which women were compelled to live lacked any legitimate justification. Jinnah advocated for the inclusion of women in all aspects of life, urging their active participation and integration in various spheres. In their book by Khawar Mumtaz and Farida Shaheed examine the status and progress of

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[45] Mirza, A. A. (2013). *Changing gender relations in small businesses: experiences of women entrepreneurs of Pakistani origin in Greater Manchester* (Doctoral dissertation, Manchester Metropolitan University).

[46] Malik, H. (1968). The Emergence of Pakistan. By Chaudhri Muhammad Ali. New York: Columbia University Press, 1967. ix, 418 pp. Index. $11.00. *The Journal of Asian Studies, 27*(4), 893-894.

[47]Shami, A. A. (2009). Political empowerment of women in Pakistan. *Pakistan Vision, 10*(1), 141-150.

women in Pakistan. The report, prepared for the Women Action Forum (WAF) during a period of military dictatorship characterized by the implementation of numerous anti-women regulations, highlights the diverse circumstances experienced by Pakistani women based on their geographical location.[48] These circumstances range from tribal, feudal, and urban environments. Pakistani women can occupy various roles, such as highly qualified and self-assured professionals, modest peasants working alongside their male counterparts, individuals leading secluded lives devoid of decision-making and access to information in urban lower-middle-class neighborhoods, or women of influence within the limited circles of government and business. In their book by Khawar Mumtaz and Farida Shaheed examine the status and progress of women in Pakistan Regrettably, despite being an ideologically Islamic state, Pakistan has failed to establish a comprehensive and internally consistent philosophy that defines the legal status of women (Mumtaz & Shaheed, 1987).[49] The sole document of such character is the constitution of Pakistan, which ensures the principle of equality before the law for every individual residing inside the borders of Pakistan. In Pakistan, women are afforded the legal entitlement to inherit and possess property, engage in gainful employment, and retain their profits. Nevertheless, their entitlements in various other domains are incongruous with principles of fairness, equity, and democratic governance. The

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[48] Khan, S. (2011, January). CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS FOR WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS IN PAKISTAN: A CASE STUDY OF WOMEN ACTION FORUM. In Proceedings of the Indian History Congress (Vol. 72, pp. 1074-1081). Indian History Congress.

[49] Mumtaz, K., & Shaheed, F. (1987). Women of Pakistan: Two steps forward, one step back?.

aforementioned rights are subject to ongoing description, discussion, and commentary within public discourse in Pakistan.[50]

2.4 The status of women in Pakistan: exploring women's advancement as Managers

Throughout history, women in Pakistan have encountered restricted rights and opportunities in comparison to their male counterparts. During the period of British colonial administration, Pakistani women were subject to political exclusion and were predominantly limited to domestic spheres. Following the attainment of independence by Pakistan in 1947, there was a progressive amelioration in the realm of women's rights. Notably, during the 1950s and 1960s, legislative measures were enacted, enabling women to exercise their right to vote, participate in political leadership, and access educational opportunities. Nevertheless, the persistence of conventional patriarchal norms, coupled with religious and cultural conservatism, has persisted as a hindrance to women's prospects, impeding their ability to attain comprehensive parity in both professional settings and broader societal contexts. In Pakistan, women continue to encounter several social, cultural, and economic obstacles that restrict their ability to get education, healthcare, and work prospects. In recent years, there have been notable indications of advancement in the inclusion of women in the corporate sphere.[51]

Notwithstanding these advancements, women persistently encounter substantial obstacles within the professional sphere, including instances of discrimination, sexual harassment, and inequitable

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[50] ibid

[51] Chant, S., & Pedwell, C. (2008). Women, gender and the informal economy: An assessment of ILO research and suggested ways forward.

remuneration. Additionally, women face challenges in managing the demands of both their professional and familial obligations, as societal norms continue to place a significant emphasis on women prioritizing their caregiving responsibilities above their professional pursuits. In general, notwithstanding certain favorable advancements in recent times, women in Pakistan continue to encounter substantial obstacles in attaining comprehensive parity within the realms of employment and society. The presence of discrimination against women, individuals of diverse racial backgrounds, and other marginalized groups is pervasive within contemporary society.

There are various expressions associated with gender discrimination in the workplace, including the phenomenon of individuals rejecting certain career prospects, the occurrence of employment segregation, and the limited availability of promotion opportunities. According to research published by the International Labour Organization (ILO), the proportion of women in managerial positions in Pakistan stands at a mere 3%. [52]However, throughout several decades, the efforts of working women have resulted in a notable rise in the representation of women across various organizations.

In a report disseminated by Dawn on January 15, 2015, it was disclosed that an investigative study conducted by the International Labour Organization (ILO) unveiled Pakistan's starkly low representation of women in managerial roles. The study, encompassing 108 nations, delineated Pakistan's disconcerting placement at the bottom of the list, ranking 108th. This alarming statistic underscored the fact that merely 3 percent of managerial positions in the country were held by

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[52]Iqbal, M. J. (2015). ILO Conventions and Gender Dimensions of Labour Laws in Pakistan. South Asian Studies, 30(1), 245.

women. Such findings elucidate a significant disparity in gender representation within Pakistan's managerial echelons, necessitating attention and concerted efforts toward fostering gender equality and inclusion in professional domains.[53]

2.5 The Constitution of Pakistan and the Protection of Women's Rights

The legal standing of women is significantly disparate from that of men. Although the Constitution ensures legal equality, and equal protection, and prohibits sex-based discrimination, certain clauses within it continue to give rise to ongoing women's rights concerns. The utilization of socio-cultural norms and theological interpretations often serves as a means to contest and redefine matters about women's rights, hence creating an environment of insecurity and ambiguity surrounding these rights. The 1973 Constitution, which is presently in effect, serves as the highest legal authority in the country. Consequently, any legislation enacted by a legislative body must conform to the provisions outlined in the Constitution. Nevertheless, the Constitution has undergone numerous revisions, particularly under the Martial Law regime spanning from 1977 to 1985, resulting in a diminishment of the protections it affords in terms of equal rights. The Fundamental Rights, as outlined in Articles 8 to 28 of the 1973 Constitution, are intended to be universally applicable to all individuals, regardless of gender or ethnicity. The Pakistani constitution ensures gender equality by granting women equal status.

In his book titled "Women, Koran, and International Human Rights Law," Niaz Shah examines the relationship between women, the Quran, and international human rights legislation. This

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[53] Iqbal, M. J. (2015). ILO Conventions and Gender Dimensions of Labour Laws in Pakistan. South Asian Studies, 30(1), 245.

scholarly publication examines three distinct Islamic viewpoints about human rights: secular, incompatible, and reconciliatory (compatible). Additionally, it proposes an interpretive methodology that takes into account contextual factors. The assertion is made that the application of ijtihad, which refers to the exercise of independent reasoning, has the potential to amend existing Islamic legal frameworks in countries governed by Islamic law, where gender-based discrimination is prevalent.[54] These legal frameworks are mostly based on interpretations of the Koran that may lack contextual considerations. The assertion is made that the primary intention of the Koran was to elevate the societal standing of women and safeguard their rights, rather than to relegate them to an inferior position.

In his scholarly work entitled "Gender Equality and the 1973 Constitution," author Ihsan Yilmaz delves into a comprehensive examination of the rights accorded to women within the framework of the country's constitutional framework. Despite the patriarchal underpinnings inherent in the Pakistani Constitution of 1973 regarding women's societal roles, Yilmaz elucidates how the section concerning fundamental rights incorporates an array of protective provisions aimed at fostering equitable treatment of women and eliminating gender-based discrimination across all facets of societal existence.

Central to Yilmaz's analysis is an exploration of various constitutional articles about women, their interpretation by judicial authorities, and their practical implementation, with a particular emphasis on their alignment with both Islamic principles and international human rights standards, most notably exemplified by the Women's Convention of 1979. This scholarly endeavor underscores

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[54] Shah, N. (2006). Women, the Koran and international human rights law: the experience of Pakistan (Vol. 4). Brill.

the significance of recognizing and upholding women's inherent rights as enshrined within the Constitution, thereby emphasizing the imperative for ensuring their substantive realization and protection within the legal and societal frameworks of Pakistan.[55]

The Constitution has a detailed enumeration of fundamental rights that are equally applicable to individuals of all genders, with certain provisions specifically designed to safeguard the rights of women. Certain concepts regarding women's rights are recognized as influential factors in shaping public policy. In contrast to the principles of policy, which cannot nullify legislation or impose penalties on individuals for non-compliance, the fundamental rights possess the capacity to be legally enforced inside a court of law (as stated in Article 30). The Constitution upholds a majority of the fundamental liberties outlined in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, encompassing the liberties of mobility, affiliation, articulation of ideas and convictions, the entitlement to possess and manage property, accessibility to public areas, and the entitlement to personal privacy within one's residence.

The provisions outlined in Articles 8 to 28 of the 1973 constitution elucidate the fundamental rights bestowed upon all citizens, irrespective of gender or age. These articles also ensure the equitable treatment and standing of women within society. Article 25 of the constitution explicitly prohibits the occurrence of any form of discrimination against women. Article 25 of the constitution guarantees that all individuals, regardless of their status, are treated equally under the law and have the right to receive fair and impartial legal protection. Sex-based discrimination is prohibited.

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[55] Yilmaz, I. (2011). Good governance in action: Pakistani Muslim law on human rights and gender-equality. European Journal of Economic and Political Studies (EJEPS), 4(2).

Article 27 of the Constitution of Pakistan ensures protection against discriminatory practices about the employment of eligible citizens in the country's services. It explicitly prohibits discrimination based on factors such as race, religion, caste, sex, residency, or place of birth. By Article 34, measures should be implemented to guarantee the complete involvement of women in many aspects of societal engagement, thereby ensuring their full participation in national affairs. Article 37 of the Constitution emphasizes the promotion of social justice and the eradication of social evils. In line with this, the state is mandated to facilitate the engagement of individuals from diverse regions in various national activities, such as employment in the services of Pakistan, through means such as education, training, agricultural and industrial development, and other appropriate methods. Article 38 of the constitution emphasizes the state's responsibility to promote the social and economic well-being of all individuals, regardless of their gender, caste, creed, or race. This is to be achieved by improving their living standards, preventing the accumulation of wealth and control over resources in the hands of a privileged few at the expense of the general welfare, and ensuring fair treatment and balance of rights between employers and employees, as well as landlords and tenants. By Article 18, individuals have the freedom to engage in trade, business, or professions, provided that they adhere to any legal requirements that may be established. This right is extended to all citizens, granting them the ability to pursue any legitimate occupation or profession of their choosing.[56]

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[56] Cortes, I. R. (1975). Women's rights under the 1973 constitution. *Phil. LJ*, *50*, 1.

Chapter 3

Challenges Faced by Women in the Corporate Sector

This chapter will employ the major problems women managers face in the corporate sector. Sheryl Sandberg in her book addresses the issues that women face several problems in balancing work and family life. Sandberg begins by presenting evidence that males continue to dominate society. For instance, women controlled 20% of parliamentary seats worldwide and headed just 17 of the 195 sovereign nations when this book was produced. Even more of a disparity existed for women of color. Sandberg addresses that cultural biases adversely affect our choices and beliefs. Women are more likely than males to downplay their accomplishments and internalize their disappointments, which breeds a profound sense of insecurity. Women are more inclined than males to credit chance, diligence, or outside assistance for their achievement. Men are more prone to credit their abilities and attributes for their achievements. Men are also more prone to blame outside forces for failures, while women are more likely to blame personal shortcomings.[57]

The researcher asked different questions from the women managers working in the corporate sector they shared their experiences which reflect that women have to bear so many challenges to advance their careers. Many respondents pointed out that Organizational atmospheres in accordance to the contingency theory matter a lot in how they deal with male and female managers.

To achieve my goal as a leader I struggle a lot. I worked in different companies and organizations. Each organization has a different set-up and environment. So they are treated differently with

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[57] Sandberg, S. (2015). Lean in-women, work and the will to lead.

males and females according to their system. In every firm females face a lot of problems. Being a manager it's too tough to work and handle the affairs. (Sara Khan 2023).

All participants shared their experience in achieving leadership roles, being females, women face a lot of problems to be fit in the corporate sector.

Male managers as colleagues aren't consistently supportive; occasionally, they exert pressure to maintain dominance, reflecting a societal norm where men often seek to assert control. (Zernish Khan 2023).

One of the respondents reported that it is difficult for both genders male and female to achieve their goals because it takes too much time, capability, and experience. Men also face so many challenges to be the manager. Challenges are not gender specific although there is a difference in their problems because women have to take care of their family and household chores, on the other hand, men have different responsibilities regarding their family. (Urooj2023).

Another respondent working in the private industry said:

"It varies from organization to organization how they think about who should be the best manager male or female. Currently, I am working in this company and I feel no tags as male or female."

She shared her previous experience that; there they consider it taboo for a female to work as a manager. The work nature was also different and some of my colleagues were also not comfortable there. (Amara 2023)

3.1 The Gender as Hurdle in Career Progression

Gender has been a hurdle for women to achieve leadership roles. it comes in a way with some traditional stereotypical biases that don't allow women to work as leaders in any organization. With the advancement of education organizational culture is changing with time, we see now more women working in the corporate sector but still at the time of promotion of the employees women are considered less capable and not suited to be promoted. In the researcher's interview, all female managers' point of view reveals gender acts as an obstacle for females. It is a hindrance to the professional development of females. In our culture, male dominance permeates every aspect of life, presenting challenges for women. Respondents highlighted the significance of "Personality," which often dictates one's societal standing. Many managers stress the importance of a strong and assertive personality for women to thrive in the corporate world, especially within male-dominated environments where men are traditionally seen as decision--makers. Zarnish, a senior manager, shared her experiences, noting the difficulties female managers face when their male colleagues fail to take them seriously. To navigate such situations, she emphasized the necessity for women to project a serious and assertive demeanor, aligning with prevailing cultural expectations.

She drew a comparison between her current company and her previous workplace, she argued that in such male-dominated organizations, women must be strong-willed to ensure their colleagues listen to them. She suggests that to fit in such a culture women need to have strong personalities.

This underscores the significance of personality for women in the workplace. Another female manager, Misbah, concurred, acknowledging that her gender poses a hurdle in her career

progression.

Yes, I have faced some gender-specific obstacles in advancing my career. There have been instances where I felt my contributions were not given as much weight as those of my male colleagues. Sometimes, in meetings or discussions, I've noticed my ideas being overlooked or attributed to others. Additionally, there have been moments when I've felt that expectations around my availability and commitment were influenced by traditional gender roles. Striking a balance between work and personal life can be a challenge, especially when there's an assumption that women might prioritize family over career.

However, I must also mention that there have been positive changes in the corporate sector over the years. Many companies are actively working towards creating more inclusive environments, and I've had the opportunity to connect with mentors and allies who support my professional growth. (Misbah 2023)

One respondent Ayesha said;

Gender has consistently posed a challenge in my career journey. Despite five years of experience in the corporate sector and holding a professional degree, my gender remains a significant obstacle. In my previous company, when promotion opportunities arose, I was passed over with the explanation that they favored men for the position. They justified this decision by asserting that for meetings with international teams conducting surveys and considering investments, they preferred an efficient leader who could effectively manage and engage with them.

Here, she appears deeply disheartened, expressing the belief that women's progress is

perpetually hindered solely because of their gender. She then mentioned that she decided to leave that company. (Ayesha 2023).

Another respondent Amara said; *I have been working here for 5 years but I am not getting a promotion yet. That is why I feel that gender is somewhere obstacle for me.*

It's incredibly distressing for me, considering that my qualifications surpass those of many others, yet being a woman in the corporate sector remains a significant barrier to advancing into senior managerial roles. Moreover, she noted that her experience in her previous organization mirrored this situation, which prompted her to move, only to find herself facing the same challenges in her current workplace. (Amara 2023)

3.2 Gender-Based Variations in Leadership Approaches

It has been observed in the workplace that men and women possess different approaches to leading an organization. All respondents strongly argued that "women are by born managers" they have a tendency to manage both and work together. Mother is the first-ever guide for the newborn she tends to manage the overall decisions for the household and can manage overall matters which proves that she can lead in every field of life.

Several respondents advocated for female management styles, noting that women frequently approach their work with a heightened sense of passion and dedication. They are observed to adeptly manage resources and employees with considerable skill and discernment. As one respondent said:

My gender has significantly impacted my professional journey. While I've encountered gender biases leading to my ideas being occasionally overlooked, I've also experienced growth and

support. Striving for a balance between work and personal life, in the face of traditional expectations, has been an ongoing challenge. Building connections with male colleagues for mentorship has sometimes posed difficulties due to subtle barriers. However, my unique perspective as a woman has enhanced team diversity and problem-solving.

Another respondent argued:

*I feel the difference between the leadership styles of females and males in terms of dedication because women are much more dedicated rather than male. (*Urooj 2023).

Based on the responses gathered it can be inferred that when women are committed to their work, they demonstrate a professional demeanor, exhibiting perseverance and a passionate approach toward their tasks. Additionally, during the interviews, women acknowledged their perceived emotional vulnerabilities. One participant remarked that men possess a composed disposition that facilitates effective decision-making, whereas women are often viewed as emotionally fragile, and susceptible to exploitation due to their gender. Furthermore, it was suggested that female managers may be perceived as less astute compared to their male counterparts, rendering them susceptible to manipulation. This sentiment underscores the perception that female managers may exhibit moments of panic, while male managers are perceived as adept at maintaining control in various situations. (Urooj 2023).

One participant characterized women as micromanagers, meticulous in their approach to ensuring every task is executed with precision. In contrast, males were described as less inclined to delve deeply into details. Additionally, it was observed that women often perceive their responsibilities

as sources of stress, approaching them with a heightened sense of nervousness. While women managers exhibit confidence, they frequently hesitate in making decisions.

Another respondent reports:

Indeed, there exists a distinction in leadership styles, attributable to the observed tendency for women to experience emotional vulnerability. Consequently, when faced with unexpected circumstances, women may exhibit signs of panic and struggle to effectively manage the situation., (Gull Khan).

Particularly, within the context of our cultural norms, discernible disparities exist between the roles ascribed to males and females. In societies characterized by male dominance, such as ours, distinct expectations and limitations are imposed upon individuals based on gender. Women are traditionally relegated to domestic roles, tasked with caring for the family. In Pakistan, societal attitudes towards women are often conservative, with reluctance to allow women to engage in professional pursuits alongside their male counterparts. Moreover, women may encounter negative perceptions and resistance towards their assertiveness in such environments. This discrepancy in mindset perpetuates the belief that men are inherently better suited to occupy higher positions of authority within our society.

According to one respondent, Horum, there exists a distinction in the personalities of men and women. Men are perceived to possess assertive traits, capable of imposing decisions, managing subordinates, and criticizing both male and female employees alike. In contrast, female managers are often met with reluctance to acknowledge their suggestions or decisions, and their directives may not be taken seriously. Consequently, female employees may frequently experience feelings

of being marginalized or undervalued within the workplace. This disparity in treatment constitutes a form of inequality, as it reflects a lack of equal rights for women within the organization. (Horum, 2023).

The respondent, Shabana, highlighted the pervasive underestimation of females in our society without valid justification. She expressed her belief that females possess greater compatibility and competence compared to males. However, she also emphasized the significance of one's background and upbringing in shaping one's personality. Shabana noted that as a manager, the effectiveness of directing employees hinges on the manager's approach, underscoring the importance of personality in managerial roles. (Shabana 2023).

Strong personality and experience are also an important factor that women need to possess to be successful in the corporate sector. An experienced female manager in her interview declared:

There exists no inherent disparity in leadership styles between genders; however, female managers are encouraged to possess a charismatic personality that inspires followership. Both males and females share equal responsibility as managers. Additionally, the effectiveness of managerial performance is contingent upon experience, with seasoned managers often exhibiting superior management capabilities. Consequently, managerial maturity is deemed essential for effective leadership. Furthermore, managerial competence is augmented by a strong educational background and a thorough understanding of the business domain. (Zarnish 2023)

3.3 An Analysis of the efficiency Gap between Men and Women

To ascertain the veracity of the belief regarding women's efficiency in male-dominated fields, researchers queried participants about the extent to which they believed men to be more efficient than women. All female respondents vehemently refuted this notion, asserting that there is no truth to the claim that men are inherently more efficient than women. They underscored the importance of two primary factors, namely, opportunity and hard work, in determining an individual's efficiency. This misconception, they noted, often confines women to traditionally female-dominated professions such as teaching and healthcare. Moreover, within the corporate sector, women are frequently underestimated, despite evidence to the contrary. The prevailing bias in favor of male managers is particularly pronounced in large marketing firms. Notably, this culture of gender bias is observed to be most prevalent in Asian countries.

Rosin claims that the revolution that feminism has been waiting for is taking place right in front of our eyes. We are approaching "the end of 200,000 years of human history and the beginning of a new era" in which women — and womanly abilities and attributes — are on the increase. Men are losing control. Patriarchy is breaking down. She claims that women are taking up more and more roles in the workforce, in academia, in the home, and even in romantic relationships and marriage. She considers it a quirky relic, "the last artifacts of a vanishing age rather than a permanent configuration," that women continue to be underrepresented in most countries' highest echelons of power and still do not receive equal pay for equal labor.[58]

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[58] Rosin, Hanna (8 June 2010). "The End of Men"

Following are some responses to the myth of men's efficiency;

Both males and females demonstrate efficiency in various domains, each possessing unique strengths and capabilities. While men excel in decision-making, leadership, and management, women also contribute significantly to productivity and household management. However, it is erroneous to assert that men are inherently superior. Women possess distinct skills, such as multitasking and nurturing, It is fallacious to equate effective household management with an inability to thrive in the corporate sector; rather, there exists a spectrum of roles in which women excel. (Sara 2023).

The gender disparities become more pronounced as we transition from labor market participation to women's representation in decision-making roles. A mere fraction of women ascend to the upper echelons of management. Another female manager lamented the pervasive gender bias inherent in our societal structure, which inherently favors males over females. Men enjoy greater flexibility and opportunities across various sectors, whereas women encounter limitations and barriers that impede their advancement into higher roles commensurate with their abilities. She refuted the notion that gender is a determining factor in career progression, emphasizing instead the importance of hard work. (Iqra 2023)

There are certain fields where it has been observed that women may excel more than men, suggesting that gender does not determine efficiency. Contrary to the notion that men are inherently more efficient, women demonstrate proficiency in distinct domains where their skills outshine those of men.

Efficiency is not gender-dependent; it's shaped by individual skills and experiences. Both genders are capable of equal efficiency in various tasks. Generalizing efficiency based on gender overlooks individual abilities. It's crucial to assess efficiency based on skills and work ethic rather than gender. (Misbah 2023)

The female respondent said that gender cannot determine one's efficiency rather it is dependent on your hard work. (Shabana 2023).

In conclusion, women possess competence and capabilities, as evidenced by their historical achievements in various fields such as medicine, engineering, aviation, and politics. However, in the context of Pakistan, societal barriers hinder women from fully utilizing their potential, often influenced by religious beliefs. While men typically do not adhere strictly to religious practices, they often seek to impose their interpretations on women, selectively emphasizing aspects of religion that serve their interests, such as the allowance for multiple marriages in Islam. This bias is further perpetuated by the notion that women are primarily responsible for domestic duties, despite the Islamic principle of equitable division of household tasks. From the perspective of the respondents, it is evident that some men rely solely on their gender identity rather than demonstrating capabilities or competencies.

3.4 Female Manager's Family Problems and Responsibilities

Women encounter numerous challenges, particularly in accessing higher education, which is often hindered by various barriers. Furthermore, securing employment in the private sector, particularly in senior positions, typically necessitates a strong family background. Data analysis indicates a concerning trend whereby women in Pakistan face deprivation of their fundamental rights, with the incidence of harassment cases in private settings on the rise.

A woman's standing within the family and community may be the cause of her issues and difficulties. Nevertheless, there are numerous activities in which women participate that help to advance the country, including sports, politics, the arts, and culture. However, many of them still do not have the same standing as males. They are forced to suffer as a result of gender discrimination in work, education, and health. They could experience sexual harassment from other guys, from bystanders, or even while traveling. Her safety is often questioned, both at work and at home. Women's status might differ from family to family. A woman with limited education and financial resources may hold a prominent position within one household, whereas, in another household, the situation may differ.

Working women are often tasked with managing a multitude of responsibilities simultaneously, including nurturing their children, maintaining a well-functioning household, and actively participating in societal engagements. As a result, their workload tends to increase significantly. To gain deeper insights into the familial obstacles confronted by female managers on their path to success, researchers initiated inquiries aimed at understanding the nature of family-related challenges experienced. Each respondent highlighted the fundamental role played by the family institution in shaping the trajectory of individuals' lives and molding their personalities. While the analysis of familial dynamics holds significance for both men and women, it is noteworthy that Pakistani society operates within a patriarchal framework, wherein males are accorded privileged status. Traditionally, sons are favored for educational opportunities, and viewed as valuable investments for the future. This gender-based discrepancy perpetuates systemic inequality. By juxtaposing this entrenched stereotype, it becomes apparent that the reluctance of families to prioritize female education contributes to the overrepresentation of male managers within the corporate sector. Therefore, it is imperative to underscore the importance of promoting equal

educational opportunities for individuals of all genders to foster a more inclusive and equitable society. Following are the respondent's experience about the family problems they face:

Balancing family responsibilities with career goals has posed challenges. The expectations of traditional gender roles sometimes clash with my professional aspirations, requiring me to find a delicate equilibrium. Prioritizing work commitments while meeting family needs can be demanding. Additionally, societal norms can lead to misconceptions about women's dedication to their careers when they emphasize family. This can impact opportunities and support. However, I've also been fortunate to have a supportive family that values my ambitions. Open communication and setting boundaries have helped me navigate these challenges, allowing me to pursue my goals while maintaining important family connections. (Misbah 2023).

Another respondent was contented, in consideration of female security, her family exhibits significant concern, thereby complicating the pursuit of a seamless career trajectory. This challenge is particularly pronounced within the corporate sector, where late-night meetings and dinners are commonplace, presenting logistical hurdles for women aiming to maintain a balanced professional life. (Urooj 2023).

Women encounter numerous challenges in our society. The expectation for women to balance family responsibilities, childcare duties, and professional obligations can pose significant difficulties. Additionally, one woman noted that being unmarried has alleviated some of these challenges for her, as she has not had to navigate the complexities of managing a family alongside her career. She emphasized the crucial support she receives from her family, particularly her father. *(Ayesha 2023).*

One respondent shared her experience that she faces a lot of problems from family, being a daughter and sister feels like they own her and do not have her own opinion in life, there is nobody to listen to her not in the home no outside home, there is a lot of women who are facing so many family issues. Males want to be dominant over women, they think like they own the females. (Sara 2023).

Most female managers face issues due to their strong religious affiliations therefore they want their women not to be with males, especially in the corporate sector.

One respondent shared that her family has a religious mindset and they don't allow me to go outside and order me to have a proper veil because in my family there is no trend to move outside without putting on an abaya and this is considered very shameful act she shares her opinions about harassment cases that most of the ratio is belonging to so-called modern and liberal society. That is the reason that she likes to cover herself while working with men, and she said that her point of view is that if you are working with men then you can be comfortable in abaya. (Iqra 2023).

3.5 Overcoming Societal Behavior: "The Journey of Female Managers in the Corporate Sector"

In the context of Pakistan, societal structures pose significant barriers for women in the workforce. Historically, women's participation in employment has been restricted by familial obligations, cultural traditions, societal expectations, global economic conditions, and limitations on women's mobility. Evidence indicates the prevalence of gender-based discrimination in workplaces, particularly in fields dominated by men, with attitudes of individuals impacting the health and familial relationships of working women. Society can be broadly categorized into

three groups: firstly, those with conservative views who oppose women working outside the home, advocating for women to remain under male supervision; secondly, individuals with some level of education who are partially supportive of women in the workforce; and thirdly, those who actively support and encourage women's education and employment opportunities. Many female managers interviewed for this research report face negative commentary and societal pressure.

Gender stereotypes persistently impact managerial conduct and professional aspirations in work settings, perpetuating patriarchal norms that impede women's career progression

The reviews provided by female managers regarding societal attitudes consistently highlighted a negative perspective. One respondent shared her experience of belonging to a deeply religious family, where she faces restrictions on working without a veil. Consequently, she encounters various comments from people around her. Society seems divided into two camps: those who commend her decision to work as a manager while adhering to religious attire, and others who discriminate against such women, suggesting that they should not work at all if they face such difficulties. Instead of appreciating the efforts and modesty of these women, the latter group criticizes them. Despite these challenges, the respondent believes that women should disregard such negative remarks and strive to progress in their careers. (Iqra 2023).

Respondents highlighted that Islamabad harbors a distinct cultural milieu where individuals lead busy lives, often engrossed in their affairs, and interactions between people are minimal. While compared to rural areas and other cities in Pakistan, Islamabad offers a relatively more favorable environment for working women, they still face significant challenges within organizations. Many respondents noted that success in the corporate sector often hinges on physical appearance, with

women feeling pressured to present themselves as showpieces, a form of exploitation. Furthermore, senior managers were reported to engage in various forms of harassment towards junior female colleagues, leveraging their positions for personal gain, particularly in exchange for promotions. Another concerning finding was the prevalence of jealousy among female managers, with senior figures often creating obstacles for their junior counterparts. This toxic atmosphere stifles productivity and undermines the efficiency of work. Organizations must implement policies aimed at improving the working environment for women, including transparent pathways for promotion and measures to address harassment and internal conflicts.

A comprehensive analysis of the research indicates that stereotypical beliefs are influenced by various factors such as individual perspectives, family dynamics, sociocultural norms, and organizational structures, thereby perpetuating gender discrimination and hindering women's professional advancement within organizations. Consequently, women in the corporate sector face numerous challenges and barriers that impede their progression to managerial roles. These factors collectively form a metaphorical glass ceiling, preventing women from being actively recognized and promoted to managerial positions. Instead, they are often confined to labor roles, while leadership positions remain predominantly occupied by males. As a result, women persistently strive to overcome the barriers and obstacles that obstruct their path to assuming directorial roles within the corporate sector.

The issue of gender as a hurdle in the corporate sector can be effectively addressed through the application of management theories such as Contingency Theory and System Theory of Management. Contingency Theory underscores the significance of situational factors and personality traits in managerial decision-making. It emphasizes that a manager's effectiveness is

determined by their ability to assess and respond to the unique circumstances of a situation, rather than being dictated by gender. Thus, the theory does not attribute managerial competence or efficiency based on gender, but rather on individual capabilities and situational context.

Similarly, System Theory of Management offers insights into how organizational systems and policies influence gender dynamics within the workplace. By examining how organizations structure their policies and procedures regarding female managers, the theory highlights the importance of creating inclusive and equitable environments. If an organization's policies perpetuate gender biases or hinder the advancement of female managers due to family-related issues, the system theory suggests a need for policy reform to promote gender equality and support the professional development of all employees.

In contrast, the traditional assumptions of Theory X may perpetuate gender inequality by reinforcing stereotypes about the capabilities and motivations of different genders. However, embracing the principles of Theory Y can foster a more inclusive and egalitarian approach to gender dynamics within organizations. By recognizing the inherent value and potential of all employees, regardless of gender, leaders can create an environment where women have equal opportunities for advancement and contribute meaningfully to the organization.

Overall, these management theories underscore the importance of addressing systemic barriers and biases that hinder the advancement of female managers in the corporate sector. By recognizing the role of situational factors, organizational policies, and leadership attitudes, organizations can work towards fostering gender equality and promoting the professional growth of all employees.

System theory of management is best suited for this research, this theory suggests that organizations function as interconnected systems, where changes in one area affect the entire system. Applying this approach to gender inequality reveals a network of factors contributing to disparities. From hiring practices to workplace culture, systemic biases often disadvantage women, limiting their progress. By understanding these systemic dynamics, stakeholders can pinpoint areas for improvement, such as inclusive policies and equal opportunities. Through this perspective, addressing gender inequality becomes a comprehensive effort to reshape the organizational landscape for long-term equality.

Chapter 4

Critical Analysis

The primary objectives of this research endeavor were to investigate gender inequality within the corporate sector of Islamabad, specifically focusing on the challenges faced by women and the underlying reasons contributing to the disparity in promotion rates between genders. Additionally, the study aimed to explore the familial and societal factors that perpetuate these challenges for women. This chapter aims to offer an analysis and interpretation of the findings derived from the research process. It will elucidate the correlations between these findings and those of previous studies conducted in this field. The conclusions drawn in this study are drawn from the analysis and interpretation of data gathered through semi-structured interviews conducted with ten participants employed within the corporate sector.

By analyzing the findings of the research questions, as anticipated, gender inequality manifests across various domains, depriving women of their fundamental rights. A closer examination of gender disparity within the corporate sector underscores the presence of significant barriers hindering women's entry. This research reveals the pervasive challenges encountered by women striving for leadership positions. Discussions on the hurdles to female leadership invariably highlight the prevalence of biases and stereotypical mindsets obstructing women's progress. The experiences shared by respondents further illustrate the obstacles women face in attaining leadership roles.

In the study conducted with female managers through interviews, the predominant barriers impeding women's advancement were found to stem from entrenched gender stereotypes. While some participants underscored the importance of personality traits, emphasizing the necessity for

women to possess resilient personalities and leadership qualities, the prevailing sentiment highlighted the significance of resilient behavior in navigating industries where managerial roles demand assertiveness and authoritative decision-making. Numerous respondents shared insights into the challenges they faced and offered suggestions for overcoming them. A recurring issue identified by many was the existence of a "glass ceiling" phenomenon, wherein women encounter an invisible barrier hindering their progression to higher positions, particularly in male-dominated sectors. This barrier perpetuates gender bias and discrimination, thereby limiting opportunities for women to assume leadership roles. Moreover, women often find themselves grappling with the expectation to balance their professional and personal lives, presenting additional challenges when aspiring to leadership positions that demand extensive time commitments and travel. These findings underscore the complex interplay of societal expectations, workplace dynamics, and personal challenges that shape women's career trajectories in the corporate

The prevailing societal misperception and ingrained stereotypes often depict women as less competent compared to their male counterparts, thereby limiting their prospects for assuming leadership roles. This pervasive challenge is consistently highlighted by nearly all managers, shedding light on the pre-existing biases entrenched within the corporate environment. Unfortunately, in Pakistani society, gender disparity presents a significant obstacle, as evidenced by the experiences shared by female professionals, illustrating the stark underrepresentation of women within the corporate sector.

As previously noted, negative attitudes and gender-based discrimination against women in managerial positions are evident on a global scale. Despite women constituting approximately half of the global workforce and witnessing a substantial increase in female graduates from universities

annually, the proportion of women in managerial roles remains disproportionately low, particularly at the upper echelons of management. Numerous studies have delved into societal attitudes towards female managers, revealing persistent biases and discriminatory practices that hinder women's career advancement opportunities.

If luckily women get a chance to work in industries are kept in low positions and no promotion, findings show that women with years of experience don't think capable of promotion. And over this matter different companies gave the unhealthy explanations that women cannot work for long hours because they have family issues. They don't look at their competency and try to promote preconceptions and stereotypes against women's personalities. Hence gender bias and discrimination can be significant obstacles for females to their professional development, particularly in male-dominated industries or senior leadership positions. This can manifest in various forms, such as unequal pay, limited opportunities for career advancement, lack of support and mentorship, and gender-based stereotypes and biases. These challenges can negatively impact female employees' confidence, motivation, and overall career satisfaction, leading to a gender gap in leadership and workforce diversity.

The difference between the leadership styles of men and women is not absolute, and individuals of both genders can exhibit a range of leadership styles. The difference varies due to the personality differences, their mindset, and qualities. All respondents argued in favor of difference, some had a strong explanation that women's and men's leadership styles are different, and some appreciate women due to their management in both households along with working in the office therefore the findings include women use more collaborative and participative communication styles, while men tend to use more assertive and directive styles. While in decision

making sometimes women are more emotional and take as duty as stress more than joy and are very concerned about each little thing one of the participants argued that women are micromanagement they manage because she has a personality like they take care of their household that's why management is her natural capability therefore she manages each and everything will more concern in contrast men do not notice much to the thing that women try to manage.

The myth that men are more efficient than women is outdated and unsupported by research. Studies have shown that there is no significant difference in efficiency between men and women in various areas. Women often excel in tasks like multitasking and paying close attention to detail. Instead, societal stereotypes have shifted to depict women as being more compassionate, affectionate, and sensitive compared to men. Conversely, men are still perceived as more ambitious, aggressive, and decisive. This portrayal of agency has remained largely unchanged.

Efficiency is not determined by gender but rather by individual skills, experience, and work ethic. It is important to recognize and appreciate the contributions and capabilities of both men and women in the workplace. Equality and diversity in the workplace can lead to better collaboration, innovation, and success. On the contrary, societal stereotypes now tend to portray women as compassionate, affectionate, and sensitive, while men are often seen as ambitious, aggressive, and decisive. This perception of gender roles has persisted largely unchanged.

The belief that men are more efficient than women is a stereotype that has been perpetuated for a long time, findings pointed out different reasons for this myth. Boys are often encouraged to be independent, assertive, and competitive by their young age, while girls are taught to be nurturing, empathetic, and accommodating. These gender norms can lead to the perception that men are better suited for tasks that require efficiency and productivity. Many people have implicit biases

regarding gender, which can lead to assumptions about men's and women's abilities. For example, people may assume that men are more logical and analytical, while women are more emotional and intuitive. One reason is the lack of representation, historically, men have held more leadership positions in various fields, which can lead to the perception that they are more efficient and competent. This lack of representation can also lead to the perpetuation of gender stereotypes.

All the respondents share that women face a lot of family problems, but just one female manager disagreed, due to her strong secular family background and elite class, which indicates the upper class cannot understand the problems of middle-class families and how the women in middle class suffer in every sphere of life. The experience shared by most of the female managers concluded the family problems that females face, men are free from them.

Women face many difficulties in achieving their career advancement; a few of them are gender discrimination, mentoring, exclusion from informal networks, and organizational support to attain senior-level positions in management. One respondent belongs to a Pashtun family bear so many hardships to be an educated girl, she said her family didn't allow her for a job even though her uncles were living in Western countries but their mindset about their family women is still so conservative, and consider it morally bad to work outside with male, they are against to work in corporate sector they only want their women to be doctor or teacher.

Therefore, the final of all the findings determined balancing family responsibilities with career goals poses a serious challenge for females, Female managers often struggle to balance their work and family life. They have to deal with the demands of their job as well as family responsibilities, such as childcare and household chores. In addition, The expectations of traditional gender roles sometimes clash with professional aspirations, requiring females to find a delicate equilibrium.

They may be seen as less committed to their careers because of their family responsibilities. Female managers may not have the support they need from their partners or family members to balance their work and family responsibilities. This can lead to feelings of isolation and overwhelm. Another issue that emerged was society's attitude towards female managers, which, according to the consensus among all female managers, is notably unfavorable.

Historically, women have faced several obstacles in the corporate sector, including gender bias, stereotypes, and discrimination. However, in recent years, there has been a significant shift towards gender equality in the workplace, and more women are taking up leadership roles in the corporate sector.

Despite this progress, women in managerial positions still face several challenges, including the "glass ceiling" phenomenon, where women struggle to move up the corporate ladder beyond a certain point. They also face stereotypes and biases regarding their leadership abilities and communication styles.

The findings of this study are highly relevant to the previous literature on gender inequality in the corporate sector. The study highlights the persistent discrimination against women in terms of pay, promotion, and leadership opportunities, which has been extensively documented in previous research. The study also reveals the presence of gender bias and stereotypes in the workplace, which is consistent with previous literature on the topic.

Furthermore, the study sheds light on the subtle forms of discrimination that women face, such as microaggressions, which have been identified in previous research as well. The findings of the

study reinforce the idea that gender inequality in the corporate sector is a complex and multifaceted issue that requires a comprehensive approach to address.

Overall, the findings of the study provide further evidence of the need to address gender inequality in the corporate sector. The study highlights the importance of promoting gender equality in the workplace and taking steps to eliminate gender bias and stereotypes. Failure to address these issues can have significant negative consequences for women's career advancement and job satisfaction, as well as for the overall performance of the organization.

The application of Contingency Theory, Theory X and Y, and System Theory of Management to the thesis topic of "Gender Inequality in the Corporate Sector: A Case Study of Islamabad" offers valuable insights into understanding and addressing the complex dynamics of gender disparities within organizations.

Contingency Theory: This theory suggests that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to management and that the effectiveness of management practices depends on various contextual factors. Applied to the thesis topic, Contingency Theory would emphasize the importance of considering the unique circumstances and contextual factors that contribute to gender inequality within the corporate sector in Islamabad. It would advocate for tailored approaches to addressing gender disparities, taking into account factors such as organizational culture, industry norms, and societal expectations.

Theory X and Y: Theory X and Y, proposed by Douglas McGregor, offer contrasting perspectives on human behavior in the workplace. Theory X assumes that employees are inherently lazy and require strict supervision and control, while Theory Y posits that employees are self-motivated

and capable of taking initiative. Applied to the thesis topic, Theory X and Y provide insight into the underlying assumptions and beliefs that may contribute to gender inequality within organizations. For instance, if managers adhere to Theory X beliefs and perceive female employees as inherently less competent or motivated, it may lead to discriminatory practices and limited opportunities for career advancement. Conversely, adopting Theory Y principles can foster an inclusive and empowering work environment that promotes gender equality and recognizes the potential and capabilities of all employees, regardless of gender.

System Theory of Management: System Theory views organizations as complex systems comprised of interconnected parts that influence each other and operate within larger external environments. Applied to the thesis topic, System Theory highlights the interconnectedness of various factors contributing to gender inequality within the corporate sector, including organizational policies and practices, societal norms and values, and individual attitudes and behaviors. By recognizing the systemic nature of gender inequality, organizations can implement holistic interventions that address underlying structural barriers, promote cultural change, and create supportive environments for gender equality initiatives.

In summary, the application of Contingency Theory, Theory X and Y, and System Theory of Management to the thesis topic of gender inequality in the corporate sector of Islamabad provides theoretical frameworks for understanding the multifaceted nature of gender disparities within organizations and guiding strategies for promoting gender equality and inclusion. Drawing upon these theories, the research argues that the managerial role has been made gender-based and is wrongly ascribed to men. Therefore, women have been sidelined and are largely victims of gender discrimination.

Conclusion

In conclusion, gender inequality is a pervasive issue that affects every sector of society. It is a complex phenomenon that is deeply rooted in cultural norms, social structures, and institutional practices. Gender inequality affects women and men differently, but it is particularly detrimental to women who are often excluded from decision-making processes, denied access to education and healthcare, and face discrimination in the workplace. In the culmination of this research, women in the corporate sector of Islamabad are debarred from the decision-making process. Pakistan is one of the countries where the cultures of men and women are different, women are considered to be less important in the decision-making process, and they are always portrayed as birth givers, who look after the home and children. Women are more victims of such a frame of mind in the patriarchal society, they don't let women be educated, and they don't allow them to be independent women. The data analysis showed all the interviewed female managers had the same experiences, they faced many challenges to achieve their role as managers in the male–dominated workplace, it has also been noticed that all the powers in the corporate sector have been associated with male managers. Major international firms and big industries don't offer top-level promotions to women because they consider them less caliber in comparison with men. They considered women managers as "quitters", due to their family issues. Family support is the most important form of support, family acts as its strongest institution, but due to the stereotypical norms for women most families don't trust their girls to send them outside the home, as shared by one respondent from the Pashtun family, they have disparate norms and values associated with females as compared to the males. Men hold primary power in all aspects of society such as politics, family, etc. Considering all the factors by the analysis of interview data, it is concluded that women are

more professional, they are more passionate, and they have more powerful personalities to serve as managers.

The effects of gender inequality are felt across all sectors of society, including the economy, politics, education, healthcare, and social welfare. To address this issue, it is essential to adopt a comprehensive approach that addresses the root causes of gender so that we can create a world that is truly inclusive and equitable for all.

The recommendations arising from the study cover several key areas aimed at fostering gender equality and supporting women's advancement in the workplace. Firstly, there is a need for awareness campaigns targeting families to emphasize the importance of female education. Secondly, efforts should be made to promote equal pay and close the gender wage gap. Thirdly, initiatives must be undertaken to encourage women's participation and leadership across all industries, including those traditionally dominated by men. Moreover, equal opportunities for promotions and career advancement should be ensured for both genders, alongside the implementation of policies supporting work-life balance such as parental leave and flexible work arrangements. Additionally, providing access to financial and business resources for women entrepreneurs is essential. Strengthening leadership capacity within organizations can facilitate the process of change, along with offering high-profile opportunities to integrate women into higher positions. Ensuring workplace security for women through organizational policies and charters is imperative. Furthermore, women's opinions should be valued and incorporated into decision-making processes, while adopting new professionalism and management approaches with gender equality as a central objective. Broadcasting career advancement programs through various channels can also aid in educating and empowering women to pursue relevant professions. Finally,

societal involvement and support are crucial for realizing these recommendations effectively. In an ideal gender-equal society, the concept of "gender" would be obsolete, allowing individuals to express themselves authentically without constraints or labels.

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Appendix

Interview Questions

1. In your view, what are some of the challenges that women face in achieving leadership roles in the corporate sector?
2. Have you encountered any gender-specific obstacles in advancing your career?
3. How do you feel your gender has affected your professional development?
4. Do you believe there are differences in leadership styles between men and women? If so, what are they?
5. Have you noticed any differences in the types of tasks or projects assigned to men and women in your organization? If so, please elaborate.
6. Up to what extent do you agree with the statement "men are more efficient than women".
7. What are the family problems that you have faced in achieving your goal?
8. How is societal behavior when you are a manager or leader?
9. How do leaders themselves think about men's and women's leadership both inside and outside the organization?