

INVESTIGATING THE EXPERIENCES OF MALE EMPLOYEES IN FEMALE-CENTRIC WORK ENVIRONMENTS

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Abstract

This study explores the challenges faced by male employees in female-dominated workplaces in Lahore, Pakistan. Utilizing qualitative methods, it highlights key issues such as gender role conflict, tokenism, social integration, emotional labor, and organizational policies. Findings reveal that male employees experience significant stress due to societal expectations, feelings of isolation, and inadequate support structures. Recommendations for organizations include promoting gender-inclusive policies, offering gender-sensitivity training, fostering social integration, recognizing emotional labor, creating equitable career advancement pathways, and encouraging open dialogue about gender dynamics. These measures aim to enhance workplace inclusivity and support for all employees, ultimately leading to improved job satisfaction and organizational effectiveness.

Keywords: Male Employees, Female-Dominated Workplaces, Gender Dynamics, Emotional Labor, Workplace Inclusivity

Introduction

In recent years, the focus on workplace diversity has led to greater recognition of gender imbalances in various sectors. While much of the literature has focused on the challenges faced by women in male-dominated fields, there has been comparatively little attention given to the experiences of men working in female-dominated environments. These workplaces, such as education, nursing, social work, and administrative roles, are often perceived as spaces where women not only outnumber men but also influence the organizational culture in ways that may affect male employees differently (Williams, 1995). This article aims to explore the challenges faced by male employees in female-dominated workplaces, with a focus on the context of Lahore, Pakistan.

Workplace culture in female-dominated environments tends to emphasize collaboration, emotional intelligence, and relationship-building, qualities traditionally associated with femininity (Simpson, 2004). For male employees, navigating these norms can present unique challenges, especially when societal expectations of masculinity come into conflict with the demands of the workplace. Research indicates that men in these settings often experience feelings of isolation, pressure to conform to feminine norms, and difficulties in advancing their careers (Wingfield, 2009). In many cases, male employees may feel excluded from informal social networks, which can impact their job satisfaction and career progression (Heikes, 1991).

In Pakistan, where traditional gender roles are deeply ingrained in society, male employees in female-dominated workplaces may face additional layers of complexity. The cultural expectation for men to be assertive, independent, and in leadership positions can create tension when these traits are either undervalued or seen as disruptive in female-dominated sectors (Ashraf, 2019). This creates a disconnect for men who may struggle to reconcile societal expectations of masculinity with the realities of their work environment. Additionally, organizational policies may unintentionally reinforce these challenges, as efforts to promote gender equality often focus on

empowering women without fully considering the experiences of men in these spaces (Acker, 2006).

Several studies have explored the phenomenon of tokenism, where men in female-dominated workplaces become hyper-visible due to their minority status. According to Kanter's (1977) theory of tokenism, individuals in a numerical minority are subject to heightened visibility, increased pressure to conform, and exaggerated differentiation from the majority group. For male employees, this can result in a form of "reverse discrimination," where they are constantly expected to perform at a higher level to prove their competence (Simpson, 2004). Additionally, tokenism can lead to male employees feeling socially and professionally isolated, as they are excluded from female-dominated networks of support and mentorship.

One of the most significant challenges faced by men in these environments is related to emotional labor. Hochschild (1983) defines emotional labor as the management of emotions to fulfill the requirements of a job, often associated with caregiving, teaching, or service-oriented roles. While emotional labor is typically expected of female employees, male employees in these roles may face pressure to engage in emotional labor in ways that conflict with traditional expectations of masculinity. This can create emotional dissonance, where the individual's internal feelings are at odds with the emotional expression required by the job, leading to stress, burnout, and decreased job satisfaction (Wharton, 2009).

Furthermore, male employees in female-dominated workplaces often face barriers to career progression. Simpson (2004) argues that while men in male-dominated fields are often fast-tracked to leadership positions, this dynamic does not always apply in female-dominated environments. Organizational structures and informal workplace cultures may prioritize women's advancement, leaving men with fewer opportunities for upward mobility. The absence of male role models or mentors within the organization further compounds this issue, making it difficult for men to navigate their professional development (Ragins & Cotton, 1999). This can lead to frustration and a sense of stagnation, as male employees feel their contributions are overlooked in favor of promoting gender equity for women.

In the context of Lahore, Pakistan, these challenges are exacerbated by societal expectations regarding gender roles. The intersection of cultural norms and workplace dynamics creates an environment where male employees may struggle to find their place in female-dominated sectors. Traditional gender roles in Pakistan often dictate that men should occupy positions of power and leadership, while women are expected to take on more nurturing and supportive roles (Ashraf, 2019). When these expectations are reversed in female-dominated workplaces, men may face not only professional challenges but also societal scrutiny. This can lead to a feeling of "role incongruity," where the expectations of their workplace conflict with their social identity as men (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Overall, this article seeks to contribute to the growing body of research on gender dynamics in the workplace by examining the specific challenges faced by male employees in female-dominated sectors in Lahore. By exploring the experiences of men in these roles, this study aims to highlight the unique pressures they face and offer recommendations for creating more inclusive and supportive workplace environments. Understanding these challenges is essential for promoting gender equity that benefits all employees, regardless of gender.

Literature Review

Research on gender dynamics in the workplace has traditionally focused on the barriers faced by women in male-dominated fields. However, as women have increasingly entered and dominated

certain professions, attention has shifted toward the experiences of male employees in these female-dominated environments. These sectors, including nursing, education, social work, and administrative roles, are often characterized by workplace cultures and structures that align with traditionally feminine traits such as emotional intelligence, cooperation, and communication (Williams, 1995). For male employees, these environments can present unique challenges that impact their social integration, career progression, and overall job satisfaction. This literature review explores the existing research on the challenges faced by male employees in female-dominated workplaces, with a particular focus on gender role conflict, tokenism, and emotional labor, alongside specific cultural considerations within the context of Pakistan.

Gender Role Conflict and Stereotypes

One of the most pervasive challenges faced by male employees in female-dominated workplaces is gender role conflict. Gender role conflict arises when individuals experience tension between societal expectations of masculinity and the behaviors required by their professional roles. Traditionally, men are expected to display characteristics such as assertiveness, independence, and emotional restraint (Eagly & Karau, 2002). However, in female-dominated workplaces, employees are often expected to exhibit qualities such as empathy, nurturance, and cooperation—traits that are typically associated with femininity (Simpson, 2004). This incongruity can lead to feelings of discomfort, stress, and alienation for male employees, as they struggle to align their workplace behavior with societal expectations of masculinity.

Research conducted by Heikes (1991) on men in nursing provides a clear example of gender role conflict. Male nurses reported feeling pressure to suppress traditionally masculine traits, such as competitiveness, in favor of behaviors that were more aligned with the caregiving aspects of their roles. Similarly, men in teaching and social work have reported challenges in conforming to the emotional labor and nurturing expectations of their professions, often leading to burnout and job dissatisfaction (Wingfield, 2009). This tension between societal gender norms and professional expectations is particularly pronounced in cultural contexts such as Pakistan, where traditional gender roles are more rigidly defined and socially enforced (Ashraf, 2019).

Tokenism and Hypervisibility

In addition to gender role conflict, male employees in female-dominated workplaces often experience the phenomenon of tokenism. Kanter (1977) introduced the concept of tokenism, which refers to the heightened visibility and scrutiny faced by individuals who are part of a numerical minority in their workplace. Male employees in female-dominated fields frequently find themselves in this position, where their actions are closely observed and often interpreted through the lens of their gender. This hypervisibility can result in increased pressure to perform, as male employees may feel that their work is constantly under evaluation and that any failure will be attributed to their gender rather than their individual abilities (Simpson, 2004).

Tokenism can also contribute to social isolation. Research by Williams (1995) found that male employees in female-dominated workplaces are often excluded from informal social networks that are dominated by women. These networks, which play a crucial role in career advancement and professional development, can be difficult for men to penetrate due to gendered norms around communication and social interaction. As a result, male employees may find it challenging to form the necessary professional relationships to advance in their careers, leading to feelings of marginalization and stagnation.

Moreover, the expectation of men to perform in traditionally feminine roles, while simultaneously being treated as outsiders, creates a dual burden that can be difficult to navigate. Studies have

shown that male employees in female-dominated fields often feel they must overcompensate for their gender by excelling at their jobs to avoid reinforcing negative stereotypes about men in these professions (Heikes, 1991). This creates additional stress and can contribute to burnout over time.

Emotional Labor and Job Satisfaction

Emotional labor, defined by Hochschild (1983) as the management of emotions to meet the requirements of a job, is another significant challenge for male employees in female-dominated workplaces. In professions such as nursing, teaching, and social work, emotional labor is a central component of the job. Employees are expected to demonstrate empathy, compassion, and patience—traits that are often culturally associated with femininity. For male employees, the expectation to engage in emotional labor can be particularly challenging, as it conflicts with societal norms that discourage men from expressing vulnerability or engaging in caregiving roles (Wharton, 2009).

The emotional labor required in female-dominated workplaces can lead to emotional dissonance for male employees, where there is a mismatch between their internal emotions and the emotions they are expected to display. This dissonance can result in stress, decreased job satisfaction, and eventual burnout (Hochschild, 1983). Furthermore, male employees may feel that their contributions are undervalued in environments where emotional intelligence and caregiving are prioritized over traditionally masculine traits such as leadership and assertiveness (Simpson, 2004).

The impact of emotional labor on male employees is particularly pronounced in cultural contexts like Pakistan, where traditional masculinity emphasizes emotional restraint and stoicism. Research by Ashraf (2019) on gender roles in Pakistan found that men are socialized from a young age to avoid expressions of vulnerability, which are seen as signs of weakness. In female-dominated workplaces, where emotional expressiveness is often a job requirement, this cultural norm can create a significant barrier for male employees, who may struggle to reconcile these conflicting expectations.

Cultural Considerations in Pakistan

While much of the research on male employees in female-dominated workplaces has been conducted in Western contexts, the experiences of men in non-Western societies such as Pakistan present additional complexities. In Pakistan, gender roles are deeply ingrained in both social and professional settings, and men are traditionally expected to be the primary breadwinners and leaders within their households (Ashraf, 2019). These societal expectations create a unique set of challenges for men working in professions where women are the majority, as their professional roles may conflict with their cultural identity as men.

Men in Pakistan who choose to work in female-dominated fields such as teaching or nursing may face social stigma and discrimination, both within and outside of the workplace. This stigma can manifest in the form of derogatory comments, questioning of their masculinity, or assumptions that they are less competent than their female colleagues (Williams, 1995). As a result, male employees in these fields may feel pressure to justify their career choices to both their colleagues and their social circles, leading to additional stress and emotional labor.

Furthermore, organizational policies in Pakistan often focus on addressing the historical underrepresentation of women in leadership roles, without fully considering the experiences of men in female-dominated sectors (Acker, 2006). This can result in policies that unintentionally marginalize male employees, such as mentorship programs or leadership development initiatives that are primarily targeted at women. In such environments, male employees may feel excluded

from opportunities for professional growth, leading to frustration and dissatisfaction with their careers.

Conclusion

The challenges faced by male employees in female-dominated workplaces are multifaceted, encompassing issues of gender role conflict, tokenism, emotional labor, and cultural expectations. While research on this topic has predominantly focused on Western contexts, the experiences of men in non-Western societies such as Pakistan reveal additional complexities related to traditional gender roles and societal norms. Addressing these challenges requires a nuanced understanding of gender dynamics in the workplace and the development of inclusive organizational policies that support the professional development and well-being of all employees, regardless of gender.

Problem Statement

In female-dominated workplaces, the dynamics and experiences of male employees often go unnoticed, even though they face distinct challenges that affect their job satisfaction, career progression, and overall well-being. The dominant focus on gender inequality has traditionally centered on the disadvantages women experience in male-dominated fields, leaving a gap in understanding the obstacles men encounter in sectors where women are the majority. This research seeks to explore the specific challenges male employees face in female-dominated workplaces, particularly in the context of Lahore, Pakistan.

Male employees in these environments often grapple with role incongruity, tokenism, and the pressures of emotional labor, all of which are exacerbated by traditional gender norms and societal expectations prevalent in Pakistani culture. The conflict between the professional demands of female-dominated sectors and societal ideals of masculinity leads to feelings of isolation, marginalization, and professional stagnation for male employees. Furthermore, organizational policies that aim to promote gender equity tend to focus primarily on empowering women, inadvertently overlooking the unique challenges faced by men in these workplaces.

This study aims to investigate the ways in which male employees navigate these female-dominated environments, the social and professional barriers they face, and the impact of organizational policies on their career advancement and job satisfaction. By examining the experiences of male employees in female-dominated fields, the research will contribute to a broader understanding of workplace gender dynamics and provide insights for developing more inclusive organizational practices that address the needs of all employees.

Objectives of the study

1. To explore the challenges faced by male employees in female-dominated workplaces in Lahore, Pakistan, including social integration, career progression, and emotional well-being.
2. To examine how gender role conflict and societal expectations of masculinity affect the experiences and job satisfaction of male employees in these environments.
3. To assess the impact of organizational policies and workplace culture on the professional development and career advancement of male employees in female-dominated sectors.

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research methodology to explore the experiences and challenges faced by male employees in female-dominated workplaces in Lahore, Pakistan. A qualitative approach is particularly suitable for this study as it allows for in-depth exploration of

the subjective experiences of participants, providing rich, detailed data that can reveal the complexities of the issues at hand.

The population of this study consists of male employees working in female-dominated workplaces in Lahore. These workplaces may include sectors such as education, healthcare, and administrative services, where women constitute the majority of the workforce. The sample size for this study is 20 male employees, selected through purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is used to ensure that participants have relevant experiences and can provide meaningful insights into the research questions.

Data collection for this study is conducted through semi-structured interviews. The interviews are designed to explore participants' personal and professional experiences in female-dominated environments, focusing on issues such as gender role conflict, workplace culture, social interactions, and career progression. Semi-structured interviews allow for flexibility, enabling the researcher to probe deeper into participants' responses and gather comprehensive data on the topic. The interviews are conducted in a confidential setting, ensuring that participants feel comfortable sharing their experiences openly. All interviews are audio-recorded with the consent of the participants, and the recordings are transcribed for analysis.

Data analysis is carried out using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data. The process involves reading through the interview transcripts multiple times to familiarize with the data, followed by coding key ideas and concepts. These codes are then organized into themes that reflect the core challenges faced by male employees in female-dominated workplaces. Through thematic analysis, the study aims to uncover common experiences, as well as any variations or unique perspectives among the participants.

By employing this qualitative methodology, the study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of male employees in female-dominated workplaces, with a focus on the specific social and cultural context of Lahore, Pakistan. The findings will contribute to the broader discourse on gender dynamics in the workplace and inform the development of organizational policies that address the needs of both male and female employees.

Data Analysis and Results

The data analysis for this study was conducted using thematic analysis, a method that enables the identification and exploration of patterns and themes within qualitative data. Thematic analysis is well-suited for examining the experiences of male employees in female-dominated workplaces, as it helps to capture the nuanced challenges they face. The interviews with 20 male employees working in female-dominated environments in Lahore, Pakistan, were transcribed and analyzed to identify recurring themes related to their professional experiences, social interactions, and career development. The analysis revealed several key themes, which are presented below.

Gender Role Conflict and Masculinity Expectations

One of the most prominent themes that emerged from the data was the issue of gender role conflict. Participants expressed that working in female-dominated environments often placed them in conflict with traditional expectations of masculinity. In Pakistani society, masculinity is associated with assertiveness, leadership, and emotional restraint. However, in female-dominated workplaces, such as teaching or healthcare, the job often requires traits such as emotional sensitivity, cooperation, and nurturing, which are traditionally seen as feminine qualities.

Participants discussed the discomfort they felt when these expectations clashed with societal perceptions of how men should behave. One respondent noted:

"In my workplace, empathy and patience are highly valued, but as a man, I've been taught to be more assertive and firm. It sometimes feels like I have to suppress my natural instincts to fit in."

This conflict between personal identity and professional expectations often led to stress and feelings of inadequacy. Participants also expressed concern about how their masculinity was perceived by their colleagues and society at large, which sometimes caused them to avoid discussing their work openly.

Tokenism and Hypervisibility

Another significant theme identified through thematic analysis was the experience of tokenism. Male employees reported feeling hypervisible in their workplaces due to their minority status. Many felt that their performance and behavior were constantly being scrutinized by their female colleagues and supervisors. This heightened visibility created a pressure to perform at a higher standard to avoid reinforcing negative stereotypes about men in these roles.

One participant shared:

"Being one of the few men in the office makes me feel like everything I do is under the microscope. If I make a mistake, it feels like it's amplified, as if people are expecting me to fail."

This sense of being constantly evaluated often contributed to feelings of isolation and stress. Male employees felt that they were judged not only for their professional competence but also for how well they fit into the gendered dynamics of their workplace.

Social Integration and Workplace Networks

The theme of social integration was another major finding from the data. Participants reported difficulties in forming social connections and joining informal networks within their female-dominated workplaces. Informal social networks are often vital for career advancement and professional development. However, men in these environments felt excluded from these networks, which were predominantly female and shaped by gendered communication styles. Several participants mentioned that they felt uncomfortable participating in certain conversations or social activities that their female colleagues engaged in, which limited their opportunities to build strong professional relationships. As one respondent noted:

"Most of my colleagues socialize after work, but I don't feel like I belong in their discussions. It's not just the topics; it's the way they interact. I feel like an outsider."

This social exclusion often led to a lack of access to informal mentoring or support networks, which are critical for career progression.

Career Advancement and Organizational Policies

Another recurring theme was the impact of organizational policies and career advancement opportunities on male employees in female-dominated workplaces. Participants expressed frustration with the lack of tailored policies that addressed the unique challenges they faced. Many felt that workplace policies and programs, particularly those aimed at promoting gender equality, focused primarily on supporting women, with little consideration for the issues faced by men.

One participant remarked:

"There are many initiatives to support women's leadership, but as a man, I often feel like I'm on my own. There are no programs that address the challenges we face as men in these environments."

Participants also reported feeling sidelined for promotions or leadership roles, as organizational cultures in female-dominated workplaces often prioritize the advancement of women. While many

male employees supported these efforts to promote gender equality, they expressed concerns that they were being unintentionally marginalized in the process.

Emotional Labor and Job Satisfaction

The final major theme that emerged from the data was the burden of emotional labor and its impact on job satisfaction. Many participants reported that their roles required them to engage in significant amounts of emotional labor, such as providing emotional support to colleagues or clients. While emotional labor is often a core component of roles in female-dominated sectors like healthcare or education, male employees found it challenging to meet these demands due to societal norms that discourage men from expressing vulnerability or engaging in caregiving roles. One participant stated:

"I'm expected to listen and provide emotional support to my clients, but as a man, I've always been taught to keep my emotions in check. It's exhausting, and sometimes I feel like I'm not good enough at this part of my job."

The emotional strain of performing this type of labor often led to lower job satisfaction and, in some cases, burnout. Participants felt that their contributions were undervalued because they struggled with the emotional aspects of their work, even though they excelled in other areas.

Discussion

The discussion of the findings from this study highlights the multifaceted challenges faced by male employees in female-dominated workplaces, with a focus on the specific context of Lahore, Pakistan. The results, derived from thematic analysis, contribute to a broader understanding of gender dynamics in the workplace, particularly in environments where men are the minority. This discussion integrates existing literature with the study's findings, exploring key themes such as gender role conflict, tokenism, social integration, organizational policies, emotional labor, and career advancement.

The findings confirm that male employees in female-dominated workplaces experience significant gender role conflict, which aligns with previous research on men working in non-traditional fields. Studies have shown that traditional gender norms often dictate that men should display assertiveness, leadership, and emotional restraint, whereas roles in sectors such as healthcare, education, and administration often require emotional sensitivity and collaboration—traits traditionally associated with femininity (Simpson, 2004).

The conflict between societal expectations of masculinity and the professional demands of female-dominated sectors was evident in the experiences of participants. As expressed by one respondent, the need to suppress masculine traits in favor of more nurturing behavior led to feelings of discomfort and stress. This echoes the concept of role incongruity, where men in female-dominated professions feel that their gender is incompatible with their job role (Heilman & Wallen, 2010). In Lahore, where traditional gender roles are particularly emphasized, this conflict may be even more pronounced.

Moreover, this theme ties into hegemonic masculinity theory, which posits that societal norms privilege certain masculine ideals over others, often to the detriment of men who do not conform to these ideals (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). The study's participants struggled to reconcile the expectations of their jobs with these entrenched societal views of masculinity, resulting in emotional stress and lowered job satisfaction.

The theme of tokenism also featured prominently in the analysis. Male employees reported feeling hypervisible due to their minority status in female-dominated workplaces. This experience aligns with Kanter's (1977) theory of tokenism, which argues that individuals in the minority,

particularly in terms of gender, often face exaggerated scrutiny and pressure to perform at higher levels.

Participants expressed a sense of being constantly evaluated by their female colleagues, a finding consistent with research that suggests tokens often feel compelled to represent their entire gender (Yoder, 1991). This hypervisibility led to feelings of isolation and stress, as men in these workplaces felt they had to prove themselves to avoid reinforcing negative stereotypes about men in such roles. These pressures can lead to performance anxiety and have detrimental effects on mental health and overall job satisfaction (Kanter, 1977).

The study also highlighted the challenges male employees face in terms of social integration. Many participants felt excluded from informal social networks, which are often crucial for career advancement and access to professional support. This finding mirrors existing literature that shows men in female-dominated environments often struggle to integrate socially, as informal workplace cultures are typically shaped by gendered communication styles (Ely, 1995).

In Lahore, cultural norms around gender further exacerbate this issue. Men may feel uncomfortable participating in social activities that are perceived as feminine or inappropriate for men in Pakistani society. This social isolation can limit access to mentoring opportunities and professional networks, which are critical for career growth (Ibarra, 1992). The exclusion from these informal networks puts male employees at a disadvantage, both in terms of day-to-day social support and long-term career advancement.

The analysis also revealed that organizational policies in female-dominated workplaces often overlook the specific needs of male employees. Participants noted that while there are initiatives to promote gender equality, these are generally focused on women's empowerment, with little consideration for the unique challenges faced by men. This finding aligns with previous research, which has found that diversity and inclusion policies often focus primarily on increasing the representation of women in male-dominated sectors, neglecting the reverse situation (Williams, 1995).

Male employees in female-dominated workplaces may feel marginalized by policies that do not account for their experiences, particularly when these policies reinforce the perception that women are the primary beneficiaries of diversity initiatives (Williams, 1993). The lack of support structures for men in these environments can lead to feelings of alienation and hinder their professional development. Additionally, participants expressed frustration with being overlooked for leadership roles, a trend also noted in existing studies where men in female-dominated fields report limited opportunities for upward mobility (Smith, 2012).

Another critical theme identified in the study is the burden of emotional labor placed on male employees in female-dominated workplaces. Emotional labor, which involves managing emotions to fulfill the emotional needs of clients or colleagues, is often a core aspect of roles in healthcare, education, and other service-oriented professions (Hochschild, 1983). While emotional labor is typically associated with women, men in these environments are also expected to perform it, leading to stress and job dissatisfaction.

The study's findings support existing research that suggests men in these roles often struggle with emotional labor because it conflicts with societal norms that discourage men from expressing vulnerability or engaging in caregiving behaviors (Guy & Newman, 2004). The emotional strain associated with this type of work, coupled with the lack of recognition for their efforts, contributes to lower levels of job satisfaction and, in some cases, burnout.

The findings of this study contribute to the broader discourse on gender and workplace diversity by providing insights into the unique challenges faced by men in female-dominated sectors. While much of the existing literature focuses on women in male-dominated fields, this study highlights the need for a more nuanced understanding of gender dynamics across all types of workplaces. Men in female-dominated environments experience distinct challenges that are often overlooked by organizational policies and diversity initiatives. This research emphasizes the importance of developing more inclusive approaches that consider the experiences of both men and women in diverse workplace contexts.

In sum, the themes identified in this study—gender role conflict, tokenism, social isolation, emotional labor, and career advancement—underscore the complexity of gender dynamics in female-dominated workplaces. These findings call for a more inclusive approach to diversity management, one that recognizes and addresses the unique experiences of all employees, regardless of gender.

Conclusion

The study explored the experiences and challenges faced by male employees in female-dominated workplaces in Lahore, Pakistan, shedding light on the nuanced gender dynamics that influence their professional lives. Through thematic analysis, key themes such as gender role conflict, tokenism, social integration, organizational policies, emotional labor, and career advancement emerged, offering valuable insights into the complex experiences of men in these environments.

One of the primary conclusions is that male employees often experience gender role conflict, where societal expectations of masculinity clash with the demands of their roles in female-dominated sectors. These roles often require emotional sensitivity and collaboration, traits that are traditionally seen as feminine. As a result, men experience stress, discomfort, and an internal conflict between their personal identity and professional responsibilities. This highlights the ongoing influence of societal norms regarding gender roles in the workplace.

The study also revealed that male employees frequently feel like tokens in their workplaces, experiencing heightened visibility and scrutiny due to their minority status. This hypervisibility can create performance pressure and a sense of isolation, as men feel they are constantly being judged or evaluated based on their gender. This reinforces the idea that male employees in female-dominated environments are often subject to tokenism, leading to unique professional challenges not commonly faced by their female counterparts in the same environments.

Finally, the emotional labor demanded of male employees in female-dominated workplaces was identified as a significant source of stress and job dissatisfaction. Men in roles that require high levels of emotional support and care often struggle with societal norms that discourage emotional expression in men. The emotional strain associated with these jobs can lead to burnout and a lower sense of professional fulfillment.

In conclusion, male employees in female-dominated workplaces in Lahore face a distinct set of challenges shaped by both societal norms and organizational structures. Addressing these challenges requires a more inclusive approach to workplace policies and diversity initiatives, one that recognizes the unique experiences of all employees, regardless of gender. By understanding and addressing the issues faced by men in these environments, organizations can create a more balanced, equitable, and supportive workplace for all. This study contributes to the growing body of literature on gender dynamics in the workplace and highlights the importance of considering the diverse experiences of both men and women in the pursuit of true gender equity.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made to address the challenges faced by male employees in female-dominated workplaces, with the aim of fostering a more inclusive, equitable, and supportive work environment.

1. **Promote Gender-Inclusive Organizational Policies**

Organizations should develop policies that are inclusive of both genders, ensuring that men's unique challenges in female-dominated workplaces are recognized and addressed. This may include reviewing existing diversity and inclusion initiatives to ensure that they do not solely focus on women's empowerment but also consider the specific needs of male employees. Regular audits and consultations with employees from both genders should inform these policies, creating a balance that benefits all workers.

2. **Offer Gender-Sensitivity Training for All Employees**

Gender-sensitivity training should be provided to all employees, regardless of gender, to raise awareness of the unique challenges faced by both men and women in the workplace. Such training can reduce stereotypes and biases, improve communication across gender lines, and foster a more collaborative work environment. This will encourage a workplace culture where both men and women feel respected and valued.

3. **Foster Social Integration and Support Networks**

To combat the social isolation often experienced by male employees in female-dominated sectors, organizations should take steps to foster inclusive social integration. This could involve creating gender-neutral mentoring programs and peer support groups that facilitate interaction across genders. Encouraging a more inclusive workplace culture that values the contributions of all employees will enhance the sense of belonging for male workers, reducing isolation and improving job satisfaction.

4. **Address Tokenism and Performance Pressures**

Efforts should be made to reduce the impact of tokenism on male employees by ensuring that men are not singled out or subjected to heightened scrutiny due to their minority status. Organizations should emphasize the value of diversity and discourage the notion that male employees must over-perform to justify their presence in female-dominated sectors. Performance metrics should be standardized and gender-neutral, ensuring that all employees are evaluated fairly based on their skills and contributions, rather than gender-based expectations.

5. **Recognize and Support Emotional Labor**

The emotional labor required of employees in sectors like healthcare, education, and administration should be acknowledged and supported by the organization, regardless of gender. Men who perform emotional labor in these environments often experience stress and burnout, as societal norms discourage emotional expression in men. Organizations can offer professional development programs that equip all employees, including men, with the skills needed to manage emotional labor while also providing access to mental health resources to prevent burnout.

6. **Create Pathways for Career Advancement**

Male employees in female-dominated workplaces often perceive a lack of career advancement opportunities. Organizations should ensure that men have equal access to promotions and leadership positions by implementing transparent and merit-based pathways for career development. Gender should not play a role in leadership selection processes, and organizations should actively monitor and address any biases that may exist in this regard. Providing mentorship opportunities and leadership training can further help male employees advance in their careers.

7. Encourage Open Dialogue on Gender Dynamics

Creating spaces for open and respectful dialogue about gender dynamics in the workplace can foster a more understanding and inclusive work culture. Male employees should feel comfortable discussing the challenges they face without fear of judgment or backlash. Leadership should actively encourage such discussions, perhaps through workshops or focus groups, to ensure that all employees feel heard and supported.

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