



ANALYSIS OF THE PERFORMANCE AND PROBLEMS OF WORKING  
WOMEN: A CASE STUDY OF QUETTA CITY

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Abstract

Working women in Quetta, Balochistan, navigate a complex web of socio-cultural, economic, and institutional challenges. Despite progressive policies at national and international levels, deeply ingrained societal norms and weak institutional enforcement hinder women’s professional advancement and overall workplace well-being. The city’s conservative setting exacerbates the dual burden on women, who are expected to perform exceptionally both at home and in professional environments. This case study examines the lived experiences of working women across various employment sectors, including education, healthcare, and administration, shedding light on how traditional expectations conflict with the demands of modern employment. The research draws on qualitative methods and secondary data, supplemented by insights from 150 respondents—working women in Quetta—who participated through surveys and interviews. Their responses reveal how systemic limitations—such as a lack of legal awareness, insufficient childcare facilities, unreliable public transport, workplace harassment, and wage inequality—collectively contribute to the marginalization of women in Quetta’s workforce. The study also underscores how societal stigma, reinforced through media and generational teachings, suppresses ambition and reinforces occupational segregation.

**Keywords:** Working women; gender inequality; dual burden; workplace harassment; career barriers; cultural norms.

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## INTRODUCTION

Contemporary workplaces often induce stress in all employees, but executive and professional women experience heightened levels of stress, anxiety, and psychological distress compared to their male counterparts. This disparity arises from factors such as increased family responsibilities, a tendency to overcommit, and unequal pay for similar work. A significant contributor to this increased stress in women is the phenomenon of stereotype threat, a challenge men rarely encounter. Stereotype threat occurs when women are aware of negative stereotypes regarding their performance in specific areas compared to men. This awareness can hinder their performance in crucial situations like tests, negotiations, presentations, and competitions. The mere knowledge of a negative gender stereotype can trigger unconscious anxiety about confirming it, leading to impaired cognitive function, reduced focus, and increased tension.

## WORKPLACE STRESS AND GENDER INEQUALITY IN PROFESSIONAL SETTINGS

In today's fast-paced work environments, stress is common, but professional women often experience higher stress levels than men. This stems from greater family responsibilities, societal pressure to accommodate every request, and persistent wage gaps. Women also face stereotype threat—where awareness of negative gender stereotypes undermines performance in tasks like negotiations or presentations. Studies show that even subtle reminders of stereotypes (e.g., “women are worse at math”) can lead to underperformance, reinforcing self-doubt and workplace discrimination.

## LEGAL AND SOCIOCULTURAL BARRIERS

Many countries have introduced laws against workplace harassment, yet enforcement remains weak due to cultural norms and lack of awareness. Sexual harassment policies often fail because women are either unaware of their rights or fear retaliation. Harassment includes verbal abuse, excessive workload, and hostile work environments. International labor conventions classify such behavior as discrimination, yet many women endure these challenges silently.

## WORK-LIFE IMBALANCE AND MENTAL HEALTH

Balancing career and family obligations is a major stressor for working women. Over half report difficulty concentrating at work due to family-related stress, compared to about a third of men. Married working women face immense pressure juggling jobs, household duties, and childcare. Many experience burnout, depression, and anxiety from the “second shift”—unpaid labor at home after work. Few successfully manage both work and family life, with most struggling under chronic stress.

## GENDER STEREOTYPES AND WORKPLACE DISCRIMINATION

Traditional gender norms shape workplace dynamics, associating women with nurturing roles and men with assertiveness. These stereotypes affect hiring, promotions, and leadership perceptions. Women in male-dominated fields face role incongruity bias—where their leadership is seen as less legitimate because it conflicts with feminine stereotypes. Assertive women risk social backlash, while men are praised for similar behavior.

## LEADERSHIP BARRIERS

Women remain underrepresented in leadership due to systemic barriers like the glass ceiling. Female leaders are scrutinized more harshly, and their mistakes are magnified. Women often exhibit transformational leadership—emphasizing collaboration—yet this style is undervalued compared to traditional, authoritative leadership associated with men.

Female entrepreneurs also face bias, as entrepreneurship is stereotypically linked to masculine traits like risk-taking.

## **DECISION-MAKING**

Men are more likely to engage in competitive risk-taking, especially in financial decisions, while women tend to be cautious. This disparity affects career advancement, as high-risk opportunities (e.g., promotions) are often dominated by men. Women may avoid competitive environments due to fear of judgment, limiting their professional growth.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The experiences of working women in Quetta have been extensively studied through multiple scholarly lenses, revealing persistent challenges rooted in socio-cultural norms and institutional structures. Research by Eagly and Karau (2002) demonstrates how gender role stereotypes create a "lack of fit" perception that disadvantages women in professional settings, particularly in conservative regions like Quetta. Studies by Rehman et al. (2019) document how patriarchal values in the region prioritize male employment while restricting women's workforce participation to specific sectors like education and healthcare. Economic analyses by the ILO (2019) reveal significant wage disparities, with women in Quetta earning substantially less than their male counterparts for comparable work, a pattern exacerbated by occupational segregation that channels women into lower-paying informal sector jobs. Workplace harassment emerges as a critical concern in multiple studies (UN Women, 2021), with researchers noting inadequate legal protections and reporting mechanisms that leave many women vulnerable to abuse. The work-life balance challenge is particularly acute in Quetta, as shown by Allen et al. (2000), where women typically bear primary responsibility for household management and caregiving alongside their professional duties, with limited institutional support. Transportation infrastructure presents another significant barrier, with World Bank (2020) studies highlighting how safety concerns and limited mobility options restrict women's access to employment opportunities across the city. Intersectional analyses following Crenshaw's (1989) framework reveal how these challenges are compounded for certain groups, including married women, mothers, and those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, who face multiple layers of disadvantage. Research by Hochschild (1989) on the "second shift" phenomenon finds particular resonance in Quetta's context, where cultural expectations place disproportionate domestic burdens on working women. Affirmative action measures like employment quotas have shown mixed results according to Rudman's (1998) studies, sometimes generating resentment or backlash despite increasing women's representation in certain sectors. Kabeer's (2015) work on gender and social norms helps explain the persistent resistance to women's workforce participation in Quetta's traditional social fabric. Institutional factors including workplace policies, access to professional development, and mentorship opportunities emerge as important mediators in studies by Eagly and Koenig (2021), who note their significant impact on women's career trajectories. Qualitative research by local scholars (Ali et al., 2018) documents how women in Quetta navigate these constraints through various strategies, from relying on family support networks to carefully managing their professional identities in male-dominated workplaces. The urban-tribal dynamics of Quetta create unique patterns of gender inequality, as shown in comparative study by Sadaquat (2011), differing from those observed in other urban centers. Recent work by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (2020) highlights how security concerns and conservative interpretations of gender roles further constrain women's mobility and employment options in the region. Research on organizational

culture by Zenger and Folkman (2019) reveals persistent biases in leadership perceptions that disadvantage women professionals in Quetta's workplaces. Studies of work-family conflict Greenhaus and Beutell, (1985) demonstrate how the lack of supportive policies exacerbates stress and limits career progression for working mothers. The growing presence of women in professional fields suggests gradual change, but as Parker and Funk's (2017) surveys show, significant gaps remain in leadership representation and pay equity. Institutional ethnographies by Bashir and Akhtar (2021) document how workplace environments in Quetta often fail to accommodate women's specific needs, from maternity provisions to harassment protections. Comparative analyses (World Economic Forum, 2021) position Quetta's gender disparities within broader national and regional patterns, while highlighting local particularities. Scholarship on gender and development (Benería et al., 2015) emphasizes how economic empowerment programs in Quetta have achieved limited success due to cultural resistance. Research on commuting patterns reveals how transportation barriers disproportionately affect women's employment opportunities in the city. Studies of organizational behavior (Aslam & Zubair, 2020). Heilman, (2012) demonstrate how gender stereotypes influence performance evaluations and promotion decisions in Quetta's workplaces. The psychological impacts of workplace discrimination are documented in mental health studies (Alves et al., 2021), showing higher stress levels among working women in the region. Research on policy implementation explains the gap between formal gender equality measures and their practical effectiveness in Quetta's institutional context (Dobbin, 2009). Ethnographic work by local researchers provides nuanced understanding of how women negotiate professional identities within Quetta's cultural constraints (Ahmed, 2022). Longitudinal studies would be valuable to assess whether incremental changes observed in recent years represent durable progress or temporary fluctuations. This comprehensive body of research underscores the need for multifaceted interventions addressing both structural and cultural dimensions of gender inequality in Quetta's workforce.

## OBJECTIVES

1. To analyze the effects of cultural norms and values on women's involvement in the workforce.
2. To find out how employed women handle the responsibilities of both childcare and employment.
3. To explore how gender assumptions and prejudices affect women's chances for career advancement.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research adopts a mix method approach to examine the performance and problems faced by working women in Quetta, Balochistan. The design allows for an in-depth understanding of the socio-cultural and institutional contexts that shape women's professional experiences in the city. Given the sensitivity and complexity of gender issues in conservative societies, mix method was most appropriate for capturing the nuanced perspectives and lived experiences of women in the workforce. 150 Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure representation across different age groups, marital statuses, educational backgrounds, and job types. The inclusion criteria required that participants be currently employed in Quetta and have at least one year of work experience. Survey questionnaires were designed to gather information on workplace conditions, performance challenges, social support systems, work-life balance, and experiences of discrimination or harassment. The interviews aimed to provide deeper

insight into the emotional, cultural, and psychological aspects of being a working woman in Quetta. The study further incorporated secondary data sources such as government reports, NGO publications, academic journal articles, and relevant policy documents. These sources provided contextual background and supported triangulation of findings. This methodology not only allowed for a rich understanding of the challenges faced by working women in Quetta but also provided evidence-based insights that could inform policy and practice aimed at improving workplace conditions and performance outcomes for women.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

The study's findings reveal significant insights into the challenges and experiences of working women in Quetta across multiple dimensions. Quantitative and qualitative data analysis provides a comprehensive understanding of the structural, cultural, and institutional barriers they face.

### **DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS**

#### **AGE OF THE RESPONDENTS**

The age distribution of respondents significantly influences their sociological behavior and learning patterns. Data collected through in-person interviews revealed that 43% of respondents were aged up to 30 years, followed by 33% in the 31–40 years category. Meanwhile, 16% fell within the 41–50 years age group, indicating a predominantly younger to middle-aged sample.

#### **EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF THE RESPONDENTS**

Education plays a crucial role in shaping awareness and behavioral changes. The study found that 56% of respondents were graduates, while 26% had intermediate-level education. A smaller proportion held higher qualifications, with 11% possessing an M.Phil./PhD and only 7% having a matriculation degree.

#### **DESIGNATIONS OF THE RESPONDENTS**

The research included working women from diverse professional roles to ensure comprehensive insights. Findings showed that 34% of respondents were in BPS 1–11, 49% in BPS 12–16, and 17% in BPS 17 and above, reflecting varied hierarchical representation.

#### **FAMILY SYSTEM OF THE RESPONDENTS**

Family structure impacts working women's experiences, with 63% residing in joint families and 37% in nuclear families. This distinction helps assess how familial support or constraints influence their professional lives.

#### **MONTHLY INCOME OF THE RESPONDENTS**

Income levels varied significantly, with 63% earning over PKR 61,000 monthly. Meanwhile, 15% fell in the PKR 41,000–60,000 range, 12% earned PKR 21,000–40,000, and 10% had incomes below PKR 20,000, highlighting economic disparities.

#### **MARITAL STATUS OF THE RESPONDENTS**

Marital status analysis revealed that 52% of respondents were married, while 30% were single. The remaining included widowed (6%), divorced (5%), and separated (7%) individuals, offering diverse perspectives on work-life challenges.

#### **WORKING EXPERIENCE OF THE RESPONDENTS**

Professional experience varied, with 41% having 6–10 years of experience, 26% exceeding 10 years, and 19% in the 1–5 years range. Only 14% had less than a year's experience, ensuring well-rounded insights.



RESPONDENTS' PURPOSE OF DOING JOB

Motivations for employment differed: 51% cited family support as their primary reason, 31% worked due to financial necessity, and 14% pursued career aspirations. The remaining 4% had other unspecified reasons, reflecting varied personal and economic drivers. This demographic breakdown provides a clear understanding of the respondent profile, aiding in the interpretation of research

Table. No.	S. No.	Option	Frequency	Percent%	Cumulative Percent%
Table 1	1	Up to 30 years	65	43.3	43.3
	2	31 to 40 years	50	33.3	76.7
	3	41 to 50 years	24	16.0	92.7
	4	Above 50 years	12	8.0	100.0
	Total		150	100.0	100.0
Table 2	1	Matriculation	11	7.3	7.3
	2	Intermediate	39	26.0	33.3
	3	Graduate	84	56.0	89.3
	4	M.Phil./PhD	16	10.7	100.0
	Total		150	100.0	100.0
Table 3	1	BPS 1-11	51	34.0	34.0
	2	BPS 12-16	74	49.3	83.3
	3	BPS 17 and above	25	16.7	100.0
	Total		150	100.0	100.0
Table 4	1	Joint Family	94	62.7	62.7
	2	Nuclear Family	56	37.3	100.0
	Total		150	100.0	100.0
Table 5	1	Up to 20,000 rupees	15	10.0	10.0
	2	21,000 to 40,000 rupees	18	12.0	22.0
	3	41,000 to 60,000 rupees	23	15.3	37.3
	4	Above 61,000 rupees	94	62.7	100.0
	Total		150	100.0	100.0
Table 6	1	Married	78	52.0	52.0
	2	Single	45	30.0	82.0
	3	Separated	11	7.3	89.3
	4	Widowed	9	6.0	95.3
	5	Divorced	7	4.7	100.0
	Total		150	100.0	100.0
Table 7	1	Less than 1 year	21	14.0	14.0
	2	1 to 5 years	28	18.7	32.7
	3	6 to 10 years	61	40.7	73.3
	4	More than 10 years	40	26.7	100.0
	Total		150	100.0	100.0
Table 8	1	Financial Need	47	31.3	31.3



2	Family Support	76	50.7	82.0
3	Career Aspirations	21	14.0	96.0
4	Other	6	4.0	100.0
Total		150	100.0	100.0

SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES

Working women in Quetta face numerous obstacles that hinder their professional growth and well-being. Many lack awareness of their workplace rights and have limited access to skill development programs, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation. Economic challenges, such as low wages and insufficient benefits, further discourage workforce participation. Sociocultural barriers, including gender discrimination and restrictive norms, limit opportunities for career advancement. Additionally, safety concerns in public and professional spaces create further reluctance among women to join or remain in the workforce.

To address the most significant challenge 150 respondents were asked as TABLE 13 includes their answers, systemic reforms are needed. Improving workplace conditions—such as ensuring fair pay, safe environments, and career growth opportunities—can encourage greater participation. Empowering women through education, vocational training, and leadership programs can enhance their professional capabilities. Stronger enforcement of labor laws and anti-discrimination policies is essential to protect their rights. Additionally, community awareness campaigns can help shift societal attitudes and foster a more inclusive work culture. By addressing these structural and cultural barriers, Quetta can unlock the full potential of its female workforce, contributing to broader economic and social progress

TABLE 13: PERCEPTION ABOUT THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGE FACED BY WORKING WOMEN

S. No.	Option	Frequency	Percent%	Cumulative Percent%
1	Societal Pressures	63	42.0	42.0
2	Wage Discrepancy	27	18.0	60.0
3	Harassment/Discrimination	40	26.7	86.7
4	Lack of Professional Opportunities	13	8.7	95.3
5	Transportation Issues	7	4.7	100.0
Total		150	100.0	100.0

PERFORMANCE OF WORKING WOMEN

The results of the research show that a complex interaction of several factors shapes the experiences and difficulties faced by working women in Quetta. Some women said they were happy with their professions, pointing to advantages like personal fulfillment and financial independence, but a sizable percentage said they faced ongoing challenges. Many women felt underappreciated or passed over for advancements, and discrimination and bias—which are typically subtle but widespread—were commonly acknowledged. Besides, finding a work-life balance became a crucial problem, especially for people balancing demanding jobs and family obligations. These issues were made worse by the absence of suitable childcare facilities and nurturing family structures, which made it harder for women to succeed in the workplace.

Despite these challenges, a few women shared positive experiences, emphasizing understanding bosses and helpful coworkers as important components of their job happiness. Nonetheless, the research' main topic emphasizes how societal norms and structural impediments still impede the advancement and general well-being of working women in Quetta. These obstacles, which restrict women's job advancement chances, are firmly anchored in institutional flaws and cultural norms. The survey also clarifies the particular difficulties that women in Quetta encounter, including a lack of gender-sensitive rules, harassment at work, and restricted access to secure transportation. The socioeconomic circumstances of the area exacerbate these problems by frequently limiting women's access to professional training and education.

The results highlight how urgently these issues require focused interventions and legislative changes. The employment climate for women may be greatly enhanced, for example, by enacting gender-neutral regulations, guaranteeing equal compensation for equal labor, and instituting family-friendly policies like flexible work schedules and maternal leave. Additionally, establishing workplaces free from harassment and offering reasonably priced childcare will lessen some of the stress that working mothers experience. Since cultural changes are necessary for long-term improvement, the study also emphasizes the significance of increasing awareness and altering society views toward working women. Striking a healthy work-life balance was a major obstacle for Quetta's working women, especially those with family obligations. The challenge of juggling hard jobs with childcare and domestic responsibilities was mentioned by many respondents. This problem is made worse by a lack of adequate childcare services and supporting family structures, which puts further strain on working women. Women's capacity to succeed in their occupations is restricted by traditional societal assumptions that they should handle household chores, which exacerbate these systemic issues.

A thorough analysis of these conclusions is provided by the statistical data gathered through questionnaires and displayed in the graphs. Each figure provides a visual depiction of the answers and relates to a particular questionnaire question. For instance, one graph would show the proportion of women who said they had encountered discrimination at work, and another might show the percentage of women who said their employers supported them. These graphs offer a thorough summary of the experience and problems faced by working women in Quetta in addition to validating the qualitative findings. The study provides a comprehensive grasp of the problems at hand by fusing qualitative and quantitative data, opening the door for well-informed and practical solutions that will empower working women in the area. As the findings from the respondents are shown in **TABLE 18: PERCEPTION ABOUT FEELING OBLIGATED TO PERFORM BETTER DUE TO QUOTA SYSTEM**

S. No.	Option	Frequency	Percent%	Cumulative Percent%
1	Yes	77	51.3	51.3
2	No	54	36.0	87.3
3	Sometimes	19	12.7	100.0
Total		150	100.0	100.0

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research emphasizes performance and problems working women in Quetta a city where women represent a substantial portion of the population. This highlights their considerable potential for contributing to Quetta's development across various sectors. However, despite their potential impact, gender inequality persists and acts as a

discouraging factor for women in Quetta. This inequality can manifest in limited access to education and training, discriminatory hiring practices, unequal pay, restricted career advancement, and the disproportionate burden of balancing work and family responsibilities. The importance of societal and familial acceptance in supporting and encouraging women's participation in Quetta's workforce. Cultural norms and traditional expectations in Quetta can create barriers, limiting women's mobility, autonomy, and access to employment. When families and communities in Quetta embrace and value women's contributions outside the home, it fosters a more supportive environment for them to pursue education, training, and careers. This support includes sharing household responsibilities and challenging restrictive gender stereotypes prevalent in Quetta.

It argues that empowering Quetta's women through legislative, administrative, social, political, and economic means is essential for the city's progress and development. This requires a multifaceted approach with interventions at various levels. Legislative measures, such as anti-discrimination laws and equal pay policies, can establish a legal framework for gender equality in Quetta. Administrative actions, like implementing gender-sensitive workplace policies and promoting women's representation in decision-making positions within Quetta's institutions, are crucial. Social initiatives, including awareness campaigns and educational programs tailored to Quetta's context, can challenge harmful stereotypes. Political empowerment, through increased representation in Quetta's governance, ensures women's voices are heard. Economic empowerment, by providing access to financial resources, training, and entrepreneurship opportunities in Quetta, can enhance women's economic independence.

By taking these steps, Quetta can ensure that a significant portion of its population contributes to its cultural, physical, and economic growth. Fully integrating women into Quetta's workforce and society unleashes their potential to drive innovation, productivity, and economic prosperity. It also enriches Quetta's cultural landscape by bringing diverse perspectives. Furthermore, women's empowerment positively impacts the well-being of families and communities in Quetta, as women often play vital roles in healthcare, nutrition, and education. Ultimately, investing in women's empowerment is an investment in Quetta's overall development and progress.

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