



GENDER-BASED CHALLENGES IN CAREER PROGRESSION FOR WOMEN IN PUBLIC SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

This study delves deeply into the pervasive and persistent gender disparities that act as significant impediments to the career development of women within the public education sector in Pakistan. This study shed light on the diverse challenges that hinder women's progression, encompassing aspects such as limited access to professional development opportunities, the prevailing workplace culture, the delicate balance between work and personal life, and the impact of existing promotional policies. The study applied a qualitative research approach, and data was gathered through semi-structured interviews conducted with senior-level management from higher education institutions in Pakistan's public sector. The obtained data was analysed through NVivo 12 software. The study has found that multifaced gender disparities persist in women's career development, including structural preferences for men in leadership roles, discriminatory hiring practices, and limited training opportunities for women. Workplace culture perpetuates gender biases, creating hostile environments that undervalue and exclude female professionals. Gender-specific promotional policies disadvantage women, perpetuate inequalities, and hinder career development. Perceptions of leadership and authority reinforce stereotypes of women's incompetence in authoritative roles, further marginalizing their opportunities for progression. This study contributed meaningfully to the broader discourse on gender equality in the professional landscape, addressing challenges. Stakeholders can use this as a reference within higher education institutions and collaboratively strive towards fostering an environment characterized by equality, support, and opportunity, thereby facilitating the professional growth and development of women across all echelons of the public education sector.

Keywords: *Gender Disparities; Career Development; Obstacles; Workplace Culture*