



**FORMAN  
CHRISTIAN  
COLLEGE**  
(A CHARTERED UNIVERSITY)

## **Challenges Faced by the Male Garment Factory Workers**

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SOCL 499: Final Year Independent Research Project 2024

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## Table of Content

<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Acknowledgment.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>5</b>
Aim of Study.....	6
Research Objectives.....	7
Research Questions.....	7
Significance of Study.....	7
<b>Literature Review.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Theoretical Framework.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Methodology.....</b>	<b>12</b>
Research Design.....	12
Conceptualization and Operationalization.....	12
Impact on Workers.....	12
Population.....	12
Sampling Design.....	12
Data Collection.....	13
Ethics.....	13
Data Analysis.....	13
<b>Findings.....</b>	<b>15</b>
Gender-Based Discrimination in Task Assignment.....	16
Limited Opportunities for Career Advancement.....	18
Wage and Compensation Discrepancies.....	20
<b>Discussion.....</b>	<b>24</b>
Limitations.....	26
<b>Recommendations.....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>References.....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Appendix A: Informed Consent Letter.....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Appendix C: IRB Form.....</b>	<b>34</b>

## **Abstract**

The research provides insight into the unique barriers male employees confront in Sialkot-based apparel workplaces, addressing important issues of recruitment, income differences and promotion prospects. The research investigates how gender can affect the experiences of male employees in this sector, as there is a lack of literature regarding what barriers to career advancement and notions of workplace equity, professional growth is existent for male employees. The research used exploratory descriptive design to explore contextual particularities on how male workers experience workplace problems in Sialkot, Pakistan garment factories. Of the 9 participants purposively sampled were male workers in garment factories. The participants' data was collected using semi-structured interview guide. In general, the results from this study demonstrate ongoing gender-based discrimination across low-skilled industries evidenced by limited advancement opportunities, wage gaps and uneven distribution of tasks. However, wage disparities still exist in the male-cantered labour market because unskilled workers are often paid low wages. Furthermore, promotion process has been enriched with bias and opacity that lock out the talented but overlooked male employees from career advancement. Taken together, these changes point to the imperative need for comprehensive changes on the current recruitment policies, wages policies, and career paths for the promotion of relative more Male garment workers in the existing generic worker friendly employment environment. If the above structural problems are addressed, the resultant greater job satisfaction will result in decreased turnover and equitable treatment of all jobs.

*Keywords: male workers, wage disparities, garment factories, gender discrimination*

## **Acknowledgment**

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Aaisha Amjad, for her invaluable guidance, support, and encouragement throughout the course of this study. Her insightful feedback and constructive criticism have greatly enhanced the quality of this research. I also wish to extend my heartfelt thanks to Dr. Sara Rizvi Jafri, the Head of Department, for her continuous support and for fostering an environment conducive to academic growth. This study would not have been possible without their mentorship.

## **Introduction**

Challenges in the garment industry are a severe issue that significantly affects the workforce. Most workers worldwide are women, particularly in the global south where the garment industry employs several workers. Unfortunately, women are often subjected to gender-based exploitation. These challenges include sexual harassment, unequal pay, limited opportunities for advancement, and restricted access to benefits like maternity leave. Nevertheless, regardless of gender, all employees in the apparel industry are negatively impacted by workplace challenges in a variety of ways (Ahmed and Khan, 2018). Findings of several studies reveal that male workers in garment factories also encounter a range of unique challenges that stem from deep-rooted societal norms, systemic discrimination, and industry-specific practices (Abughattas, 2016). While the garment industry has traditionally been associated with female employment, men who enter the sector face significant hurdles that affect their career trajectories, job satisfaction, and financial stability. These challenges mostly include biased hiring practices, unequal pay structures, limited career advancement opportunities, and pervasive stereotypes, all of which create a complex web of barriers to their professional growth and overall well-being (Ahmed and Khan, 2018).

A serious issue that threatens the well-being of male garment factory workers is discrimination in the recruitment process. The study found out that the garment industry particularly has a bias for female employees hires based on set gendered beliefs about their work attitude and ability as well as domestically appropriate skills. Employers generally predict that female workers are more submissive and loyal and will probably be more responsible and punctual than male workers for tasks like sewing or checking quality (Afzal et al., 2015). The above explained gender-based discrimination leaves men with very little marketable employment opportunities and restricts them to limited better paid or in some circumstances, bars them from being employed at all. As a result, male workers struggle to

secure stable employment and are often overlooked for positions for which they are qualified (Asad and Khan, 2020).

Besides the discrimination in hiring, the males often at work are paid lower wages and treated unfairly. The belief that assignments are more suited to female workers than male workers mainly resulted in men being paid a reduced wage for comparable work (Alam et al., 2021). Gender pay discrimination does not only discriminates against the earning capacity of male workforce but also widens the gap of economic disparity among male employees.

Another challenge is the stiff climbing of the career ladder for men in the garment factories. Although it is possible for women in the workplace to take advantage of equal opportunity efforts to overcome the discrimination of women, men are in turn excluded from discussions about workplace equality. In this way, they may face other obstacles such as promotions. Sexism promotes inequality that acts as a barrier towards promoting men in the sector bottom.

In view of such challenges, it is required to carry out a research study that points towards the plight of male garment workers in Pakistan. That sort of research can help to gain a broader picture of the challenges that they experience in terms of promotion, equal pay, and opportunities in the workplace. By showing these challenges faced by male workers in the garment sector, the policymakers and industry leaders can look into ways of catalysing the interventions in that way to ensure capability, equity and productivity within the garment industry in Pakistan.

### **Aim of Study**

The primary research question is to examine the different forms of oppression of male workers in the garment industry in Sialkot; pay discrimination, restricted promotion opportunities and differential treatment and remuneration because of receiving benefits lower than that of female employees.

## **Research Objectives**

This qualitative study aims at exploring influence of gender role on male worker employed in female dominated industries of Sialkot garment factories, particularly exploring the discriminative experiences of the male workers with regards career mobility, gender equality, and expectation discrepancy.

## **Research Questions**

The research questions for this study are as follows:

1. What are the workplace challenges faced by the male workers in garment factories in Sialkot, Pakistan?
2. How do gender roles and biases within the predominantly female workforce of garment factories in Sialkot, Pakistan, affect male workers' opportunities for career advancement and workplace equity?
- 3.

## **Significance of Study**

This study is relevant as it brings into an equally relevant focus hitherto unnoticed and least researched issues related to the male employees in the garment sector with specific context to Sialkot, Pakistan. In doing so, the study aims to fill the existing research gaps regarding the problems that impact the occupation advancement, workplace equity and staff learning for male employees in this field of work through interrogating how masculinities and the stereotype associated with it. The research provides relevant information to policymakers and organisations to address an enhanced equality and policies to include the rights of the genders and a suitable workplace environment to professionals without discrimination outcomes.

## Literature Review

Duties at the workplace have been a concern in the garment industry especially where situations like in Sialkot, Pakistan affects employment opportunities, wages and parity and career progress. The reviewed literature discusses various angles of this matter, including the recruitment process, wages, and promotion opportunities as well as the challenges faced by any worker.

In more detail, the study revealed that male workers in garment factories are remunerated differently. It had remained to be one of the largest barriers to career mobility for male workers for a long time. Research shows that it is yet a pipe dream when it comes to most of the male employees to receive the equal remuneration they deserve more so when they engage in similar assignments like the female counterparts. We have observed the male employees are mostly engaged in the more mechanical operations as compared to the women employees who are paid more remuneration despite doing less work. A study shows that the employers' policies of cost-cutting persist with unfair gender wage discrimination against men as they are paid less than women (Anner 2020). Moreover, the employees have average or low awareness of wage discrimination, thus are vulnerable to exploitation and abuses (ILO, 2020).

Another regularly recorded problem is that senior male staff are paid less than females even though men take more dangerous positions with higher physical demand and extended hours of work. A wage discrimination study in the garment industry shows that even though men are assigned tasks that require strength, they do not receive any fair compensation for doing arduous jobs. Moreover, the wage structure fails again a number of issues including a lack of clear procedures in determining wage adjustments making the distribution of income between male and female workers in the country uneven as noted by the (ILO, 2016).



Regarding employment opportunities, men in the garment industry continue to suffer from poor promotion prospects, not least because of the prevailing cultures regarding the roles assigned to males in this line of work. Men are mostly deployed to undertake manual, strenuous jobs at the operational floor, instead of being promoted to administration, training and other senior positions, which reduces their chances of career progression and denies them a chance at training (Human Rights Watch, 2018). Furthermore, Mr. Maguire weighs that there's low possibility of a promotion or career ladder progress which results to majority of the men getting posted to dead-end jobs (Kabeer, 2020). The jobs available in the garment industry are clearly compartmentalized according to roles that are deemed appropriate for women in various organizations making light work appropriate for women. Hence male employees are confined to low ranked occupations and due to lack of prospect for promotion they tend to stay ingrates in low job satisfaction and higher turnover rate prevail among the male employees (Hossain et al., 2018).

These issues are still hot and painful; therefore, male workers in the garment industry also become victims of harassment. Female workers remain the primary targets of harassment, but males are also victims of verbal and coercion in high demand settings. From the studies, verbal harassment is prominently observed when companies are at their peak production seasons of the year, it endangers all employees of the factory, pointing that many male employees are subjected to physically strenuous work without protective gear (Mishra, 2017).

Employment quotas and gender disparity are traditionally and commonly present in most of the garment factories where many times the quota hampers the male and female workers. Studies always reveal that male employees are discriminated against in terms of categories of works given, salaries, and opportunities for promotions (Human Rights Watch, 2018). According to the International Labor Organization ILO (2016) it is clear that they indicate

that the differences are entrenched in social and cultural beliefs, regarding appropriate roles of women and men in relation to work. Such rates bring out injustices in equality of opportunities which in turn reinstate the circle of discrimination.

A variety of problems affecting male workers in Sialkot textile city of Pakistan have been highlighted by the literature review including factors relating to recruitment, wages, and promotion. In order to respond to such questions, consistently developed agendas that support managerial diversity and equality, and work against conventional gender roles, as well as type of organizational policies preventing any discrimination whichever sex an employee belongs to, must be put into use.

## Theoretical Framework

These problems can be explained by using the Dual Labor Market Theory, according to which the labor market is divided into primary and secondary parts (Ashton & Maguire, 1984). The core human capital argument in the context of male workers in the garment industry involves prevailing evidence that they are largely employed in the secondary labor market jobs which are low paid, offer little chances of upward mobility and job insecurity. On the other hand, the primary sector provides better employment opportunities, quick promotion and many career openings but the question is male workers cannot apply for these jobs because here they are discriminated in terms of employment as well as then predicament of the industry itself do not support their enforcement.

The measures like poor training, bigotry, poor employee relations and other market factors from affecting male employees and resulting in low-wage, dead-end jobs and most male employees in garment industries of Sialkot are also bound to such jobs. Therefore, men stay stuck in the lower paid secondary jobs apparently, they cannot cross the pathways that hinder them from getting better jobs. According to this theory, no matter how young and skilled the male employee is, he is likely to undergo low productive job profiles with low chances of promotion within the garment industry (Uys & Blaauw, 2006). Such segmentation is usually associated with social and economic factors, high levels of illiteracy, the scarcity or complete absence of training programs, instability and the absence or weakness of workers' unions, and legislation that does not exist or does not support workers' rights or equal opportunities.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

The study employed an exploratory descriptive design aimed at identifying the experiences of male workers regarding workplace issues in garment factories located in Sialkot, Pakistan. To gather more comprehensive and detailed data, in-depth interviews were conducted with 9 male workers to gain insights into their challenges and perspectives on the work environment.

### **Conceptualization and Operationalization**

#### **Impact on Workers**

In addition, the present study is also interested in examining the job insecurity, low wage, and working condition satisfaction of the workers, and the factors that predispose male workers in garment factories to unique challenges at the workplace. Some of the issues affecting the garment factories are related to employment securities; wages and promotions where many workers are trapped by structural impediments (Khan et al., 2015).

The research, therefore, draws attention towards the factors such as gender relations, managerial prejudices and structural inequalities contributing to the challenges of male workers in garment factories.

#### **Population**

The population of the study was the male workers of all the garment factories in Sialkot.

#### **Sampling Design**

Purposive sampling technique was used to choose 9 male workers in garment factories. They hold job positions like production worker, warehouse staff, and maintenance

technicians. Selected workers had varied characteristics in terms of working experience, age and job position.

### **Data Collection**

Semi-structured interview guide was used to collect data from the participants (Appendix B). Participants were contacted by the researcher to explore their workplace experiences in the garment factories.

### ***Ethics***

In qualitative research, ethics are more significant than in quantitative research especially if conducting research on sensitive topics such as discrimination at workplace. Participants' permission needs to be sought, participants' information must be kept secret, and the research should not harm or take advantage of the participants. Permission from the IRB was obtained to ensure that all requirements of ethical conduct were met. In this study, ethical considerations were prioritized to protect the rights and well-being of male garment workers. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring they were fully aware of the study's purpose, their role, and their right to confidentiality (Appendix A). Participants were assured that their involvement was voluntary, and they could withdraw at any time without consequence. To maintain privacy, personal information and responses were anonymized, and data was stored securely.

### ***Data Analysis***

This study employed thematic analysis as the primary method for analysing qualitative data, focusing on identifying patterns, themes, and meanings within the collected information. To conduct the analysis, the researcher reviewed the interview transcriptions and sorted the data written in the documents in a stepwise manner to determine the connections and factors. To begin with, a deductive method was employed to form operational themes consistent with the objectives of the study to offer a systematic evaluation of the data

collected. This was followed by an inductive analysis where the emerged themes identified were labelled and described to gain an adequate appreciation of the contested concepts.

The method that enabled theme development in the current study was the Thematic Analysis process described by Clark and Braun (2013). This included getting to know the data, coding the data, generating potential themes, reviewing and refining these themes, defining and naming the themes, and writing up the findings in the specific contexts of gender discrimination and its impact on male workers in the garments sector. This style of data analysis was helpful in elaborating not only the objective results of the research, but also newly identified factors constituting the concept of workplace challenges for male workers.

## Findings

This research intends to study the problem enabling this situation through analytical reflection with regard to the above framework, the following research questions have been developed: Current approaches to employment; Wages differentials; provisions of upward mobility for males working for the garment industry of Sialkot, Pakistan. The work adopted an exploratory descriptive research design which aimed at determining the impression of nine male workers on all matters occurring in garment factories in Sialkot, Pakistan. The socio demographic of the participants are shown in Table 1 below. The overall findings of the study are presented in the form of following themes:

1. Gender-Based Discrimination in Task Assignment
2. Limited Opportunities for Career Advancement
3. Wage and Compensation Discrepancies

**Table 1**

*Demographic characteristics for Male Factory Workers*

<b>Demographic Variable</b>	<b>Number of Workers (n)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Age Group</b>		
18-25	2	22.2%
26-35	3	33.3%
36-45	2	22.2%
46 and above	2	22.2%
<b>Education Level</b>		
No formal education	2	22.2%
Primary education	3	33.3%
Secondary education	2	22.2%
Higher secondary/Technical Training	2	22.2%
<b>Years of Experience</b>		
0-5 years	3	33.3%
6-10 years	4	44.4%
11 years and above	2	22.2%
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single	5	55.6%
Married	4	44.4%

<b>Monthly Income (PKR)</b>		
10,000-20,000	1	11.1%
20,000-30,000	4	44.4%
30,000 and above	4	44.4%
<b>Type of Employment</b>		
Permanent	3	33.3%
Contractual	4	44.4%
Daily wage	2	22.2%
<b>Primary Role/Job Position</b>		
Machine operator	3	33.3%
Supervisor	2	22.2%
Quality control department	2	22.2%
Maintenance department	2	22.2%
<b>Type of Residence</b>		
Urban	5	55.5%
Rural	4	44.4%

### **Gender-Based Discrimination in Task Assignment**

Gender-based discrimination task assignment is evident in the information revealed by the majority of the participants. It was highlighted by most of the male workers that they were deployed for the tasks like lifting of heavy items and general maintenance services while females were mostly selected for the tasks like sewing and pasting stickers on the clothes. Most of the participants stressed that the tasks assigned to male workers involved more physical strength as compared to the tasks assigned to the female employees. The demands for loading and shifting the items were assigned to men, while women were confined to light production tasks such as sewing or sticker printing due to their assumed physical weakness. Women are always expected to perform less physical work than men even if they both are hired for the same jobs (Adkins, 2001).

The findings of the study also highlighted that men are often typecast into physically demanding tasks, while women are assigned roles requiring fine motor skills. This division of labour, rooted in long-standing gender norms, continues to persist today. The traditional roles that view men as breadwinners and protectors, and women as caregivers and homemakers, largely contribute to this gendered allocation of tasks (Connell, 2005). These historical norms



are especially significant in industries where physical labour is paramount, yet they continue to shape modern workplaces in ways that affect both men and women (Acker, 2006). One male participant noted,

"It's frustrating because even though we're capable of doing all kinds of tasks, we're always pushed into the harder, more labour-intensive jobs, while women are given the easier, less strenuous ones."

Further analysis by Channar (2010) highlights the concept of "job queues," where women are typically assigned subordinate roles regardless of the integrated male-female workforce. These roles are often less challenging and offer fewer opportunities for career advancement, reflecting deeply ingrained gender biases. Such traditional prejudices are evident in the perception that men are expected to handle more physically demanding tasks, while women are relegated to roles like sewing and printing. One male respondent shared,

"In terms of heavy tasks like loading and lifting, supervisors always rely on us. They assume women won't be able to handle these tasks, so they assign them easier tasks like sewing or printing stickers."

Another respondent noted,

"In the hiring process, both men and women may be considered for the same position, but we end up doing all the work without any excuses."

This underscores the gendered expectations that shape job roles and responsibilities, reinforcing the structural inequalities within the workplace. Acker (2006) argues that organizations inherently perpetuate power imbalances and reinforce women's inferiority. In such environments, tasks are allocated based on assumptions about the inherent abilities of men and women.

Gender stereotyping has historical, cultural, and social biases, specifically in labour-intensive occupations. These biases manifest themselves in assignment delegation among the employees and outcome in discrimination based on gender. This is the case, even when advancement toward gender equality appears to be rising since men and women are perceived and treated differently in many sectors (Khan et al., 2017). Apart from including only the research works that discuss the general impact of any gender differences in tasks and roles, this literature review examines how gender bias contributes to the division of tasks, especially in situations demanding high physical strength. This reinforces the idea that gender stereotypes continue to dictate job roles and opportunities, limiting the professional mobility and fair treatment of workers in the garment industry.

Schilt (2006) established that from the extent to which males were perceived in terms of their ability to perform physical work, sexually transitioned male to female participants gained enhanced ability because of assuming the male identity. It was not because they were physically less capable, but because the gender of the subjects was more appropriately attuned to physical prowess. This means that even when it comes to estimating physical capabilities gender norms play a huge role than the actual physical strength that may exist between males and females. One of the participants of the study revealed,

"When I transitioned, I was suddenly seen as more capable of handling tough tasks, it's not that I became stronger, but now my ability to lift and move things was taken more seriously, just because I was presenting as male."

### **Limited Opportunities for Career Advancement:**

It is particularly common among male workers to voice complaints about unfavourable employment conditions, such as lack of promotion and career advancement. Many argue that top positions are scarce and are typically offered to individuals with

connections in the administrative systems. This perception has garnered attention in organizational studies, especially regarding the concept of low mobility, particularly among men. Research has shown that many employees find themselves locked out of promotions, as promotion decisions often do not solely depend on individual performance but are influenced by office politics. Most literature on career advancement identifies politics as a significant barrier, where employees with more connections, cronies, or favour from higher-ups are more likely to be promoted. This view is echoed by a respondent, who shared that "no good terms with administration and no reference" limit one's chances of advancing up the promotional ladder (Ferris et al., 2005). One of the participants said,

“I have no good terms with anyone in the administration. Nobody is familiar to me. I work hard but do not get acknowledgement or promotion. The men like me keep working in the same position for several years. Promotions are fixed for those who have reference or good ties with the administration”.

Such employees seem to be stuck at the working posts many employees often feel left alone or locked at their workplace. People often fail to understand that promotions are done on merit basis, and it is often proved wrong by acts of favouritism and discrimination. It clearly depicts that many employers agreed with the opinion stating that the most important thing is whom they know.

Research shows that those organizations that boast of meritocracy, are usually characterized by a very large distance between work input and organizational reward. For example, such a state makes people passive and become demotivated because most workers can figure out that their labour does not bring them any benefits (Zenger & Folkman, 2019). One respondent expressed,

"I work overtime, take on extra tasks, but nothing changes. It feels like the harder I work, the further I am from getting ahead. It's demotivating when you see others being promoted because of who they know, not what they do."

It was highlighted that gender occupied an important place in promotion activities, and women clerical employees are more suitable for promotion as managers than male employees. Men, on the other hand, are forced to a stereotype of low, slow rising jobs, particularly where the work involves performance of bodily strength (Ong, 1987). One of the participants said,

"Women are promoted because they are smart and take their responsibilities seriously, while we are seen as less responsible".

Studies also show that gender stereotyping influences the measurement of the performance, thus working male and female employees are not equally regarded according to their abilities and roles. Johnson (2020) reveals that women are often appreciated more for their work ethic, focusing on how hard they work, or how careful they are with details, while men may be rewarded for how much they can achieve, or how eager they are to do so. These outcomes may lead to inequitable promotional probabilities that favour women but retain conventional expectations of duties by gender. As these stereotyped perceptions are carried forward, they have the potential to impact the organizational culture and then affect the decision of granting promotion and managerial positions (Catalyst, 2020).

### **Wage and Compensation Discrepancies**

As stated by the workers, wages are assumed to be aligned to the skills, knowledge, ability and experience of the workers. However, the majority of the workers complained of unequal wages among men and women workers. They further revealed that they work physically harder than women but are paid less than their physical exertion. It also elaborates

how the male employees feel that they are not earning enough money compared to the work they are delivering. One of the participants said,

“In term of salary, apparently women and men are paid equally but in fact men are paid less as compared to female though they do harder work than female.”

In some sectors of garment factories, it is quite evident that men are mostly engaged in those jobs which considerably require physical strength but they still earn less than the women who are occupying managerial or specific specialized positions.

Analysis of wage discrimination based on gender has remained an area of interest in almost all countries' labour markets. While most of the previous research in garment industry focussed on the low wages exploitation of women, the men who perform heavy jobs also express a similar concern on wages (Aguinis et al., 2018) Workers especially the construction crew states that male dominated jobs demand much effort physically, nevertheless these men are paid lower wages than ladies who seem to be doing nothing, yet they are paid equally.

The practice of requiring employees to work extensive overtime hours with little or no additional compensation is a pervasive issue, especially in labor-intensive industries such as garment factories. Despite a high demand for labor, many organizations exploit workers' willingness to work longer hours, often under the pretense of meeting production quotas or deadlines. This practice runs counter to established labor laws, which mandate that employees should receive higher wages for overtime work as a means of fair compensation. These laws are designed to protect workers from exploitation and ensure that extended work hours are acknowledged and rewarded. However, in practice, compliance is inconsistent, leaving many workers vulnerable (Golden & Jorgensen, 2002).

The present research study reveals that most employees, especially those working in the lower paying economies, fail to get the actual extra pay. The failure to compensate

workers for taking such a risk increases financial pressures and impacts worker morale, fatigue and burnout reducing efficiency. One of the participants said:

“I work day and night, sometimes against my will and capacity. The manager often demands extra working hours but hardly pays good amount for it. The amount paid is quite less than the work done as overtime.”

The study also brought out the fact that contracts are often broken with managers pressurizing their employees to work extra hours hence they suffer from high stress levels and a poor working life balance. This is the time when employees are expected to sacrifice their own time for work and do not get a penny for that or a simple ‘thank you’. This facility does not only have negative effects on their psychological health but also aggravates their physical health progressively. This situation is made worse by the fact that extended working hours not only are widespread but are further practiced where they are mandated by supervisors, to the detriment of the general well-being of the workers.

Various prior studies show that many hours worked per day reduces health significantly; stress, fatigue, and deteriorating mental health. It can be Lifelong, with several of the workers suffering from burnout symptoms together with more severe medical conditions such as cardiovascular diseases (Fenwick and Tausig, 2001). When workers are made to work extra hours free without rest, they become easily stressed and often prone to sickness which similarly affects productivity of the company. Such discoveries explain the necessity of organizations to reconsider and control the working environment for employees’ health and well-being.



## Discussion

The present research inquiry unveils the fact that there is a sharp division of work opportunities based on gender equality in employment sectors such as garments manufacturing industry. The female employees are much more likely to be posted to gentle jobs like sewing or placing stickers on machines while male employees are more expected to perform hefty jobs involving their muscles like lifting, equipment among others. It is a carryover of culture and gender politics that imply that because men are physically stronger than women, women should be put in positions that are perceived to be less strenuous. (Acker, 2006) referring to this as a sign of the so-called “gendered organizations” as task assignments are assigned in a way that maintains the stereotypical gender roles for women and at the same time only offer them job offers that “do not have a lot of career mobility”. Furthermore, (Freeman & Katz, 2007) argue that general task assignments by the systemic structure itself prolong the grant of occupational segmentation that undermines women’s general career advancement.

Also, male workers complained of increased dissatisfaction in that there was no movement up the career ladder, they blamed career stagnation in the company to favouritism not performance. The interviews also showed that participants believed promotions are a function of favouritism rather than performance, supporting previous literature on organizational politics. The search conducted by (Ferris et al., 2005) established that networking and relationship with management are more valuable determinants of promotion than the performance.

From the male participants, I have learned that hardworking people are never rewarded because the administrative structure gives promotions to friends. Stereotypes make this worse because when women are employed in clerical jobs, they are deemed more fit for



administration than men who are continually categorized to do strenuous manual work jobs with no real chance of promotion.

Another important concern that occurred was wage and compensation disparities together with other related restraints. First, participants seemed to have an understanding on wage disparity between male and female workers depending on the kind of work they do. Male workers who work physically demanding jobs complain of being paid the same or less than their female counterparts who work fewer demanding jobs. (Heintz, 2006) also believes that wage differences may exist, but most of the time they are not a true representation of difference in labour intensity. This is in line with Benería (2001) who opined that often, like the women, the men are regarded as ‘cheap labour’ even though their jobs physically challenge them. In addition, most employees receive minimal wages, and organizations take advantage of the extra hours their employees work without equal remuneration. According to (Golden and Jorgensen 2002) it is a fair call that adequate remuneration for overtime is needed to maintain organizational commitment; nevertheless, many organizations dodge these standards thereby creating an atmosphere of exploitation among the workers.

Consequently, the present study shows that there is still a consistent weak spot of ‘gendered employment regime’ in occupational-demanding sectors with promotional restrictions, equal or even lower wages, and even work partitions. Regarding these (sometimes) chronic issues, it must be said that every organization should have equal employment opportunity policies, good publicity policies, and promotion criteria, and equal wages for equal work. Besides, law can play a role to ensure that there is enactment of labour laws with regards to prevention of Discrimination of the two sexes. These are the factors that, when controlled, can help to confirm that such industries that are focused on labourers can actually create social justice because every labour is valued irrespective of the gender.

## **Limitations**

Although this study aimed at identifying areas of concern that can hinder the career progression of male garment workers in Sialkot's textile industry by using a qualitative research method of data collection, the following sources of research bias cannot be ruled out. Looking into it, one finds that despite giving comprehensive detailed results that can be described as a thick description, qualitative methods may not easily be generalizable across larger contexts. More so, the voice gathered in the study depends on the participants' beliefs, feelings, and experiences, which makes the study biased. This can however come with an intrinsic weakness of social subjectivity of self-reported data and subjective analysis that may reduce the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the participants may have traded information out of implications of the experience making them keep quiet thus underestimating some of the difficulties or incidences.

## **Recommendations**

Solving the problems that male workers of Sialkot garment industries face, it is suggested that the employers should adopt strong anti-discrimination policies that cover all the aspects of employment, merit and equity-based employment. Task assignments should be redesigned to de-gender formats, though cross-training endeavours should encourage both male and female workers to be apprentices at and engage in various tasks, which will eradicate gender stereotyping in tasks assignments.

Also, factories must also regulate itself as to its policy on extra hours, wage and working conditions, and reduce the stressed and strained working hours in factories for improvement of working conditions. There is a need for leadership, employees' representatives and policymaker cooperation for supporting the work environment, the labour market position and ensuring employees' rights and fair recourse to grievance procedures as well as career advancement and continuous learning.

## Conclusion

This research study explored the challenges faced by male employees in Sialkot's garment industry, focusing on potential discrimination in task assignment, pay disparities, and promotion opportunities. The findings reveal that while male workers may hold certain advantages over their female counterparts, they still face significant barriers shaped by socio-economic factors, education, and social connections. Job acquisition often remains informal, favouring those with established networks and higher socio-economic standing, while lower-level and unskilled male workers struggle with employment insecurity. Although men generally earn more than women, wage differentials exist among male workers based on skill and experience, leaving many unskilled laborers earning inadequate wages. Furthermore, compensation structures often lack transparency, preventing equitable pay even for equal roles.

Promotion opportunities are similarly constrained for male workers, especially those at lower levels. The process can be influenced by biases that favour those with connections or higher educational backgrounds, leaving many qualified individuals unable to advance in their careers. Limited access to training and skill development exacerbates this issue, trapping male workers in low-ranking positions. To improve working conditions, it is essential for the industry to implement fair recruitment and selection processes, offer equitable wages, develop transparent promotion policies, and foster training and development opportunities for male employees.

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## Appendix A: Informed Consent Letter

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Participants,

You are invited to participate in a study titled “Challenges faced by the male garment factory workers.” The study aims to determine major workplace challenges faced by the workers of the garment factory. Your participation will help the researcher to better understand the effects of various concepts like disparity in salary, hiring practices and promotion.

The interview will take approximately 30 to 40 minutes of involvement. You are not pressurized to answer any question, and you can even quite the interview at any time. Researcher will keep your identities confidential and not share them with anyone. Even your answers will be recorded anonymously. After reading the provided information, you consent to participate in this research project by signing this form.

Thank you!

Researcher: Zohaib sharaz

BSc. Hon Student, Department of Sociology, Forman Christian College

21-10956@formanite.fccollege.edu.pk

Signed consent of the participant: \_\_\_\_\_.



**Appendix B: Semi- Structured Interview Guide**

1. How did you manage to get employed at the factory? Reaching that point, I had the following questions:
2. Are the hiring procedures in your factory fair for the applicant or are they discriminating? Why or why not?".
3. Have you noticed any disparity based on gender in getting an employment in your possible factory? If not, what differences have you noticed?"
4. If the hours are fine, how do you feel about the current wages? Are you aware of wage differential by gender in your factory?
5. How frequently does the employer demand an extra shift? Are you paid reasonably enough for the overtime in addition to your standard working hours?"
6. What can you say about the manner through which promotion takes place in your factory? Would you consider your chances of career advancement as either fair or unfair?
7. Is your required training and other training received to sharpen your skills?" I personally asked her: "Do you think this affects your opportunities for a promotion?"
8. In your factory, do you have an impression that male workers experience some types of discrimination?
9. He asked them, 'What do you find most difficult about your work?
10. How do you feel about long-term job advancement possibility in the garment industry? What do you think could improve your chances of progressing?"

**Appendix C: IRB Form**

**FORMAN CHRISTIAN COLLEGE**  
(A CHARTERED UNIVERSITY)

**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD**  
**APPROVAL CERTIFICATE**

IRB Ref: IRB-631/01-2024

Date: 04-06- 2024

Project Title: Challenges Faced by Male Garment Factory Workers

Principal Investigator: Zohaib Seraz

Supervisor: Dr. Jawad Tariq

The Institutional Review Board has examined your project in the IRB meeting held on 04-06-2024 and has approved the proposed study. If during the conduct of your research, any changes occur related to participant risk, study design, confidentiality or consent, or any other change then IRB must be notified immediately.

Please be sure to include the IRB reference number in all correspondence.

Dr. Sharoon Hanook  
Convener-IRB  
Chairperson Department of Statistics  
Forman Christian College  
(A Chartered University)  
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