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Abstract:
Female workforce in the Textile Industry of Pakistan belongs to the lower socio-economic income group. They support their families financially and on average perform well than their male counterparts. In our society, where females are mostly limited to household responsibilities, these females are working pretty well for themselves. Without any assistance from the Government sector, most of them are not even aware of their rights and hence, they are ignored. The objective of this study was to explore the policies and provisions extended by the Private sector and the role of Government in encouraging the Textile sector in Karachi. And to find out how gender-gap, working conditions, demographics and female immobility affects the status of female employment. The research is quantitative, qualitative, descriptive & explorative in nature. With the help of convenience sampling technique, 60 female workers were selected from 2 textile factories in Karachi. A questionnaire was developed in Urdu for the purpose of data collection and General Linear Model has been used to analyze the data.

Key Words: Working conditions, Female employment, Women immobility, Gender pay gap, Public/Private Policies

1. Introduction:
The textile industry contributes around 46% to the total output produced in the country. In Asia, Pakistan is the 8th largest exporter of textile products. It provides employment to 38% of the workforce in the country. However, the proportion of skilled labor is very less as compared to that of unskilled labor and the industry is facing tough competition globally and is passing through a crucial juncture. In Pakistan an estimated 30% of the textile and clothing sector's
workforce, which is 3 million workers, is female. This ratio though higher than the national average of 15% female workers is far lower than other South and Southeast Asian countries. The quantitative distribution of women textile workers among world regions shows a high concentration in Asian countries, with a share of almost 80% in the total number of reported women employees in 1995 (ILO, 2000). Despite a significant expansion of employment opportunities, gender equality in access to the labor market has not yet been achieved in Pakistan, and the same applies to conditions of employment (ILO, 2009). However according to UNDP- Baseline Survey Report (2006): Women have a long term relationship with their co-workers and employers as a result of lower turnover rate. Moreover, women are more punctual and quality conscious than their male counterparts.

**Global Employment Trend and Gender pay-gap:**

According to Ford (2007), women employment and gender pay gap is the product of participation, pay levels and occupational segregation. Female participation in labour market has increased in recent years across the world, including Asia. According to the statistic figure of ILO(2004), little or no change in female participate rate happened in East Asia, and female participate rate in South-East Asia and South Asia increased. Women in South-Korea and Japan earned about 54 and 50% of the respective male rate of pay in 1990. Moreover, women not only earn less than men, they also tend to own fewer assets.

In Japan, as pointed out by Yuasa, the reliance on the internal labour market made the work segmented and women were relegated to lower level jobs. Yukongdi (2005) also find some organizational practices discriminated against women in Thailand. Employers preferred to hire single women, and reserved specific jobs with higher pay for men whom they claimed were more mobile and physically suited for the job. Moreover, women were the first to be laid off during hard times as employers contended that men were the breadwinners.

The data analysis from the KILM (1996 – 2003) concludes that the increases in the gender gaps are, therefore, the result of the worsening. Labour market conditions resulting from the adaptation of a market economy, which have a disproportionate impact on women. An analysis of factors contributing to the gender pay gap between the sexes is a clear negative relationship between the rate of female participation in the labor market and the gender pay gap. In 2007, the
European Commission noted that one consequence of these differences and inequalities that women face in the labor market is the persistent gap between the wages. Women earn on average 15% less than men for each hour worked. A woman still has a significantly higher chance of falling into the lower income category and a significantly lower chance of falling into the high income category than does a man with a similar occupation, employment status tenure.

In developing countries, barriers to formalization need to be reduced to ensure that workers have more opportunities to find decent jobs and be protected by labour market institutions, including social protection measures. ILO (2009). International Journal of Business & Management (2008) argues that the current position of women in the labour market in Asia Pacific countries does not indicate a victory in gender equality. In particular, gender-biased employment legislation may be a strong reason why women have difficulty in moving upward. The impact of employment legislation on women’s career advancement has been limited in Asian countries. In absolute terms (Gendered Labor Markets & Globalization in Asia: 1999) emphasize that the segregation is still high and what is worse, shows little sign of decreasing unlike elsewhere in the world. Women workers are still crowded into a fairly narrow range of occupations even within the export sector, and at the lower end of occupational hierarchies based on pay, status or advancement possibilities. However, while earnings may be higher, working conditions on the global assembly line leave a great deal to be desired. Because the trend was set by EPZs where there are restrictions on freedom of association, workers are rarely able to complain or win redressal of grievances. Women work long hours in cramped, noisy and unsafe conditions, with few breaks, face sexual harassment and violence from male supervisors and co-workers, and are exposed to a range of hazards.

**Trend in Female Employment in Textile Sector of Pakistan:**
Formation of labour unions in textile sector is often discouraged in Pakistan, an ironic reasoning is provided in Market Analysis (2005) that the experiment of nationalization and empowerment of unions did not produce good results. With strengthening of labor unions, and the new legislation the workers started to exercise their rights given in the Industrial laws. Employees reacted to this in several ways. For example to avoid forming of the labor union, the employers would ensure that the number of employees never exceeds the minimum number of workers
required to form unions. Economic Survey (2008-09) reveals that women and young people are disadvantaged segment of society with regard to employment.

The problem is of opportunities; there are fewer incentives for women. Women are considered more apt in the sphere of the home. They are given the status of the home maker and thus are left out of the labor force. Socio Economic Indicators by gender (2005) supports the same concept: Pakistan’s employment structure is heavily male dominated, with at least 80% of the employed labour force comprising of men in each of the provinces. Women’s share in employment has not significantly changed since 1990-91. In a country like Pakistan, the gender question assumes greater relevance as typical social norms and behaviors tend to discriminate against the interests and expectations of women and further reinforce the historical concentration of power. Such behaviors also tend to become a part of the expected social norms and result in gender discrimination in various ways including institutional typifications. Gender Audit (2009)

SDPI (2001) insists that there are no laws that contain explicit provisions for equal remuneration for equal work for women, protection of women from sexual harassment at workplaces, protection of labour rights for domestic workers and protection of labour rights of home based workers. Major barriers responsible for low contribution, women’s immobility, ignorance about opportunities and societal perception of women as lower status dependents. PLFS (2006-7) also stated that, in general, women also have lower wages than men, and their wages increase less over time. This can be explained in part by the large gap in educational attainment of women and men. According to PIDE (1990-91 & 2006-07), Inter-industrial wage differentials get compressed as the years progress excluding Finance and Real Estate which tops the ranking of wage ladder.

**Government Policy on Gender:**

According to the Labour Code of Pakistan (2000) following are the articles and provisions related to labour rights, discrimination and maternity benefits:

According to Article 25: All citizens are equal before law and are entitled to equal protection of law. There shall be no discrimination on the basis of sex alone. Whereas the Article 27 states that:
No citizen otherwise qualified for appointment in the service of Pakistan shall be discriminated against in respect of any such appointment on the ground only of race, religion, caste, sex, residence or place of birth.

Article 37(e) states that the: State shall make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work, ensuring that children and women are not employed in vocations unsuited to their age or sex, and for maternity benefits for women in employment. Moreover Article 38 talks about the well being of the people irrespective of sex, caste, creed or race, by ensuring equitable adjustment of rights between employers and employees. It further focuses on the compulsion of the social security and insurance for all the employees.

Equality and Non-discrimination

Articles 25 and 27 of the Constitution deal with the issues of equality and discrimination and prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, religion, caste, sex, residence or place of birth. The constitution also makes it incumbent upon the state to secure the well-being of the people, irrespective of sex, caste, creed or race and by ensuring equitable adjustment of rights between employers and employees among other things (Article 38). Although Pakistan has ratified both the core conventions related to the issue but has not enacted any law incorporating the provisions of these conventions. Currently, Government is in the process of labor law reform and Employment and Service Conditions Act (draft) has provisions on equal pay for work of equal value. Quota has been fixed for women in the public sector jobs (10%) and they can also compete on the remaining 90% seats. Recently, the government has enacted a new law to make provisions for protection of women against harassment at the workplace. This Act requires all public and private organizations to adopt an internal Code of Conduct and a complain/appeals mechanism aimed at establishing a safe working environment, free of intimidation and abuse, for all working women. It shall establish an Ombudsman at Federal and provincial levels. The law also calls for imposing of fine (unspecified), a part of which will be payable to the complainant. A person committing harassment can also be dismissed/removed from service.

Maternity Benefits:

Maternity leave, under Maternity benefits Ordinance 1958, is also allowed to pregnant women for
a period of 12 weeks with full pay. It is unlawful for an employer to dismiss a women worker who is on maternity leave. The qualifying period for getting this leave is four months of preceding employment with the employer. Maternity benefit and maternity leave of 16 weeks is also provided under the Mines Maternity Benefits Act, 1941(section 5).

In the past years the government has taken many steps to encourage female employment, these include:
• Community Mobilization Project completed in five districts
• Women’s political empowerment through capacity building and institutional strengthening
• Establishment of five new women centers
• IT training for elected women councilors in local Government
• Passage of Women Protection Act
• Approval for 10% quota for women across the board

**National Women Development Policy:**
National Policy for the Development and Empowerment has been developed in 2002. The Policy will serve as a guide for Government and non-governmental organizations and civil society to ensure protection of women rights, promotion of gender balanced society and women s participation in socio-economic development of the country and for large scale dissemination at local, national, international levels. National Policy for the development & empowerment of women (2002).

**The research objectives for the study are as follows:**
• To find out the working conditions, which encourages or discourages female workforce employment in textile units of Karachi
• To find out if there exists any gender pay gap among the female workers and their counterparts
• To find out the level of contribution/ performance of female workforce as compare to their male counterparts globally and in Pakistan as well.
• To explain the limitations, if any of female workforce participation caused by female immobility, work place or policy constraints.
• To discuss the benefits & facilities provided by the Public and Private Sector to the female workforce in textile units in Karachi.

1.1 Problem Statement:
• What is the demographics of the workforce
• What are the factors for immobility for female workforce
• Does gender pay-gap exists in the said sector
• What is the status of female employment locally and globally
• What are the working conditions in which female workforce is employed
• What benefits are they receiving from public and private sector

1.2 Hypothesis:
Ho: Government policies have significant impact on working conditions in textile sector in Karachi

2. Research Methodology:
Research is qualitative in nature and purposive sampling method is used for selecting sub-sample of the population. For which there was a pre-criterion of textile factories, gender and designation. A sample size of 150 female workers, belonging to 3 textile factories located in Karachi was chosen initially. But due to incorporative attitude of the factory’s manager, the actual sample size was reduced to 60 respondents from 2 textile factories. Data was collected by a structured questionnaire, however secondary data is collected to augment the studies. General Linear Model was used to interpret and analyze data through SPSS statistical data management software.

The study is based on Public and Private Policies in Textile sector with respect to female employment. Public sector refers to the Government policies regarding female employment in the Textile sector, whereas the Private sector refers to the Textile factory’s policies/ rules/ regulation/ working conditions regarding female employment in Textile sector. The focus is on exploring private policies in the said sector through exploring working conditions. Two main variables had been identified for the study: Public policies and Working Conditions. These
variables were identified from the Global Employment Trends for Women (2009), ILO and article by: Afia Malik, Demand for textile and clothing exports of Pakistan. Following variables had been chosen in order to define working conditions and to observe the impact, of Government Policies on the working conditions:

- Gender pay gap
- Working environment
- Job-satisfaction
- Managers / Co-workers attitude
- Work experience
- Employment status
- Union labour
- Government Policies
- Industrial/ Labour law
- Women’s immobility (Number of dependents, Marital status)
- Income group

This study is based on two theories, according to the theory of Rae Lesser Blumberg on Gender Stratification (1984), the degree of gender stratification is inversely related to women's economic power to mobilize and conversely, women with less economic power can mobilize more the risk they are being oppressed physically, politically and ideologically. Secondly, Janet Saltzman Chafetz’s Gender Equity Theor states that the gender pay gap is ultimately related to the macro-level division of labor in a society. If this division is gendered—that is, work is defined and distributed based on a person’s sex—males will typically receive more resources than will women, and this material resource advantage will translate into differences in power between men and women at the micro, interpersonal level.

3. Results:
The female workers, being employed in textile factory of Karachi belongs to lower socio-income group, on average have done their matriculation, are single, supporting a family of 5 members, earning modestly between Rs.6,000 – 10,000 and are working on contractual basis. As they are
temporary employees, they do not enjoy complete benefits offered by the Private sector i.e. their respective factories. The factories employees workers mainly on contractual basis, so that they are not liable for any further added benefits which are given for the permanent employees only. These benefits includes: pension, gratuity, maternity leave, day-care, insurance and medical. Such benefits are not provided to these workers, their contracts are renewed annually and this maybe the reason why there is a high turn-over rate irrespective of gender in this particular industry. The female workforce likes to work in Stitching Department mostly, as they already are familiar with the basic stitching technique and does not involve any physical labour.

4. Discussion:
An increasing trend has been observed in female employment in textile sector, especially in Asian countries, where women participation in labour force is higher. In order to compete in the International market, more factories are turning towards female workforce, reason being that they are more quality conscious and efficient than their male counterparts. But still gender pay-gap exists, females continues to be manipulated and restricted to lower job-levels. The female workforce in Pakistan have limited resources and are totally unaware of their rights and because of the weak Government policies and negligible interest shown by the public sector, they are left at the mercy of the private sector, which is taking full advantage of the situation. The female workforce is not even aware of a single step taken by the Public sector for their benefits. The female workers, being employed in textile factory of Karachi belongs to lower socio-income group, on average have done their matriculation, are single, supporting a family of 5 members, earning modestly between Rs.6k – 10k and are working on contractual basis. As they are temporary employees, they do not enjoy complete benefits offered by the Private sector i.e. their respective factories. The factories employees workers mainly on contractual basis, so that they are not liable for any further added benefits which are given for the permanent employees only. These benefits includes: pension, gratuity, maternity leave, day-care, insurance and medical. Such benefits are not provided to these workers, their contracts are renewed annually and this maybe the reason why there is a high turn-over rate irrespective of gender in this particular industry. These female workforce likes to work in Stitching Department mostly, as they already are familiar with the basic stitching technique and does not involve any physical labour.
Private Policy/ Working conditions: Approximately 78% of the respondents possess 0-5 years of work experience and are young single females. Who have stepped out of their comfort zone to support their families, this is the reason why more than half of the respondent’s families have not objected on their decision of joining the workforce. Given our socio-culture set up, where females are confided to household chores and child-bearing responsibilities alone, this particular finding has come as a pleasant surprise. As far as the working environment is concerned, they are pretty much satisfied. They are by-far satisfied with the managers/ Supervisors attitude towards them but are completely dissatisfied by the attitude of male-workers towards them. Now, this finding maybe contradictory to what they have earlier said about the work-environment. Work environment depends a lot on your relationship with your colleagues, managers and supervisors; they seem to be happy with the manager’s attitude but not the male workers, which actually mean that a lot needs to be desired in order to improve the work environment. These female workers strongly believes that they are more efficient than their male counterparts and hence are pretty much satisfied with their jobs. A possible reason for this could be their personal circumstances especially their financial standing which desperately motivates them into acceptance of what is been given to them rather than finding out what they truly deserve. Gender pay gap which has been identified in 3rd edition of KILM (1996 – 2003) and also by the European Commision (2007): focuses on the factors effecting it and the increase it, over the period of time. However opposite trend can be identified in the responses, these female workers strongly believes that the gender pay-gap does not exists and that the male workers performing same jobs does not make more than them. One possible reason being that these females does not realize and are completely unaware that the gender pay-gap do exists. As they have limited access to the market and most of them have just joined the workforce with few years of work experience, they still are not in a position to fully comprehend the situation yet. 98% of the respondents agrees that no Union Labour exist in their respective factories and that they are not a member of any such union. Which further reinstates the Market Analysis (2005) and Economic Survey (2008-09) point of view, that the union labours’ are absent from the textile sector purposely and that the workers are deprived of their rights. Various facilities are provided to the female workforce like: sick/annual/casual leaves and in case of permanent staff maternity leave is provided to them as well. As far as provident fund and increment is concerned it is again offered to only permanent staff while bonus is offered to temporary staff members as well.
Segregated facilities such as: cafeteria, wash rooms and praying areas are present in most the cases. However some of the respondents are not so happy about the condition of the facilities. 46% of the respondents were completely indifferent and did not know the status of any medical, insurance or day-care facilities offered to them, which again depends on the status of their employment. Since most of the respondents were single, therefore they did not know about any maternity or day care facilities offered by the factory.

Public/ Government Policy: Now moving on to the information regarding the public sector, 80% of the respondents could not even recall any single provision, law, policy, benefit or step that the Government has taken for the benefit of female workers or to encourage them. Nor do these workers are aware of any labour laws. Similarly 82% of the respondents have not been provided with any information related to their rights by their respective factories. This is a cause for concern, according to the Labour and Employment Law of Pakistan, all the factories are suppose to publish and disseminate complete advocacy material among the entire workforce related to their rights. Moreover they are suppose to be registered with the social security services, which is strictly a Government concern and is being establish for looking after the interest and welfare of the workforce. However, this is not the case; the data reveals short coming on both Public and Private (textile sector) account. There is no check and balance nor a system, which can overlook this shortcoming, due to which these female workers are suffering. They want Government to intervene and take concrete steps in order to facilitate them with respect to compensation and working conditions the most. The null hypothesis ‘Government policies have significant impact on working conditions in textile sector of Karachi ‘cannot be rejected. Impact of all the earlier mentioned variables, which includes: Gender pay-gap, working environment, job-satisfaction, managers/ co workers attitude, work experience, employment status, union labour, Government policies, industrial/ labour law, women’s immobility and income group, were checked on working conditions through General Linear Model and data was run in SPSS. It was observed that Government Policy had a strong impact on working conditions. As the Government Policies improved, the working condition also improved. A unit change in government policies brings about 0.27 change in working conditions, on a scale of 1-5.

Other variables that had an impact on working conditions were salary and job satisfaction. People with low salary were less satisfied with the working conditions, while respondents with better packages were happy with the working conditions. Job satisfaction was the highest
contributing factor in working condition with a significance value of 0.003. Respondents who were most satisfied by their jobs, were also satisfied by the working conditions as well.

5. Conclusion:

Ho: Government policies have significant impact on working conditions in textile sector of Karachi

Result: Null hypothesis cannot be rejected.

6. Recommendations:

The Public sector should take an initiative and tighten-up controls over the existing system, which is providing opportunities for the private sector to take advantage of at the expense of workforce. Government should revisit the labour/employment laws and should introduce a provision: according to which a temporary employment after 3 years of services, converts into permanent employment and the female workers can enjoy full spectrum of employment benefits. This measure if taken by the Government, will no doubt reduce the manipulation of female workers. A lot is desired to amend the current situation of female employment in textile sector if only the Government is able to implement whatever policies they have developed for female employment encouragement and protection of their rights. With improved public policies, working conditions will also improve resulting in female employment encouragement in textile sector, enabling our country to compete globally.
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