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Investigating the Influence of Career Orientation on Career Satisfaction of Dentists Facing Sexual Harassment in Islamabad, Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Background: The study examines the impact of sexual harassment on the career satisfaction of female dentists in Islamabad, Pakistan. It also investigates the moderating role of career orientation. Sexual harassment is a critical concern in healthcare settings globally, and its effects on well-being have been well-documented. However, there is a need to understand its specific impact on female dentists in this context. **Materials and Methods:** A cross-sectional quantitative design was employed, utilizing a modified questionnaire covering demographic details, sexual harassment experiences, career orientation, and career satisfaction. The study focused on female dentists in private dental clinics and hospitals in Rawalpindi and Islamabad, conducted over a four-month period from April to August 2022. Data was collected through Google Forms, social media platforms, and hard copy submissions. Out of 235 responses received, 5 were excluded due to incomplete information, resulting in a final sample of 230 participants. **Results:** Demographic analysis revealed that a majority (89.6%) of female dentists were in the 20 to 30 years age range. Furthermore, 198 dentists (86.1%) held BDS-level education. In terms of positions, 58 dentists (25.2%) had managerial responsibilities, while 172 (74.8%) solely performed clinical duties. Most dentists (87.8%) had 1 to 5 years of experience. Reliability analysis demonstrated high internal consistency for the measuring scale items. Correlation analysis revealed no significant correlation between sexual harassment and career orientation. However, a small yet positive correlation was observed between career orientation and career satisfaction. The most noteworthy finding was the negative and moderately strong correlation between sexual harassment and career satisfaction, indicating that higher levels of harassment were associated with lower satisfaction. **Conclusion:** The study provides valuable insights into the experiences of female dentists facing sexual harassment in Islamabad, Pakistan. It highlights the detrimental impact of sexual harassment on career satisfaction and emphasizes the importance of addressing these issues to enhance the well-being and professional fulfillment of female dentists. Additionally, the study underscores the role of career orientation in moderating this relationship, offering a potential avenue for interventions to mitigate the adverse effects of harassment. Further research with larger sample sizes and inclusion of male healthcare professionals is recommended to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, future studies should consider incorporating record-keeping sources to validate reports of sexual harassment.

Keywords: Sexual Harassment, Career Satisfaction, Female Dentists, Career Orientation, Healthcare Professionals, Workplace Environment

INTRODUCTION

The global healthcare sector encompasses a diverse array of disciplines and professional fields, each characterized by unique working principles and patient influx. Among these, dentistry stands as a rapidly expanding field in Pakistan, driven by heightened health consciousness and increased emphasis on oral hygiene in recent decades [1, 2]. Dentists play a crucial role in safeguarding oral health, addressing a range of issues from temporomandibular disorders to vascular and anatomical concerns [3]. The collaborative efforts of dentists, dental technicians, technologists, oral hygienists, and dental therapists form the backbone of effective oral treatment. The historical roots of dentistry are as ancient as human civilization itself, with evidence-based practices emerging alongside scientific advancements in medicine [4]. These advances have led to the adoption of various treatments and preventive measures, such as fluoride-based interventions and sophisticated diagnostic imaging techniques. While dental decay was rare in pre-agricultural societies, its prevalence surged with the advent of farming communities around 10,000 years ago [5-7].

In recent decades, there has been a notable surge in female enrolment in dentistry programs, facilitated by both private sector educational institutions and government initiatives aimed at creating conducive learning environments for aspiring female dentists [8]. Research in medical education has emphasized the pivotal role of the learning environment in shaping students' productivity, professionalism, and resilience [8, 9]. Factors such as gender, race, ethnicity, and geographic origin have been identified as influential determinants of students' contributions to the field of medicine [10]. Moreover, the educational environment's impact on the productivity of medical students has been explored in studies conducted in Bangladesh, shedding light on the unique challenges faced by female students, including a higher prevalence of sexual harassment and feelings of social under appreciation [11, 12].

Sexual harassment remains a pervasive social issue within medical organizations, affecting both male and female colleagues. Female medical staff, in particular, are vulnerable to various forms of harassment, including violence and bullying from patients and their attendants [13]. Preserving social security within medical institutions is imperative for upholding the dignity of healthcare professionals and maintaining the prestige of medical institutions [14]. Sexual harassment, comprising both physical and verbal abuse of a sexual nature, is legally prohibited and is a critical concern in healthcare settings globally [15-17]. Studies have highlighted its prevalence among caregivers, with nurses being disproportionately affected [18-20]. The detrimental effects of sexual harassment on individuals' well-being, both personally and professionally, have been well-documented [21, 22]. In light of this backdrop, this research endeavours to investigate the impact of sexual harassment on the career satisfaction of female dentists, taking into account the moderating influence of career orientation. This study addresses a critical gap in the existing literature, providing valuable insights into the experiences of female dentists facing sexual harassment in Islamabad, Pakistan. The findings of this research hold the potential to inform policies and interventions aimed at creating safer and more supportive work environments for healthcare professionals.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research employed a cross-sectional quantitative design to investigate the influence of career orientation on career satisfaction among female dentists facing sexual harassment in Islamabad, Pakistan. A modified questionnaire was utilized, encompassing four sections covering demographic details, sexual harassment experiences, career orientation, and career satisfaction. The questionnaire drew from established sources [23-25]. The study focused on female dentists in private dental clinics and hospitals in Rawalpindi and Islamabad, conducted over a four-month period from April to August 2022. The questionnaire was distributed through Google Forms, social media platforms like Twitter and WhatsApp, and some respondents were directly approached at relevant institutes for hard copy submissions. Out of 235 responses received, 5 were excluded due to incomplete information, leaving a final sample of 230 participants. The research utilized convenience sampling, involving 230 participants, to ensure a representative sample. Inclusion criteria mandated a minimum of six months of job experience, while exclusion criteria excluded dentists with less than six months of experience or those not working in private healthcare facilities in the specified areas. Ethical approval was obtained from relevant committees, and participants provided both verbal and written consent, with confidentiality ensured through the use of identification numbers on questionnaires.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Data was analyzed using SPSS version 22, employing frequency distribution analysis, descriptive statistical analysis, correlation regression, and linear regression moderation analysis to explore the relationships between career orientation, sexual

harassment, and career satisfaction. The Likert scale responses were coded for statistical analysis, with "strongly disagree" coded as 1 and "strongly agree" coded as 5. Additionally, a dichotomous scale was used for certain variables (No = 1, Yes = 2).

RESULTS

Demographic analysis revealed that a majority (89.6%) of female dentists were in the 20 to 30 years age range, while 9.1% were in the 31 to 40 years age range, and 1.3% were in the 41 to 50 years age range. Additionally, 198 dentists (86.1%) held BDS-level education, while 40 (17.4%) had post-graduate education. Regarding positions, 58 dentists (25.2%) had managerial responsibilities in addition to clinical duties, while 172 (74.8%) hold only clinical responsibilities. Experience-wise, 202 dentists (87.8%) had 1 to 5 years of experience, 19 (8.3%) had 6 to 10 years, and 9 (3.9%) had 11 to 15 years. This comprehensive analysis provides a clear overview of the demographic composition of the participating dentists.

Table 1. Demographic Variable Analysis (N=230)

| | | Frequency | Percent |
|------------|--|-----------|---------|
| Age | 20 30 Years | 206 | 89.6 |
| | 31 40 Years | 21 | 9.1 |
| | 41 50 Years | 3 | 1.3 |
| Education | Graduation | 190 | 82.6 |
| | Intermediate (diploma) | 8 | 3.5 |
| | Post-graduation | 32 | 13.9 |
| Position | Dentist (Having managerial responsibilities) | 58 | 25.2 |
| | Dentist (Not having managerial responsibilities) | 172 | 74.8 |
| Experience | 1 to 5 Years | 202 | 87.8 |
| | 11 to 20 Years | 9 | 3.9 |
| | 6 to 10 Years | 19 | 8.3 |

Table 2 displays the results of the reliability analysis for the variables in the research model, focusing on the impact of sexual harassment on career satisfaction among dentists, with consideration for the moderating role of career orientation. The table reveals that the measuring scale items for sexual harassment, total 10, exhibit a high level of internal consistency with a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.910. This indicates that these items consistently and effectively gauge the extent of sexual harassment experienced by dentists. A Cronbach's Alpha value above 0.6 is considered strongly reliable, affirming the robustness of the measurements. The moderating variable, career orientation, is composed of two measuring scale items with a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.698. Likewise, the dependent variable, career satisfaction, encompasses five measuring scale items, yielding a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.895. These alpha values fall within the recommended range of 0.6, attesting to the reliability of the measuring scale items in accurately assessing the core variables in the study.

Table 2. Reliability Analysis of Core Variables

| Sr.No | Variables | Cronbach's Alpha | N of Items |
|-------|---------------------|------------------|------------|
| 1. | Sexual Harassment | .910 | 10 |
| 2. | Career Orientation | .698 | 2 |
| 3. | Career Satisfaction | .895 | 5 |

Table 3 presents key metrics related to sexual harassment, career orientation, and career satisfaction among 230 female dentists in Islamabad. Regarding sexual harassment, respondents rated experiences on a scale from 1 to 5, with a mean score of 2.55, indicating a moderate level. The standard deviation of 0.906 indicates variability in reported experiences. For career orientation,

participants rated their commitment on the same scale, yielding a mean score of 3.90, signifying a relatively high level. The standard deviation of 0.928 shows some variability in reported levels. In terms of career satisfaction, respondents rated it on a 1 to 5 scale, with a mean score of 3.63, indicating a moderate to high level. The standard deviation of 0.922 suggests some variability in reported satisfaction levels. These findings reveal a nuanced picture of the experiences and orientations of female dentists in Islamabad. While they report moderate levels of sexual harassment, their strong career orientation and relatively high career satisfaction are positive indicators. However, the variability in reported levels emphasizes the need for further investigation. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for comprehensively assessing the experiences of female dentists in the region.

Table 1. Level of Sexual Harassment and Career Satisfaction among Female Dentists in Islamabad

| | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---------------------|-----|---------|---------|------|----------------|
| Sexual Harassment | 230 | 1 | 5 | 2.55 | 0.906 |
| Career Orientation | 230 | 1 | 5 | 3.90 | 0.928 |
| Career Satisfaction | 230 | 1 | 5 | 3.63 | 0.922 |

Table 4 presents the results of a correlation analysis examining the relationships between sexual harassment, career orientation, and career satisfaction among female dentists. Firstly, there is no significant correlation between sexual harassment and career orientation ($r = 0.067$, $p > 0.05$). This implies that the level of sexual harassment experienced by female dentists in this study is not strongly associated with their career orientation. The relationship between career orientation and career satisfaction, there is a small yet positive correlation ($r = 0.390$, $p < 0.01$). This indicates that dentists with a stronger career orientation tend to report higher levels of career satisfaction. However, it's important to note that this correlation, while statistically significant, is of moderate strength. The most noteworthy finding is the negative and moderately strong correlation between sexual harassment and career satisfaction ($r = -0.53$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that female dentists who experience higher levels of sexual harassment are more likely to report lower levels of career satisfaction. This association is both statistically significant and substantive, indicating a potentially detrimental impact of sexual harassment on overall career satisfaction. The correlation analysis offers valuable insights into the interrelationships between these variables. While sexual harassment is not strongly tied to career orientation, it has a significant and negative relationship with career satisfaction. This highlights the importance of addressing issues related to sexual harassment to potentially enhance the career satisfaction of female dentists.

Table 2. Correlation Analysis

| | 1 | 2 | 3 |
|---------------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Sexual Harassment | 1 | | |
| Career Orientation | 0.067 | 1 | |
| Career Satisfaction | -0.53** | .390** | 1 |

Table 5 presents the results of a regression analysis examining the impact of sexual harassment on the career satisfaction of female dentists. The table indicates that sexual harassment significantly affects career satisfaction, as evidenced by the F-statistic of 20.532, which is associated with a very low p-value (0.000). This implies that the relationship is statistically significant and not likely due to chance. The R-squared value, which represents the proportion of variance in career satisfaction explained by sexual harassment, is -0.517. This negative value suggests that sexual harassment has a substantial negative impact on career satisfaction. The adjusted R-squared value, which takes into account the number of predictors in the model, is also negative at -0.492. The regression analysis provides strong evidence that sexual harassment has a significant and negative impact on the career satisfaction of female dentists. The negative R-squared values indicate that sexual harassment accounts for a substantial portion of the variability in career satisfaction. This underscores the importance of addressing issues related to sexual harassment in order to improve the overall career satisfaction and well-being of female dentists.

Table 5. Impact of Sexual Harassment on Career Satisfaction of Female Dentists

| Independent variable | Career Satisfaction | | |
|----------------------|---------------------|--------|-------|
| | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
| Sexual Harassment | 2.903 | 20.532 | 0.000 |

a. R Squared = .517 (Adjusted R Squared = .492)

Table 6 explains the diversified relationship between sexual harassment, career orientation, and the career satisfaction of female dentists. Initially, the analysis focused on the impact of sexual harassment, revealing a beta coefficient of -0.55, indicating that with each unit increase in harassment, there was a corresponding decrease of 0.55 units in career satisfaction. This relationship was statistically significant, supported by a t-statistic of 2.69 and a p-value of 0.001. The confidence intervals (CILL: 0.2106, CIUL: 0.1007) provided a range for the true effect of sexual harassment on career satisfaction. In the subsequent step, the introduction of career orientation as an additional factor demonstrated a positive influence, with a beta coefficient of 0.1276, signifying that for every unit increase in career orientation, there was a corresponding rise of 0.1276 units in career satisfaction. This relationship was also statistically significant, as indicated by a t-statistic of 2.7324 and a p-value of 0.0017. The confidence intervals (CILL: 0.2158, CIUL: 0.471) provided a range for the true effect of career orientation. Finally, when considering the interaction between sexual harassment and career orientation, the analysis unveiled a beta coefficient of 0.268, highlighting a positive association between the combined effect of both factors and career satisfaction. This interaction term significantly contributed to the model, supported by a t-statistic of 3.401 and a p-value of 0.0003. The confidence intervals (CILL: 0.104, CIUL: 0.158) provided further insights into the combined impact. These results collectively underscore the distinct and interactive influences of sexual harassment and career orientation on the career satisfaction of female dentists, shedding light on the nuanced dynamics that shape professional fulfillment in this field. This information is pivotal for crafting targeted interventions aimed at mitigating the adverse effects of harassment and fostering positive career orientations.

The figure 1 shows the graphical presentation of moderation effect of career orientation on negative relationship of sexual harassment and career satisfaction. The negative effect of sexual harassment on career satisfaction of female dentists is moderated to positive by their strong commitment and passion orientation toward their profession.

Table 6. Moderation by Career Orientation on Negative Impact of Sexual Harassment on Career Satisfaction of Female Dentists

| Variables | Career Satisfaction | | | | | |
|--|---------------------|-------|--------|-------|-------|-------|
| | β | SE | T | P | CILL | CIUL |
| Step 1 | | | | | | |
| Sexual Harassment | -.55 | .079 | 2.69 | .001 | .2106 | .1007 |
| Step 2 | | | | | | |
| Career Orientation | .1276 | .1743 | 2.7324 | .0017 | .2158 | .471 |
| Step 3 | | | | | | |
| Sexual Harassment * Career Orientation | .268 | .0667 | 3.401 | .0003 | .104 | .158 |

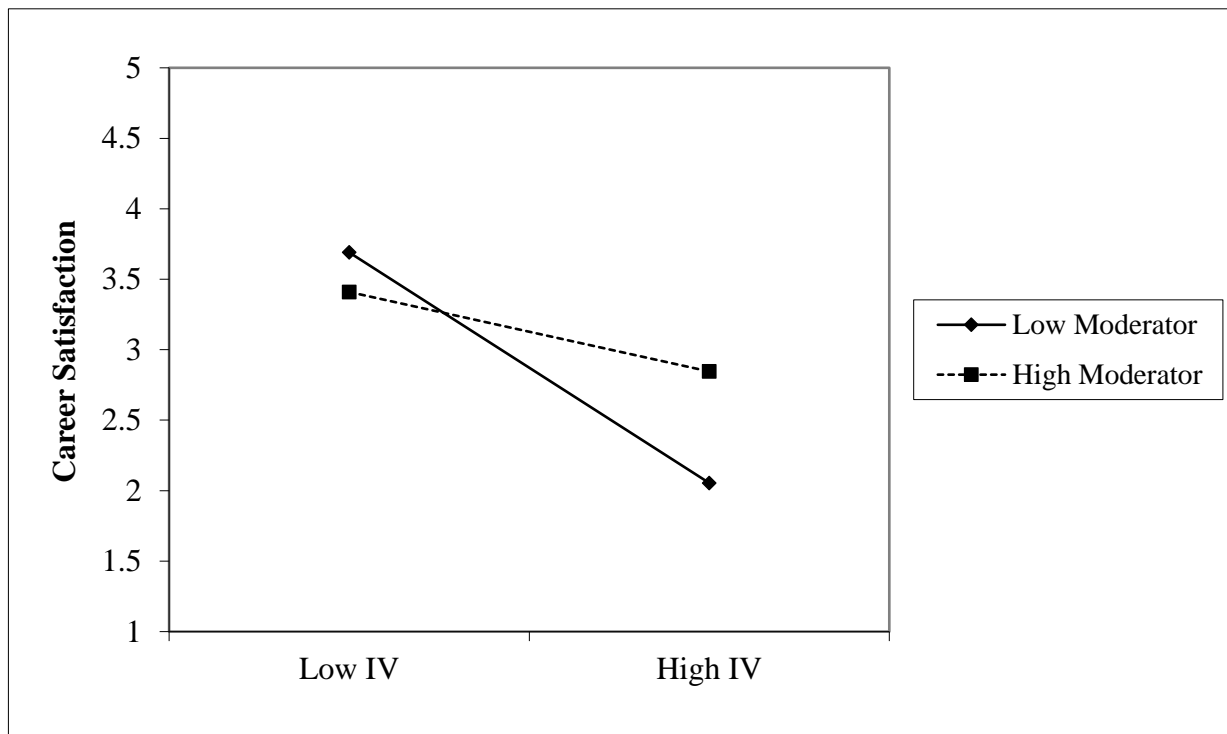


Figure 1: Moderation Graph of Career Orientation Moderation between Sexual Harassment and Career Satisfaction

DISCUSSION

The current study explores the impact of sexual harassment on the career satisfaction of female dentists in Islamabad, Pakistan, with a focus on the moderating role of career orientation. Sexual harassment is defined as the act of soliciting sexual favors in exchange for some form of service or reward, involving explicit or implicit sexual overtones. It encompasses various actions, including verbal transgressions, sexual abuse, and assault, and can occur in various settings such as the workplace, home, school, or public spaces [26]. This behavior can have severe negative effects on the psychological, mental, and physical well-being of both the harasser and the victim. The modern legal understanding of sexual harassment was established in the 1970s [26]. Notable cases of sexual harassment have gained prominence in global society, including the William V. Six V versus Pleatue I Barnas case and allegations of sexual assault and misconduct involving figures like Bill Clinton [27].

Sexual harassment is prevalent within the healthcare sector, where healthcare workers, including nurses and dentists, experience harassment from superiors, colleagues, patients, and their attendants during their duty hours. The persistent psychological effects of such harassment can lead to depression, anxiety, and distress among healthcare workers [28]. Research indicates that sexual harassment is particularly widespread among female nurses and dentists [28]. In this study, the focus lies on investigating how sexual harassment impacts the career satisfaction of female dentists. The moderating role of career orientation are also examined. The research was carried out among female dentists operating in private dental setups located in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Data was gathered through the distribution of a structured questionnaire via different social media platforms and in printed format, yielding 230 respondents. The majority of participants fell within the 20 to 30-year-old bracket (89.26%) and held a graduate-level education (82.6%).

Additionally, 74.8% of the dentists solely performed clinical responsibilities in dental clinics, without managerial roles. Furthermore, 87.8% of participants had less than five years of working experience. This demographic distribution aligns with a previous study conducted in the same region (Zara et al., 2020), indicating consistency in the population sampled. Descriptive statistical analysis revealed a notably low level of sexual harassment among female dentists in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Conversely, career orientation and career satisfaction were found to be significantly high. This suggests a positive professional environment for female dentists in the region. Previous research examining sexual harassment among female medical students in Rawalpindi reported a higher prevalence of harassment compared to our study on female dentists [29]. This difference may

be attributed to the closed clinical environment of dental practices, where female dentists often work alongside female colleagues, limiting interactions with male counterparts.

The study investigated the negative impact of sexual harassment on career satisfaction. The outcome was supported by statistical analysis, indicating a reduction in career satisfaction with increased levels of sexual harassment. This finding aligns with previous research on job satisfaction among dentists which highlighted the significant influence of workplace environment on job satisfaction [30]. The study also investigated career orientation impact to moderate the relationship between sexual harassment and career satisfaction. This outcome was supported, indicating that career orientation mitigates the negative impact of sexual harassment on career satisfaction. This aligns with research emphasizing the importance of career orientation in boosting intrinsic motivation and resilience in the face of workplace pressures [31, 32]. This research provides valuable insights into the influence of sexual harassment, and career orientation on the career satisfaction of female dentists in Islamabad, Pakistan. The findings underscore the significance of creating supportive and empowering work environments to enhance career satisfaction and well-being among healthcare professionals.

LIMITATION AND FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

The current research study is having some limitations which are base of further research study. The study was only limited to the female dentists working in the private clinics and healthcare setups in territory of the Rawalpindi and Islamabad. The future research studies should include the female as well as male dentists and other healthcare professionals to assess the impact of sexual harassment on the career orientation and career satisfaction of healthcare employees. The research sample of this research study was low which was affecting the generalizability of the outcome. The future research study should focus toward the increase sample size or enhancement of the generalizability of the outcomes. There current research study adapted the self-reported mechanism of the data collection. It was compromising the credibility of research data which was only limited to the honesty of respondents. The future research study should focus toward the actual existence of the sexual harassment by looking forward toward the record keeping sources of the data for enhancement of the generalizability of the outcome.

Conclusion

The female dentists in dental clinics and hospital of Islamabad, Pakistan faces a moderate level of sexual harassment which negatively effects their career satisfaction. However, being medical professional, a resilient class of workers possessing stress coping abilities passionate toward their profession and have high level of career orientation. The career orientation moderates to neutralize the negative impact of sexual harassment on their career satisfaction. However, reliable organizational polices and strategies are required for standard practices according to anti-harassment legislation in country.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

For None to declare

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

MK conceptualized the whole study and drafted the manuscript, MIS helped in collecting data, study design and critically reviewed the manuscript, NUH helped in data analysis and results interpretation, he also helped in editing the final version of the manuscript and improved the English grammar and removed the type errors. FW contributed to collect data from different clinics and hospital.

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