

# **Attitude towards Female Manager in Pakistan: Evidence from Banking, Education, and Telecom Sector**

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## **Abstract**

*Women around the world face attitudinal barriers which decreases their chances and ability to reach to the higher level positions in the organizations. Pakistan is also no exception as it is mostly a male dominated society where female is often suppressed. The situation is changing due to the different factors such as increase in literacy rate and greater awareness about women rights. Keeping in view this context, the objective of the current study was set to assess the attitude towards female managers in Pakistan. It used WAMS as an instrument and utilized survey method to collect data from three main sectors including banking, education, and telecom. The results indicate that there is greater acceptance towards female manager, less negative stereotypes, and perception that female possesses necessary traits to become a successful manager. The attitude towards female managers varies based on some personal factors such as gender, age, education, upbringing, religious orientation and some organizational factors such as organizational ownership, organization's nationality, and sector. Additionally, the study interviewed thirty female managers working at various level positions and found that there is greater acceptance towards female managers compare to the past. The results also acknowledged the existence of familial, organizational, and cultural barriers faced by female managers. More efforts from organizations, government, and other societal actors are recommended to make conditions more favorable for female managers in Pakistan.*

**Keywords:** Female Managers, Attitude, Stereotyping, Diversity

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## Introduction

Women are almost half of the whole world population, yet women representation in the workforce and especially at the managerial and executive level is significantly low.<sup>1</sup> In addition to the low representation, prejudice, and discriminatory treatment of women in terms of training, pays, and career development is also consistently reported.<sup>2</sup> There are different theories which explain the low representation of women at the managerial and executive positions for example role congruity theory, organizational constraint theory, theory of numbers, and gate keeper theory.

The role congruity theory postulates that leadership is a masculine role which does not correspond well with the caring and soft stereotypical role of female.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, Organizational constraints theory states that women face numerous constraints inside the organization which shapes women's behavior, motivation, and self-efficacy and thus results in lesser degree of progression towards the higher level positions in organization.<sup>4</sup> Common organizational constraints which restrict women's progression to the managerial level include limited support and networking for women, low line management experience, very few role models, long working hours, and inflexible work schedule.<sup>5</sup> The term 'glass ceiling' was first used in 1986 to describe the artificial barriers faced by female which restrict qualified female from advancing to the managerial level positions.<sup>6</sup>

The glass ceiling is evidently present today as confirmed by many studies for example Catalyst which is a research organization found that despite occupying almost half of different management positions, women only represent 2% of Fortune 500 CEO positions.<sup>7</sup> Common factors such as additional responsibilities on females for looking after the family, lack of role models, and negative attitude towards female managers are causing glass ceiling.

Theory of numbers focuses on the numerical minority of women in groups dominated by males.<sup>8</sup> The theory postulates that women face discrimination due to their limited presence in management and their effectiveness as leader is diluted because of the assessment made by the male.<sup>9</sup> These theories are just few of many theories which explain the low representation of women at the higher level positions or barriers faced by female managers. It is also clear from these theories that attitude towards female managers and stereotypical views towards female managers are major barriers for women pursuing managerial career. The current

study aims to investigate the concept of attitudinal barrier faced by female managers in the context of Pakistan.

Attitude can be defined as enduring evaluation of persons or issues based on affective behavior and cognitive information.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, attitude towards female managers is about how different individuals perceive women at managerial position which can be positive or negative depending on different factors. Several studies at International level are carried out to encapsulate the workforce attitude towards female managers in different countries. Examples include a study conducted in America<sup>11</sup>; in Nigeria<sup>12</sup>; in China among Chinese sales workforce<sup>13</sup>; in Malaysia<sup>14</sup>; in Mauritius<sup>15</sup>; in Arab countries<sup>16</sup>; and in Turkey.<sup>17</sup> In most of the studies mentioned, the sample was drawn from corporate executives, managers, or MBA or business studies students and utilized WAMS or MATWES as a survey instrument. The findings of the most of the studies reveals that attitude towards female managers across the world is not very positive. Additionally in these studies, male shows a less favorable attitude towards female managers compare to the female respondents; thus leading to conclusion that gender plays a main role in shaping attitude towards female managers.

### **Female Managers in Pakistan**

Pakistan is a dominantly Muslim country with a total population of 176 million out of which 51% are female.<sup>18</sup> Historically, the traditional role of female in Pakistan was to stay at home and look after the family. However, because of improvement in education and general awareness in society, the traditional role of female is changing. More and more women are taking the dual role of caring for family as well as involving in economic activities and pursuing the professional careers.<sup>19</sup> Despite such improvements, women in Pakistan still face barriers in career, inequality, discrimination, and bullying at workplace.<sup>20</sup> Conclusion can be drawn that low representation of women at top level of organization in Pakistan is mainly blamed to discriminatory organizational culture and women's unwillingness to take up challenges and voice their concerns.<sup>21</sup>

Current situation for women in Pakistan is also far from ideal as according to a report Pakistan was among the top five worst countries in the world to be a woman.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, a Global Gender Gap Report showed that Pakistan had a low score on indexes including educational attainments, availability of health facilities, political empowerment, economic participation, and

opportunities for women.<sup>23</sup> The country had a female labor force participation rate of about 21% in year 2007-2008, Which rose to 24% in 2013.<sup>24</sup> Despite such barrier and low representation of female in the workforce and at managerial level little research has been conducted on the topic in Pakistan.

One notable study compared the attitude towards female executives in Pakistan and Turkey.<sup>25</sup> The study found that there is more positive attitude towards female executives in Pakistan as compare to Turkey. These finding are interesting since Turkey as compare to the Pakistan is considered more liberal; therefore, the less favorable attitude towards female executives by Turkish sample is surprising. No other similar study is conducted in Pakistan which focused on measuring the attitude towards female managers; therefore, this study is motivated to fill the literature gap. The objective of this paper is set to assess the attitude towards female managers in Pakistan and make comparisons based on different demographic variables and organizational characteristics.

### **Research Methodology**

This section includes a description of the research design, population, sample, data collection procedures and instruments use in the study.

#### *Research Design*

Research design refers to the plan and structure of the investigation carried out to obtain evidence for answering the research questions posed.<sup>26</sup> It is decided to use quantitative techniques for conducting this study and utilize survey research method for data collection and subsequent analysis.

#### *Measurement of Variable*

The survey was designed to collect information about demographic and organizational characteristics as well as to measure attitude towards female managers. Attitude towards female managers was measured through WAMS (Women as Manager Scale) which is an attitudinal scale developed specially for measuring the attitude towards female managers.<sup>27</sup> WAMS has three dimensions including acceptance of women as managers, perceptual stereotypes concerning women managers, and personality attributes generally attributable to successful managers. There are twenty one (21) statements included in WAMS out of which eleven items are worded positively and ten items are worded

negatively. These statements were anchored on Likert scale from 1 strongly Disagree to 5 strongly agree.

The scale (WAMS) has been found reasonably reliable and used extensively in several studies.<sup>28</sup> The only other reliable scale to measure attitude towards female manager is MATWES which consist of 38 items. MATWES is used in Pakistani context but so far no study is found which used WAMS in Pakistan. The decision to choose WAMS over MATWES was based on the reason that in MATWES there were numerous statements which used words and phrases which cannot be used or spoken very comfortably in Pakistani culture. Thus, there was possibility that using MATWES can significantly reduce the response rate. The reliability of the measure is given in the table 1 below.

Table 1: Reliability of the Instrument used in the Survey

Scale and Subscale	Number of Items	Cronbach Alpha
i. Acceptance of women as managers	10	.73
ii. Perception of stereotypes concerning women managers	5	.65
iii. Personality attributes generally attributable to successful managers	6	.71
iv. Full scale	21	.81

The scale was found reliable in the current study as the results of the Cronbach alphas for three different aspects and the full scale was well above 0.60 which is considered satisfactory.<sup>29</sup>

Population and Sample:

Three sector including banking, education, and telecom were selected as a population for this study. Sample was drawn from three sectors including banks, educational setups, and telecom sector. All sample units belonged to three major cities of Pakistan including Lahore, Islamabad, and Peshawar. Survey questionnaire included an introductory letter which explained the aim of the research, provided instructions of how to complete the questionnaire, and ensuring absolute confidentiality of the respondents. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed out of which 218 questionnaires were returned with the response rate of 54%. The high response rate was achieved because individuals were reminded about survey after few weeks of non-response. Moreover, an alternative arrangement of filling the survey in an online webpage was also made. The language used in the

questionnaire was English. The following table provides demographic information of survey respondents.

Table 2: Demographic Profile of Survey and Interview Respondents (N=218)

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	137	62.8
Female	81	37.2
<b>Age Group</b>		
25 Years and less	101	46.3
26 to 40 Years	83	38.1
41 Years and above	34	15.6
<b>Educational Level</b>		
12 Years or Less	58	26.6
14 Years	84	38.5
16 Years and Above	76	34.9
<b>Organizational Ownership</b>		
Public	58	26.6
Private	130	59.6
Semi-Public	30	13.7
<b>Organization's Nationality</b>		
Pakistani	158	72.5
Foreign	60	27.5
<b>Industry</b>		
Banking	84	38.5
Education	70	32.1
Telecom	64	29.3

Total of 218 respondents replied. The sample included 137 male and 81 female. Most of the respondents belonged to the age groups of 25 years or less (101 respondents), and subsequently to the age group of 26 to 40 years of age (83 respondents). Out of 218 respondents, 160 respondents had educational level of 14 years or above which shows that most respondents were educated. 58 respondents belonged to the public sector organizations, 130 to the private sector, and 30 to the semi-public sector organizations. 158 respondents belonged to the Pakistani organizations while 60 belonged to the foreign ownership. The respondents belonged to three different sectors while the banking sector made the biggest proportion (84 respondents), followed by the education (70 respondents), and lastly the telecom sector (64 respondents).

#### *Data Analysis*

Once quantitative data was collected, it was entered in to SPSS version 20 and checked for any errors or missing values. Frequencies were calculated to form a demographic profile of the

respondents and data normality was checked. In order to investigate the relationship of gender and other personal and organizational characteristics to attitudes, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) is used.

### Results and Discussion

Main objective of the study was to assess worker's attitude towards female managers. Quantitative data collected from 218 respondents from three main industries in Pakistan provided the following results.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Attitude towards Female Managers in Pakistan (n=218)

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Acceptance of women as managers	2.80	4.60	4.10	.120
Perception of stereotypes concerning women managers	3.40	4.40	3.88	.251
Personality attributes generally attributable to successful manager	2.66	4.00	3.84	.321
Full Scale	2.12	4.89	3.94	.335

*Note: Categories range from "Strongly Disagree" (1) to "Strongly Agree" (5)*

The results on the dimensions of WAMS indicates that there is acceptance of women as managers (M=4.10, S.D=.120); perception of stereotypes concerning women managers does not exist much (M=3.88, S.D=.251); and most respondents agree that women possess necessary traits to become a success full manager (M=3.84, S.D=.321). Thus these results shows that respondents agree with the idea of giving responsibility, challenging work, participation in training program, and opportunity of competing for managerial positions to the female. The respondents also agree that society and organizations should give more acceptance and value to the female managers.

Overall, the results shows a positive picture that there is positive perception towards female managers in Pakistan (M=3.94, S.D=0.335). Internal consistency is found in these results as in above results Pakistani workers showed acceptance as well as little stereotyping towards female managers, and considered women exhibiting traits of successful managers. To further investigate that whether the attitude towards female managers differ based on

different demographic variables and organizational characteristics, the average of WAMS was compared by using ANOVA. The results of ANOVA along with F-statistics and corresponding significance value are given below.

Table 4: Comparison of Attitude towards Female Managers Based on Demographic and Organizational Characteristics

Source of Variance	Means of WAMS			F-Stat	Sig of F-Stat
Gender	Male	Female		14.41	0.000
	3.81	4.16			
Age Group	< 25	26-40	41 >	39.35	0.000
	3.78	4.36	3.38		
Education Level	<12	14 Years	16 >	28.13	0.000
	4.11	4.21	3.51		
Upbringing	Urban	Rural		9.599	0.000
	4.14	3.84			
Religious Orientation	Low	Medium	High	16.80	0.000
	4.13	3.98	3.27		
Experience of Working under Female Manager	Yes	No		0.335	0.563
	3.97	3.92			
Women as current supervisor	Yes	No		2.39	0.123
	4.07	3.90			
Attended Diversity Training	Yes	No		0.403	0.526
	3.88	3.95			
Organizational Ownership	Public	Private	Semi-Public	3.96	0.020
	3.86	4.11	4.56		
Organization's Nationality	Pakistani	Foreign		71.04	0.000
	4.15	3.38			
Industry	Banking	Education	Telecom	3.62	0.028
	3.81	3.93	4.14		

Note: Categories range from "Strongly Disagree" (1) to "Strongly Agree" (5)

Results in above table suggests that female respondents shows a higher favorable attitude (M=4.16) compare to the male (M=3.81) towards female managers and the differences in attitude between two samples are significant (F Stat=14.41, P< 0.05). Differences in attitude towards female manager were found in different age group of respondents. The age group of 26-40 years old had a higher favorable attitude (M=4.36), followed by the age group of 25 years or less (M=3.78), while the age group of 41 years or above showed the lowest favorable attitude towards female managers (M=3.38). The differences in attitude towards female manager by different age group were significantly different (F=39.25, P<0.05). Post hac comparisons using the test Scheffe indicates that the mean score

for the age group of 26-40 years old was significantly different than the 25 years or less and 41 years and above category. However, the mean score for 25 years or less was not significantly different from 41 years and above category. It can be concluded that mostly senior employees (Beyond 41 years of age) have a lower favorable attitude towards female managers compare to the younger employees.

Results showed that respondents who had 14 years or less education showed highest level of favorable attitude towards female manager ( $M=4.21$ ), followed by 12 years of education or less ( $M=4.11$ ). Contrary to expectations, respondents who had 16 years of education or above showed the lowest level of positive attitude towards female managers ( $M=3.51$ ). The results were significantly different among all groups ( $F=28.13$ ,  $P<0.05$ ). The Post hoc comparisons using Scheffes test indicates that means score for the 16 years and above educational level was significantly different from 14 years and 12 years of education or less categories. While the differences between 12 years or less and 14 years of education categories were insignificant.

The results also showed that respondents who had upbringing in urban areas showed higher favorable attitude ( $M=4.14$ ) compare to the respondents who had upbringing in rural areas ( $M=3.84$ ). The differences in both sample are statistically significant ( $F=9.59$ ,  $P<0.05$ ). The results indicates that the respondents with the lowest religious orientation have the higher favorable attitude towards female managers ( $M=4.13$ ), followed by the respondents with medium religious orientation ( $M=3.98$ ). The respondents who reported high religious orientated also reported the lowest favorable attitude towards female managers ( $M=3.27$ ). Post hoc comparisons using test Scheffes indicated that the mean score for the high religious orientation category was significantly different than the medium and low religious categories. While the difference between the medium and low religious orientation categories were insignificant.

Respondents who had experience of working under female manager showed almost the same degree of favorable attitude ( $M=3.97$ ) to those who did not have such experience ( $M=3.92$ ). The differences between both groups were statistically insignificant ( $F=0.335$ ,  $P>0.05$ ). Similarly, respondents who were currently working under female manager showed the same degree of favorable attitude ( $M=4.07$ ) to those who were not currently not working under female manager ( $M=3.90$ ). The differences between both groups were statistically insignificant ( $F=2.39$ ,  $P>0.05$ ).

It was expected that those who have attended some sort of diversity training will show positive attitude because diversity training can be helpful in developing some positive attitude towards cross gender. However, respondents who attended diversity training showed similar favorable attitude towards female manager ( $M=3.88$ ) to those who did not attend any diversity training ( $M=3.95$ ). The differences between both groups were statistically insignificant ( $F=0.403$ ,  $P>0.05$ ).

The results related to organizational ownership type indicates that respondents from semi-public sector organization had the highest favorable attitude towards female managers ( $M=4.56$ ), followed by private sector organizations ( $M=4.11$ ). The respondents from public sector organizations had the lowest favorable attitude towards female managers ( $M=3.86$ ). The differences between the three groups were statistically significant ( $F=3.96$ ,  $P<0.05$ ). Post hoc comparisons using the Scheffe's test indicated that the mean score for the semi-public sector was significantly different from the private and public sector categories. However, the differences between private and public sector organizations were insignificant. The attitude towards female manager also varies based on the organization's nationality. The respondents who belonged to Pakistani organization showed higher favorable attitude towards the female manager ( $M=4.15$ ) compare to the respondents who belonged to foreign organizations ( $M=3.38$ ). The differences between both groups were statistically significant ( $F=71.04$ ,  $P<0.05$ ). Generally, the foreign organizations including MNCs employ more modern management techniques and work environment is more favorable for female, therefore, the results are somewhat contradictory.

Finally, the data was collected from three different sectors. The respondents from the telecom sector showed the highest favorable attitude towards female ( $M=4.14$ ) followed by the education sector ( $M= 3.93$ ). The respondents from banking sector showed the lowest positive attitude towards female manager ( $M=3.81$ ). The differences were statistically significant among the three groups ( $F=3.62$ ,  $P<0.05$ ). Post hoc comparisons using the Scheffe's test indicated that mean score for the Telecom sector was significantly different from banking and education sector while the differences between education and telecom sector were insignificant.

Our results show that attitude towards female managers varies based on demographic factors (gender, age, upbringing, and religious orientation) and organizational characteristics

(organizational ownership type, organization's nationality, and industry). Attitude towards female managers is often compared based on gender in International studies; however, other factors are not much investigated in such studies. As far as gender is concerned, our results are consistent with many International studies such as findings of a study conducted in America;<sup>30</sup> and in Malaysia;<sup>31</sup>. All these studies reported that the female showed more positive attitude towards female managers compare to the male. Differences in attitude based on other factors such as religious orientation can be explained as Pakistan is a predominantly Muslim country with almost 95% of its population is Muslim. In strict version of Islam, women are ordered to stay at home and care for family. If women do have to come out from their houses, they have to observe veil (*Purdah*) which means maximum possible segregation and distance from male and covering all body parts, head, and face. Islam has profound effects on Pakistani society and Islamic values can be seen at individual as well as at national level for example one will often find the gender segregation such as separate schools, colleges, and factories for male and female. Strict version of Islam was implemented on Pakistani society during the ruler-ship of military dictator General Ziaul Haqq in the period of 1980s. However, after his death, the policy of implementing Islam was reverted. Currently, the effect of Islam is reducing on Pakistani society as it is taking more influence from Western and Indian culture.<sup>32</sup>

Some of the results such as were contradictory to the literature for example a study conducted in Greece found differences in attitudes toward women as managers based on the interaction with women manager.<sup>33</sup> Current study's results show that attitude did not change significantly based on the experience of working under the female manager or women as current supervisor.

Overall, our results acknowledge that some barriers exist for female manager but women are still making progress and reaching to the higher level positions in organizations. As far as the attitudinal or behavioral problems are concerned, these barriers are quite reduced. These results need to be viewed in the context as the government, civil societies, and organizations are struggling for decades to give more acceptance and equality to the female. The constitution of Pakistan (1973) gives equal rights to women and also instructs the government to make special provisions for the protection of women and children. The government has taken several steps for empowering women politically, economically,

and socially. Example of such steps includes creation of several women specific institutions such as separate Ministry for Women Development at federal level, women development bank, all women police stations, and all women post offices. Moreover, specific quota is also set for women seats in national and provisional parliaments which give women greater legislative power. Several bills are passed at national and provisional assemblies to give greater protection and rights to women. Currently, women can be seen as actively involved in Pakistani politics for example Maryam Nawaz who is the daughter of a famous politician and current Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif is considered as a role model for younger female in Pakistan.

As far as religious effects are concerned, Islam gives equal rights to women and orders its followers to give respect and be polite to women. Pakistani media is also playing its role as it is continuously making efforts to educate people about women rights. Several NGOs are also working on women rights and making efforts to educate and empower women. As a result of all these steps and persistent efforts from women, now women can be seen in many fields which were previously considered reserved for men. For example, women can be seen as host in political talk shows, Dean or Head of different Department in universities, Engineers in various industries, commandos in Army and so on. Overall it can be said that women in Pakistan are certainly gaining acceptance in different fields including management and at higher level positions.

### **Conclusion**

Women in Pakistan encounter familial, cultural, and organizational barriers during their careers which constraint them from reaching to managerial level positions. Despite such barriers, women are making their way through such barricades. Once reach to the managerial positions, there is little attitudinal problem they face. Our results show that workers in Pakistan are showing positive attitude as well as behavior towards female managers. Attitude towards female managers differs based on some personal factors such as gender, age, education, upbringing, religious orientation, and some organizational factors such as organizational ownership, organization's nationality, and sector. The result does not mean that women in Pakistan are having same degree of freedom or equality as found in most developed nation. These results are only an indicator of start of a new era where situation is turning to be favorable for women. Overall, there is still a lot more need to be

done which requires persistent efforts from women as well as from organizations, government, and other societal actors.

### **Implications**

Our findings have implications for women who are pursuing careers in management as well as for organizations. Implications for the female who are entering the professional careers are that they should be aware of subtle barriers. Female should be given proper guidance, personality grooming, support, and opportunities so that they can enter in different fields and progress their careers including the managerial one. Those female managers who have reached to the higher level positions in organization hierarchy should serve as a role model and provide guidance and support to the younger female workers on dealing with gender related barriers.

Since the job of managing and developing employees is the responsibility of HRM function; therefore, HR department should device policies such as recruitment, training, and career management which enable organizations to achieve full potential of female workers. Organizations and their top management should also understand the potential of women and the benefits of including women at managerial level positions. They should also be aware that failing to include women at different managerial levels can decrease organization's competitiveness. The top management should take active steps to create a favourable working environment for female and lower the barriers faced by female during their careers. As the findings indicate a positive attitude towards female managers; therefore, there should be less hesitation from potential female candidates as well as from HR and organizations to place female on managerial level positions.

The government should be aware that women are almost half of the whole country's population and therefore without women's development, the country cannot be developed. Government has certainly taken a lot of steps for women's development but a lot more need to be done. Government should take more steps in terms of policies and laws which should give more power, rights, and protection to the female. Already existing laws should also be properly enforced. Media and religious leaders can also play a positive role in raising awareness in the society. All these actions can change the attitude of masses and can create a favorable environment for female.

**Limitations**

The study is conducted to assess the attitude towards female managers in Pakistan but generalization of findings for the whole country is difficult as the sample was mainly drawn from workers belonging to the three sectors only. A future researcher can draw more diverse sample and can include business students from different business schools and workers from different industries. The study only utilized cross sectional data collected through survey while more diverse methods of data collection along with longitudinal enquiry is recommended for future researcher. The study was mostly focusing on the attitude towards female manager but did not give adequate coverage to the behavior which also remains a limitation. Most of the measures were self-reported for example low or high religious orientation, employee's behavior towards female managers, and so on. Such self-reported measures have the potential to introduce bias in the results; therefore, some of the unusual findings of the current study can be associated to such self-reported measures.

Finally, WAMS is an instrument which was developed for Western world and its application in Pakistani context can introduce cultural bias. Therefore, the results obtained through WAMS needs to be interpreted carefully. The limitation also points towards a need to develop an instrument which match well with Pakistani culture and adequately capture the concept. Despite the limitations mentioned, the study had a sufficiently large sample; therefore, reasonable level of confidence can be placed on the findings.

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<sup>32</sup> Shaista E. Khilji, *An Empirical Study of Human Resource Management in Pakistan: The Case of Pakistan*, Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of Cambridge, UK (1999)

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.