

CAREER CHALLENGES AND ADOPTION IN LAWYERS WITH SPECIFIC ANALYSIS AMONG FEMALE PROFESSIONALS

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore gender differences in the financial and mental well-being, as well as career satisfaction, of lawyers. It was indicated that career satisfaction, financial well-being, and mental well-being among lawyers were significantly affected by factors such as family type, marital status, educational attainment, and area of expertise. Furthermore, a positive correlation was observed between years of experience, age, monthly income, and both financial and mental well-being. These results highlight the necessity for inclusive policies to improve the status of attorneys and mitigate gender inequality.

Keywords: Lawyers, Gender, Financial well-being, Career Satisfaction, Mental well-being.

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INTRODUCTION

Lawyers play a crucial role as advocates, guides, and litigators within the judicial system. The increasing number of women in the legal profession is challenging traditional stereotypes. Research indicates that the rise in female lawyers is fostering enhanced courtesy, civility, and professionalism in the field [1]. Two decades ago, women comprised only about four percent of law students, but today they account for over forty percent of law school graduates. However, in Pakistan, the legal profession remains predominantly male. Although many female students earn law

degrees each year, few pursue careers in law due to gender discrimination, which often drives them to seek alternative professions. Additionally, female lawyers encounter significant challenges in a male-dominated environment that perpetuates stereotypes and biases [2].

Women face both general obstacles and unfair societal attitudes in their professional and personal lives. While they have equal access to education, recognition in male-dominated fields like law continues to be elusive [3]. A prevailing expectation exists that women will cease practicing after marriage and childbirth, although those

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from influential families may find better opportunities for success. Researchers have identified several challenges that hinder the equal participation of women lawyers and judges in the legal profession, both in Pakistan and globally [4-7]. First, the Judicial Commission lacks clear standards for appointing candidates to the High Court and Supreme Court. Second, sexual harassment and other misconduct are prevalent in the legal profession, yet the judicial system and bar often fail to address complaints adequately, treating these issues as low priorities. Last but not least, the male-dominated nature of the field causes hesitation, if not outright resistance, to providing necessary amenities for female judges and attorneys, such as childcare assistance, maternity leave, and separate restrooms [8].

It has been noted that advocates who are women make less money than advocates who are men. According to recent data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the gender pay gap in the legal field—which does not account for experience and training—was as high as 40% in 2015. This means that women made 60 cents for every \$1 made by males. Despite the substantial profits generated by law firms, female lawyers continue to earn significantly less, with the income gap widening by \$5,000 over the past five years. A key reason for this disparity is the perception that men are more capable of attracting clients, while stereotypes suggest that female lawyers are hindered by family responsibilities [9]. Consequently, female lawyers face greater financial challenges compared to their male peers. Additionally, research indicates that female lawyers in the United Kingdom experience disparities in financial well-being and have limited access to higher positions. The gender discrimination in lawyer earnings is linked to various factors, including differences in work experience,

family obligations, and potential disparities in abilities, preferences, or job placement. Researchers have examined the lack of gender equality in the legal profession and its association with various factors, including the wage gap and career satisfaction. Several elements can influence an individual's career satisfaction, such as salary, opportunities for growth, work environment, authority, social interaction, and the nature of the work itself. Factors that enhance career satisfaction include age, income, opportunities for advancement, and financial rewards. Notably, marriage is positively correlated with career satisfaction, suggesting that married individuals generally report higher job satisfaction than their single or divorced peers [10].

Career satisfaction plays a crucial role in the emotional and mental well-being of individuals. Organizational theory suggests that an employee's financial and career satisfaction can enhance their mental health. However, factors such as stress, lack of self-confidence, anxiety, tension, and substance abuse can adversely affect both work performance and psychological well-being, underscoring the strong connection between the two [11]. The legal profession is particularly high-stress. Lawyers face various challenges that impact their psychological well-being, including heavy workloads, financial pressures, the competitive nature of legal practice, and a perceived lack of control over decision-making. Long working hours can lead to isolation and increase the risk of depression among lawyers [12]. The psychological stress that attorneys endure as a result of client expectations, long workdays, and job discontent has been documented in a number of scientific research. According to studies conducted in the US and Australia, lawyers frequently have mental health issues [13–15].

The Law Society of Western Australia carried out a research in 1999 that involved in-depth interviews with lawyers and focused on factors like living standards, work environments, mental and physical health, and social and familial relationships. The study found that young lawyers faced significant client pressure, earned lower salaries than their senior counterparts, and worked under strict time constraints. Many reported physical and mental health issues, including fatigue, ulcers, insomnia, crying, hopelessness, low self-esteem, resentment, and anxiety [16]. As these symptoms intensified, numerous lawyers chose to leave their jobs prematurely. Unfortunately, there is limited information on these issues in Pakistan, highlighting the need for further research. This study aims to explore gender disparities among attorneys and the factors influencing their mental health, job satisfaction, and financial well-being.

To identify the key elements affecting lawyers' well-being in the legal profession, a comprehensive analysis of their circumstances is essential [17-19]. By shedding light on the situation of Pakistani lawyers, this study contributes to the existing body of literature and may guide policymakers in implementing strategies to reduce gender and wage disparities, as well as address other challenges in the field, ultimately improving the well-being of attorneys.

It is proposed that individuals satisfied with their careers tend to experience better mental health, which in turn allows them to effectively 'broaden and build' their capabilities. Those with strong mental well-being are often more innovative, enthusiastic, socially connected, healthy, and productive. Career satisfaction boosts confidence, thereby enhancing mental well-being. The level of career satisfaction can serve as an indicator of both physical and mental health. Conversely, workers

dissatisfied with their jobs are more likely to face mental health issues, negatively impacting society's economic prosperity. Employees lacking job satisfaction often encounter significant psychological challenges [20].

Career satisfaction is influenced by the gap between what an employee receives and what they expect from their job. This theory suggests that various job aspects contribute to overall satisfaction or dissatisfaction. When the benefits received fall short of expectations, dissatisfaction arises. Conversely, meeting expectations leads to satisfaction, positively impacting an individual's life compared to those dissatisfied with their job aspects [21]. It is indicated no significant gender differences in the financial well-being of lawyers. Several factors may contribute to this finding, including a limited sample size and a lack of diverse background variables. The study also found no significant gender differences in career satisfaction among lawyers, which contradicts other research suggesting that family responsibilities may lead to lower career satisfaction for women [22-25]. Furthermore, there were no notable differences in the mental well-being of male and female lawyers, which is inconsistent with previous findings.

It is indicated that lawyers from extended families experience better financial and mental well-being compared to those from average families. Conversely, lawyers from average families report higher career satisfaction than their extended family counterparts [26]. It is supported the hypothesis, revealing a significant difference in financial well-being, with LLM lawyers scoring higher than LLB lawyers. Several studies have noted that an additional year of education enhances financial satisfaction, suggesting that educational status influences lawyers' career satisfaction, a hypothesis supported by the

data [27, 28]. It is out that LLB lawyers were more satisfied with their careers than LLM lawyers. Furthermore, lawyers who were married showed noticeably greater financial well-being than those who were widowed, divorced, separated, or single. It's interesting to note that lawyers who are widowed, divorced, or separated have better mental health than lawyers who are married or single [29].

Tax lawyers reported better financial well-being than their counterparts in general, criminal, civil, and family law. In contrast, banking and corporate lawyers exhibited superior mental health compared to general practitioners. Meanwhile, general practitioners rated their job satisfaction higher than both tax and banking/corporate lawyers. The findings revealed a negative correlation between work satisfaction and financial well-being, indicating that respondents may not place a high priority on financial health [30-33]. Years of experience, age, monthly income, financial well-being, and mental well-being were found to be positively correlated, though. Furthermore, years of experience and job satisfaction were significantly positively correlated. On the other hand, there was a negative relationship between career satisfaction, age, monthly income, and mental health. Finally, there was a considerable positive correlation between the mental health of lawyers and their age, years of experience, and monthly wage.

It can be recommended to collect sex- and gender-disaggregated data to gain insights into gender dynamics within the legal profession. There should be conduct of comprehensive study that includes data from various cities across the country to assess the current status and inform policy development. It is required to expand the study to incorporate additional variables related to the professional and personal characteristics of lawyers [34, 35, 36].

CONCLUSION

The lawyers who joined the profession for reasons other than gender, family pressure, or passion reported significantly better financial well-being. However, there were no significant differences in career satisfaction or mental well-being based on the motivations for entering the field. The underlying reasons for these outcomes fall outside the scope of this study. It is revealed a negative correlation between professional satisfaction and financial well-being, while age, years of experience, monthly income, mental well-being, and financial well-being were positively correlated. Years of experience and professional satisfaction showed a significant positive correlation, whereas age, monthly income, mental health, and career satisfaction exhibited negative correlations.

It is need of the time to implement gender-sensitive training programs to help reduce gender inequality in the legal field. There should be development of a comprehensive policy aimed at enhancing lawyers' mental and financial well-being, as well as their career satisfaction.

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