

**Research Article**

The Impact of Workplace Inequality on Employee Performance: Moderating Role of Work Social Support and Workplace Resilience in Mitigating the Effect of Perceived Discrimination

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to examine how workplace inequality effect employee performance of Academia of South Punjab, Pakistan; exploring the mediation role of perceived discrimination and moderating role of work social support and workplace resilience. The targeted population for this research comprised the 470 employees (faculty) in the academia of South Punjab in Pakistan. These participants included a diverse range of faculty members from numerous academic fields, offering a complete view of the impact of workplace inequality in the academic sector. As per the research, workplace inequality effects the employee performance. Workplace inequality is a serious and pervasive issue, affecting both employee productivity and ability to design job responsibilities. This study delves into intricate dynamics of workplace inequality, and analyzes the impact of workplace inequality on employee performance by examining the moderating role of work social support and resilience. The negative impacts of inequality are exacerbated by perceived discrimination, which causes disengagement and reduces desire for proactive efforts such as employee performance. Moreover, the study also examines how the impact of work social support and resilience can influence results. Receiving emotional and practical help from colleagues and supervisors at work, known as workplace social support, can decrease the negative effects of inequality and discrimination by lowering stress levels and fostering a more inclusive atmosphere. Resilience, as a characteristic of individuals, helps employees to recover from obstacles, reducing the impact of stress and encouraging a proactive approach to adapting work duties in challenging circumstances. This research highlights the importance of addressing workplace inequity and establishing supportive work atmosphere in order to enhance both employee performance and their efficiency.

KEYWORDS

Workplace Inequality, Perceived Discrimination, Employee Performance, Work Social Support, Workplace Resilience

1 | INTRODUCTION

Employees are the key component of every firm, and they address innovation and vital operational roles that contribute to customer satisfaction. Workers' activities influence the generation of revenues and establishment's credibility and reputation. Studies have revealed that employee performance is influenced by the work environment, which interacts with the organization and its personnel, a certain pattern. Each has specific qualities and/or values concerning the organization that cannot be separated from one another (Suprayitno, 2024). In every organization, all employees perform their duties while making important choices that either see an organization succeed or fail, employees can be viewed as the basis of organizations. Employees are always considered like a backbone of every organization. In today's highly competitive environment, an organization's growth and long-term viability are heavily influenced by the productivity, efficiency, and innovation of its employees.

Workplace inequality has become a major concern for organizations and society to address. People spend a large amount of time in the job, where unequal treatment with employees can occur. Understanding the impact of workplace inequality and performance of the employee is critical. This study assesses workplace inequality and perceived discrimination in individual performance within the employees of academia of South Punjab of Pakistan. According to studies, workers who believe they have received unjust/unequal treatment may react by becoming less productive, missing work, or having a high employee turnover rate (Šadl, 2023). Additionally, studies have demonstrated that workplace inequality may result in a toxic workplace, which may lower morale and productivity among employees (Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004). The concept of inequality within working organizations forms a significant fundamental concern in academia since it provides a background to how institutionalized discrimination affects employees' well-being as well as the overall organizational performance. Mainly academic research offers the necessary theoretical approaches and methods tools to investigate complexity of inequality in its aspects concerning isolation, professional visibility and financial perspective (Rosigno et al., 2023). By analyzing these dimensions, scholars can identify the processes that result in discrimination, exclusion and unfair opportunities, so, to know how these constructs affect employees' behavior, productivity and satisfaction within their job (Dhanani et al., 2018).

According to (Gardiner & Millar, 2006; Pvs, 2018) Employee performance can be impacted by several factors, including personal, occupational, organizational, and environmental influences. A variety of factors affect employee performance, and in order to improve employee performance and accomplish organizational objectives, businesses must take these elements into account. According to the different studies, these elements may be advantageous or detrimental. While negative circumstances and many other factors might result in a decline in employee performance, while positive elements can lead to an improvement in employee performance (Triansyah et al., 2023). In this context, research on the effect of Workplace Inequality on employee performance has been limited thus far. More precisely, no study has stayed conducted to explore the inequality at workplace by using work social support as a moderator (Yousaf et al., 2020) and perceived discrimination as a mediator (Anastasia et al., 2013).

Millions of workers worldwide are impacted by the enduring problem of workplace inequality. It describes how people are treated unfairly and discriminated against in the job because of their gender, race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, handicap, and socioeconomic standing. Workplace inequality has been linked to bad outcomes for employees' performance, job happiness, mental health, and productivity, according to recent study (Jung et al., 2021). According to Kessler, perceived discrimination is one of the major life events that affect health and well-being. Subsequent research has confirmed this assertion (Mickelson & Williams, 2008; Brown et al., 2022; Journal et al., 2003). According to Allen (2019) and (Williams & Mohammed 2009), discrimination is commonly described as treating someone unfairly because of their social standing. It can also result from individual behaviours or institutional structures and policies. Researchers have gathered growing evidence that self-reported discrimination is a psychosocial stressor that contributes to several detrimental effects on mental and physical health, mostly via the mechanisms of diminished social resources and elevated stress (Bastos et al., 2017; Grollman, 2012). Even with the growing focus on the relationship between discrimination and health, researchers still face conceptual and methodological obstacles in their efforts to understand the prevalence and distribution of perceived discrimination (Allen, 2019). Different research has shown delves into workplace inequality and discrimination, highlighting specific different groups disproportionately affected by prejudice based on sex, age, or health, income inequality (Anastasia et al., 2013).

Addressing workplace inequality requires a multidimensional approach, and this research aims to uncover the pathways through which systemic inequalities influence individual and institutional success. Numerous factors, including those related to the individual, the workplace, the company, and the environment, can affect an employee's performance. These components might be helpful or harmful, according to the author. Employee performance can improve when favorable factors are present, but it can also drop when negative situations are present (Jung et al., 2021).

1.1 | Research Significance

Employees are essential in determining the performance and efficiency of any organization. They affect the quality and speed of the work done and thus the achievement of the objectives of the company. An employee if well trained, motivated and with adequate work, social support and resilience yields more output, brings new ideas and

solves problems within the organization thus improving performance. It captures their capacity to integrate into teams, manage change and perform optimally, thereby contributing to the growth and sustainability of the organization. Therefore, it could be summarized that the dedication and efficacy of workers are key to obtaining and maintaining high organizational performance.

Some employees can be locked out from training, mentoring, and growth opportunities because of implicit biases or managerial connections that are exclusive and due to this inequality created at workplace among employees. Favoritism and bias in a particular culture may foster machinist workplace environments that produce stress and conflict. Maintenance of efforts towards work improvements with an aim of advancing in one's job might lead to considerable psychological pressure. Workplace Inequality is a significant factor in addressing this issue is crucial for enhancing employee well-being, promoting organizational effectiveness, and achieving social justice and equality goals. Organizations should create a fair work environment, and employees should develop coping mechanisms. Further research is needed to understand its impact on different sectors and regions. This research also seeks to investigate how social support and resilience could moderate things. It looks at how these elements could serve to lessen the negative consequences of workplace inequality thus allowing workers to manage problems, keep motivation, and participate in job making. The study ultimately aims to provide practical insights for academic institutions to create policies and actions encouraging fairness, expand social support networks, and increase employee resilience, thereby improving performance, creativity, and institutional success. The study will investigate the role of organizational procedures in perpetuating inequality and its persistence in various organizations and fields. The goal of the study is to find out whether job crafting and workplace inequality affect employee performance among university staff in Pakistan.

Focusing on the elements causing differences in treatment among workers and their consequences for individual performance and organizational results, this paper offers an in-depth analysis of workplace inequality. The research aims to address workplace inequality in academia, focusing on the performance of employees and job crafting. So, this research study will help us to understand above explained problem, so that suitable policies can be formed. This problem highlights the research gap as well as the context to which the study seeks to contribute new information. Together with the research questions, it also details the specific aspects that will be looked at in the study.

2 | THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

This study offers a thorough analysis of the body of the research on the impact of workplace inequality on employee performance. The review aims to establish a theoretical framework, highlight key discoveries, and identify research gaps in existing literature. Based on the previous literature this study is being conducted with the aim of exploring and addressing this issue is very important and crucial for enhancing employee well-being, promoting organizational effectiveness, and achieving social justice and equality goals. Businesses should create a fair work environment, and employees should develop coping mechanisms. Recognizing the dynamics of interactions and connections at work, particularly the resource exchange between people and their organizations, is made simpler with the help of social exchange theory. American sociologist George Homans created the theory initially in the 1950s, and in the 1960s, fellow American sociologist Peter Blau built on it (Blau, 1964; Oberai & Agrawal, 2021). The concept was to clarify social behavior and interaction, particularly within the framework of institutions and organizations. According to the concept, people will aim to reduce their expenses and maximize their advantages while communicating with others (Davlembayeva, 2021). COR theory has been widely applied in various domains, including occupational stress, burnout, health, and well-being. The theory states that people interact with others in the hopes of gaining advantages and avoiding disadvantages (Blau, 1964). Employees engage in social exchanges with their employers in the workplace by offering their labor and talents in return for benefits, compensation, and job security (Mitchell et al., 2012). The association between employee performance and organizational support (Eisenberger et al., 1986b), job satisfaction and turnover (Hom & Kinicki, 2001), and employee engagement and commitment (Eisenberger et al., 1986a) are just a few of the workplace relationships studies that have utilized the extensive use of social exchange theory. The other theory that supports our work by supporting that even in presence of perceived discrimination, how work place resilience weakens negative outcomes of stressors on employee performance. Resiliency theory provides a conceptual framework for considering a strengths-based approach to understanding employee development and informing intervention design (Zimmerman, 2013; Zimmerman et al., 2013). Resiliency theory supplies conceptual scaffolding for studying

and understanding why some employees seems productive in spite of risk exposure Resiliency theory focuses attention on positive contextual, social, and individual variables that interfere with or disrupt developmental trajectories from risk to problem behaviors, mental distress, and poor health outcomes.

2.1 | Workplace Inequality and Employee Performance

Employee performance can decline by many factors, abusive behaviour, unequal treatment, unequal distribution of resources. Mistreatment at the workplace poses a constant risk to the well-being of employees and the efficiency of the company. According to Feldblum and Lipnic (2020), mistreatment has been likened to an epidemic, representing a persistent and recurrent threat to the health and well-being of employees (Shaw et al., 2018). In organizations, where certain groups are given preference or certain opportunities are unequal, differences can really bring varying perceptions in its employees about the roles and their capacity to modify it. In many occasions stress or strong negative emotions that are likely to make employees remain passive and thus cannot initiate efforts towards planning for role enhancements for greater success (Albayrak-Aydemir & Gleibs, 2023). Unequal treatment of staff can lead to frustration, anger, and decreased commitment, resulting in increased stress and anxiety. Factors like job promotion and interpersonal relationships can also contribute to this issue. Equal treatment and access to opportunities are critical in workplace dynamics for optimizing employee contributions. When employees believe they are being treated properly and included, they are more likely to be motivated and engaged, which leads to better productivity and a greater readiness to actively participate in duties like job creation (Bidwell et al., 2013). This not only increases individual performance, but it also ensures that the company's objective is met. In contrast, the sense of perceived discrimination can lower employee productivity, demonstrating the need of positive work environments. Work social support and resilience are crucial components in empowering employees, allowing them to overcome hurdles and remain focused on organizational goals. Companies develop a pleasant environment that promotes dedication, inspires creativity, and ensures the attainment of common goals by praising and supporting people (Shantha A., 2019). Workplace inequality in academia is a result of structural mechanisms affecting access to opportunities, resources, and recognition. Disparities in professional visibility and resources exclude marginalized groups from leadership roles, financial benefits, and job satisfaction. Workplace Inequality fosters perceived discrimination and employee performance, further widening the gap between privileged and underrepresented faculty members. A significant amount of research has shown the relationship between employee productivity and workplace inequality. However, additional study remains necessary to comprehend completely the link between workplace inequality and employee performance, a performance where workers take an active role to determine the nature of their jobs, relationships, and workplace culture (Berg et al., 2013). Inequality is an injustice that occurs when people of a certain group are treated differently (Kundu, 2003). Denissen AM, (2014) mentioned that inequality demotivates employees and literature confirms that demotivation reduces employee performance at the workplace. Therefore, we propose that

Hypothesis 1: Workplace inequality will have a significant negative effect on employee performance.

2.2 | Mediating Role of Perceived Discrimination

Inequality at work can lead to a hostile workplace that encourages discrimination. Workers who feel they are receiving unfair treatment could become more perceptive to other people's behavior and think it discriminating. This may set off a chain reaction of unfavorable encounters that increase sentiments of animosity and discrimination (Anastasia et al., 2013). Furthermore, discrimination in compensation, employment, and promotion may arise from workplace inequity. Employees may feel discriminated against if they believe that groups are being given preference throughout the hiring and promotion procedures, which can occur when there is an unfair advantage. Likewise, workers may believe they are the target of discrimination if they believe their compensation is unfair (De Clercq et al., 2021). Therefore, we propose that:

Hypothesis 2: Workplace inequality will have a significant positive relationship with perceived discrimination.

Perceived discrimination refers to actions of institutions and/or individuals within them, setting unfair terms and conditions that systematically impair the ability of members of a group to work (Rospenda et al., 2009). Often, it is motivated by beliefs of inferiority of a disadvantaged out-group compared to a dominant group (Bogg & Roberts, 2004). Racism, or discrimination based on race, justifies the mistreatment and dominance of members of a particular racial or ethnic group due to beliefs of their genetic and/or cultural inferiority; it also carries a history of

societal power relationships between races (Williams et al., 1997). (Okechukwu et al., 2014) found that interpersonal injustice causes discrimination and stress at work which effect performance outcome. Perceived discrimination can be implicit or explicit, impacting numerous aspects of people's life, and is described as the situation in which an individual or group is treated differently due to personal or societal characteristics (Mascheroni & Smahel, 2022). Some discrimination may be hard to identify since some people are aware that they are the target of discrimination. Look, attitudes, age, gender, sexual orientation, financial status, ethnicity, cultural identity, and/or a combination of these traits can all contribute to this. While many aspects of prejudice have been researched recently, most of these studies centre on racial, ethnic, and cultural discrimination, which is also the subject of this study. "Unfair, differential treatment on the basis of race or ethnicity" is the real explanation of this sort of discrimination (Greiner & Owusu, 2022) (De Coninck et al., 2024). Therefore, we propose that Hypothesis 3: Perceived discrimination will significantly mediate the relationship between workplace inequality and employee performance.

Perceived discrimination in the workplace can stem from negative assumptions, personal preferences, and a lack of understanding of individual issues. It can also be caused by a lack of regard for diversity, excessive leisure time, scepticism towards concerns, bad recruitment practices, and inadequate employee training. Discrimination in the workplace often stems from the actions of human resources managers. Employees may engage in discriminatory talks based on gender, ethnicity, or religion when HR managers do not supervise them during their leisure time. This study aims to focus on workplace inequality and its impact on employee performance. This work examines the workplace environment and the impact of prejudice as a current management issue. Improving employee performance and organizational competency is a key challenge for management (Lee & Wu 2011),& (Maryam Mustapha & Garba Bala Bello, 2021).

2.3 | Moderating Role of Work Social Support and Workplace Resilience

Work Social Support is described as a person's perceptions of love, care and respect from other people around him (Cobb, 1976) suggested that individuals seek support from the people around them. Support grants them feeling of being part of the social group; with social support, individuals feel valued and belonging. It has been found that support is most effective when the source of support is relevant to the stressor being experienced (Beehr et al., 1990). Discrimination constitutes a potentially powerful indicator of stress and has enormous consequences for psychological well-being. According to (Cohen & Wills, Thomas Ashby Stress, Social Support, 1985), emotional support provides a buffer to a wide-ranging category of stress while instrumental support is effective when the support provided coincides with the stress experienced, i.e., financial help in the face Ethnicity & Health. The limited research on how social support intervenes to influence the effect of perceived discrimination on health suggests that social support represents a coping strategy (Brondolo et al., 2009). The effectiveness of support may vary by which types are available in the face of perceived discrimination (Atri, 1957), (Atri et al, 2007). Negative outcomes are associated with the stress of perceived discrimination and the related experience of social inequality, yet these effects can be successfully buffered by emotional dimensions of social support (Yousaf et al., 2020). Therefore, we propose that Hypothesis 4: The relationship between workplace inequality and perceived discrimination will be moderated by work social support.

Resilience is understood as the capacity or set of features that enables one to adapt successfully to stressful challenges (Alvord & Grados, 2005) found that resilience could weaken the negative effect of workplace stressor. Therefore, we propose that resilience could weaken the negative effect of perceived discrimination and psychological stress, which are also supported by resilience theory of (Branscombe et al., 1999). Still, the negative effects of inequality are greatly reduced by excellent work social support and personal resilience. Social support—embodied in mentoring, collegial support, and supportive leadership—offers psychological safety and practical aid, therefore buffering the negative impacts of stress and prejudice and allowing individuals to participate in meaningful job making despite systematic disparities. Resilience not only helps workers to be more adaptable and consistent in the face of difficulty but also encourages ongoing involvement and job innovation even under unfair circumstances. The self-directing aspect of creativity and efficiency of employees could be significantly affected by unfair treatment in organizations such as inequity or lack of equal opportunities. Those experiencing inequity may lack confidence in what they are doing or changes to make in their workplace leading to low employee morale and motivation. When employees are lonely and have no prospects for promotion anxiety increases and it is added to

negative working environment (Yin et al., 2023).

All things considered, the studies not only help to identify and correct workplace disparities but also offer practical remedies that might improve institutional success and employee performance, contributing significantly to the discipline of organizational behavior and human resource development in academia. Promotive variables can be either assets (good aspects of the individual, such as competence, self-efficacy, or coping abilities) or resources (external aspects, such as parental support), according to (Bernaras, 2018). Fletcher and Sarkar (2013) define resilience as the ability to maintain regular functioning in the face of considerable adversity or dangers. Protective factors for positive outcomes include strong personal beliefs, a supportive family environment, and access to external support systems (e.g., family, friends, schools, or public institutions). Protective variables can strengthen coping mechanisms against stress (Cederblad, 1996; Werner, 1993; Werner & Smith, 1992), potentially shielding individuals from discrimination (Garba Bala Bello, 2021).

Hypothesis 5: The relationship between perceived discrimination and employee performance will be moderated by workplace resilience.

Employees' output in the workplace is highly influenced by unequal treatment there is. Workers who feel that their opportunities, resources, or recognition vary typically report lower job satisfaction and engagement, which results in less emotional commitment to their work. This unhappiness may lead to further bias and discrimination, which, in chronic form, helps to cause burnout and absenteeism, therefore reducing production. Furthermore, uneven treatment reduces workers' capacity to participate in job crafting, that is, to modify their responsibilities to better fit their interests and aptitudes—so limiting inspiration and creativity.

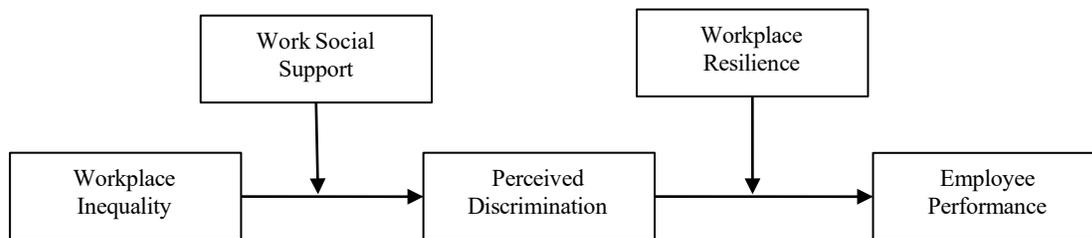


Figure 1: Workplace Inequality Model

3 | METHODS

Any study must have a research design since it specifies the procedure and methods for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data. The research design addressing the relationship between workplace inequality and employee performance must be carefully considered to meet the study's objectives and produce valid and reliable data. This study will be a one-time, quantitative cross-sectional study. The information would be gathered from Pakistani universities in one session (from Academia from South Punjab). Due to the autonomous sector, i.e. universities, the level for job inequality and insecurity is much higher in the autonomous sector than any other sector.

Table 1

Questionnaire Details

Sr. No.	Variables	Sources	Items
01	Workplace inequality	Roscigno et al., (2023)	7
02	Perceived Discrimination	(Stucky et al., 2011)	9
03	Employee Performance	(Arshadi, 2011)	7
04	Work Social Support	(Yousaf et al., 2020)	6
05	Workplace Resilience	(Connor & Davidson, 2003)	10

4 | RESULTS

Table 2 explains demographic data of our respondents in terms of gender, education, age, Demographic Analysis (N=470)

Table 2
Demographic of Participants

Demographics	Category	Frequency	Percentage%
Gender	Male	327	(70%)
	Female	143	(30%)
Education	MPhil	319	(68%)
	Doctorate	151	(32%)
Age (In years)	15-30	248	(53%)
	31-45	177	(38%)
	46-60	39	(8%)
	Above 60	6	(1%)
Job Experience (In years)	1-5	124	(26%)
	6-10	152	(32%)
	11-15	138	(29%)
	16-20	40	(9%)
	Above 20	16	(3%)

4.1 | Validity and Reliability

All of the variables included in the analysis have high levels of internal consistency, as shown by Cronbach's alpha values which are far above the 0.70 threshold range that supports the reliability of the construct table 3. Convergent validity was established since all factor loadings were larger than 0.5 (Triana et al., 2015). All individual factor loadings were greater than 0.6, significant at $< .01$. In terms of construct validity, the AVE values of WP1, PD and EP are above 0.5. All square roots of AVEs are higher than their corresponding correlation outcomes hence, discriminant validity was proven (Voorhees et al., 2016). The study's results provide credence to the reliability and accuracy of the measuring tool used. It was also determined that the inter-variable correlations were much less than the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct (Sürücü & Maslakci, 2020). These results provide credence to the reliability and validity of the instruments used in the research; table 4.

Table 3
Validity and Reliability

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Items	Factor Loading
WP1	0.84	WPI1	0.87
		WPI2	0.86
		WPI3	0.81
		WPI4	0.79
		WPI5	0.75
		WPI6	0.70
		WPI7	0.72
PD	0.73	PD1	0.70
		PD2	0.79
		PD3	0.83
		PD4	0.77
		PD5	0.69
		PD6	0.76
		PD7	0.80
		PD8	0.79
		PD9	0.71
EP	0.79	EP1	0.74
		EP2	0.69

		EP3	0.76
		EP4	0.79
		EP5	0.72
		EP6	0.81
		EP7	0.83
		WPR1	0.77
		WPR2	0.77
WPR	0.76	WPR3	0.78
		WPR4	0.76
		WPR5	0.73
		WPR6	0.64
		WPR7	0.66
		WPR8	0.87
		WPR9	0.84
		WPR10	0.72
		WSS1	0.70
WSS		WSS2	0.75
		WSS3	0.69
		WSS4	0.86
		WSS5	0.69
		WSS6	0.78

WPI= Workplace Inequality; PD= Perceived Discrimination; EP= Employee Performance; WPR= Workplace Resilience; WSS= Work Social Support

Based on the information, it appears that all of the scales used in the study had good to excellent levels of internal consistency reliability. The Workplace Inequality (WPI) had the highest reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of .84, indicating that the items on this scale were highly correlated with one another and consistently measured the same construct. The Perceived Discrimination (PD) also had a high level of reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of .82, indicating that the items on this scale were also consistently measuring the same construct. The Employee Performance (EP) also had a high level of reliability with Cronbach's alpha of .79, indicating that the items on this scale were also consistently measuring the same construct. The Workplace Resilience (WPR) also had a high level of reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of .76, indicating that the items on this scale were also consistently measuring the same construct. The Work Social Support (WSS) also had a high level of reliability with Cronbach's alpha of .82, indicating that the items on this scale were also consistently measuring the same construct. In addition to providing information about the reliability of the scales, the factor loadings indicate the degree to which each item is associated with the underlying construct being measured by the scale. It appears that all of the items had good factor loadings, indicating that they were measuring the intended constructs. Overall, the reliability and validity of the scales used in this study suggest that the data collected is likely to be reliable and valid, which strengthens the conclusions. Calculated AVE (average extracted variance) is shown in Table-3. The AVE readings are all above the threshold of 0.50. According to Hew and Syed A. Kadir (2017), employing the Fornell-Larcker rule that all square roots of AVEs should be greater than their corresponding correlation values demonstrates discriminant validity. The construct's dependability has also been confirmed by attaining Cronbach's Alpha and composite reliability ratings above 0.70. Strong convergent validity of the measurement model was found in this investigation, as shown by the high AVE values. High Cronbach's Alpha and composite reliability ratings further suggest that the model's constructs are trustworthy and consistent

Table 4
Discriminant validity, Convergent validity, and R-square of EP

Variables	EP	WPI	PD	AVE	CR	R ²
EP	.764			.582	.922	.52
WPI	.392	.788		.624	.919	
PD	.284	.021	.763	.584	.907	

Diagonal values are the sq-root of AVE; Perceived Discrimination (PD)=.584, Workplace Inequality (WPI)= .624 Employee Performance (EP)= .582; AVE= average variance explained; CR=Composite Reliability: Perceived Discrimination (PD)= .907, Workplace Inequality (WPI)= .919, Employee Performance (EP)= .922. In Table-4, the AVE values of WPI, PD and EP are acceptable as they are greater than 0.5. The composite reliability is greater than 0.6 and the construct's convergent validity is acceptable. According to the research of Anderson and Gerbing (1988), convergent and discriminant validity were used in the development of the path analysis. The present investigation used structural equation modeling to quantify AMOS values. This research differs from others in that it relied on structural regression to test its assumptions. SEM's main benefit is that it can correct measurement errors inside a statistical framework, which is something that multiple regressions can't achieve.

Table 5
Model Fit

Model	RMSEA	CMIN/DF	CFI	NFI
Default model	.062	1.923	.920	.916
Independence Model	.278	30.226	.000	.000

AMOS's primary goal is to assess how well a given structural equation model fits the data (SEM). In structural equation modeling (SEM), model fit is used to determine whether the hypothesized model adequately explains the data. Many fit indices, such as CMIN/DF, CFI, NFI, and RMSEA, were used to evaluate the quality of the model fit, as shown in Table 4. According to Kline (1998), a satisfactory match between the hypothesized structural model and the actual data is achieved when the CMIN/DF number is less than 3. Both the CFI (0.920) and NFI (0.916) values are above the threshold of 0.90, indicating an excellent match. The RMSEA value of 0.062 shows good fitness of model; Table 5.

4.2 | Path Analysis

In structural equation modeling (SEM), a statistical metric called the route coefficient indirect impact is used to evaluate the indirect link that exists between two variables. It provides a numerical measure of the degree to which one or more intermediate variables moderate the influence of a single independent variable on a single dependent variable. Researchers can identify the degree and relevance of these indirect effects by evaluating the path coefficients, which provides them with significant insights into the underlying mechanisms and processes at play.

Table 6
Mediation Path Analysis

Hypothesis	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
PD→EP	-.148	.054	-1.898	***
WPI→EP	-.104	.065	-1.601	***
WPI→PD	.378	.056	6.704	.005

Note: *** significant at 0.001

The table shows the estimates, standard errors (S.E.), critical ratios (C.R.), and p-values for the paths between the variables, table 6. The paths show the relationships between the predictor variables (WPI, PD) and the outcome variable (EP). The estimates represent the strength and direction of the relationship, while the standard errors and critical ratios provide information about the statistical significance of the estimates. For the first hypothesis (H1), the path between Workplace Inequality and Employee Performance significant relationship ($\beta = -.104$, $p = 0.001$). This suggests that there is a significant negative relationship between Workplace Inequality and Employee Performance. For the second hypothesis (H2), the path between Workplace Inequality and Perceive Discrimination has significant relationship ($\beta = .378$, $p = .005$). This suggests that there is a significant relationship between Workplace Inequality and Perceive Discrimination. For the third hypothesis (H3), the path between Perceive Discrimination and Employee Performance has a significant negative relationship ($\beta = -.148$, $p < .001$). This suggests that there is a significant negative relationship between Perceive Discrimination and Employee Performance. Overall, the results of the path analysis support all hypotheses, suggesting that Workplace Inequality and Perceive Discrimination affect employee performance. Hence proof our H3:

Table 7
Mediation Results

Hypothesis	Paths	Results
H1	WPI→EP	Approved
H2	PD→EP	Approved
H3	WPI→PD	Approved

Results further show that Perceived Discrimination partially mediates the relationship between Workplace Inequality and Employee Performance.

Table 8
Moderating Effects of WPR and WSS

Hypotheses	Path	β	SE	CR	p
H4	WPIxWPR →ZPD	0.15	0.038	1.65	.005
H5	WPIxWSS →ZPD	0.19	0.151	2.21	.001

Note: *** significant at $p < .001$

WPI = Workplace Inequality; PD= Perceived Discrimination WPR= Workplace Resilience; WSS=Work Social Support.

Table 9
Moderation Results

Hypothesis	Paths	Results
H4	WPIxWPR →ZPD	Approved
H5	WPIxWSS →ZPD	Approved

Similarly, workplace resilience has significant moderate effects between the relationship of perceived discrimination and employee performance. Further, results showed that work social support ($\beta=.19$, $p=0.001$) has significant moderating effect on the relationship between workplace inequality and perceived discrimination and results showed that workplace resilience ($\beta=.055$, $p=0.005$) has significant moderating effect on the relationship with perceived discrimination and employee performance.

5 | DISCUSSIONS

This study is being conducted with an aim to explore and address this issue is very important and crucial for enhancing employee well-being, promoting organizational effectiveness, and achieving social justice and equality goals. Employee performance is influenced by factors such as job promotion concerns and interpersonal relationships that cause anxiety often. That reduces coping in addition to psychological wellbeing since loneliness and stress originate from social exclusion. Although, employee anxiety, burnout, perceived discrimination and psychological stress can result from mistreatment with employee at their workplace (McCord et al., 2018). This results in decreased production and financial losses related to sick leave, burnout and withdrawal from work and frequently avail holidays at the organizational level (Dhanani et al., 2021) (Atamba et al., 2023). Workplace inequality affects employees globally, affecting their performance, job happiness, mental health, and productivity due to unfair treatment based on gender, race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, handicap, and socioeconomic standing. Due to such type of inequalities and mistreatment performance of employees negatively (Jung et al., 2021).

Millions of workers worldwide are impacted by the enduring problem of workplace inequality. Favoritism and bias in a particular culture may foster machinist workplace environments that produce stress and conflict (Bolt, 2012). It describes how people are treated unfairly and discriminated against in the job because to their gender, race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, handicap, and socioeconomic standing. Inequality is an injustice that occurs when people of a certain group are treated differently (Kundu, 2003). Denissen AM, (2014) mentioned that inequality demotivates employees and literature confirms that demotivation reduces employee performance at the workplace. Inequalities in the workplace at academia could lower job satisfaction, perceived discrimination, and lower employee performance. Employees that feel underappreciated for reasons like gender, race, or socioeconomic background may become demotivated and their output may be hampered. Inequality may also result in poor

performance at work, reduced output, and career stagnation. Different research have shown delves into workplace inequality and discrimination, highlighting specific different groups disproportionately affected by prejudice based on sex, age, or health, income inequality (Anastasia et al., 2013)

This study showed that support from mentors, peers, and leaders improves emotional resilience and provides useful tools that let staff members participate in job creation and maintain performance standards even with inequity. This encouraging system helps workers control their stress and offset the demotivating consequences of prejudice by fostering validation and belonging. In the end, social support helps people to adjust more successfully, maintain involvement, contentment, and productivity within an unfair workplace. Universities should provide social support (Yousaf et al., 2020) and resilience that really helps in the operational effectiveness, creativity, effective problem solving, customer satisfaction, organizational culture and climate, staff and employee relations, organizational resilience, knowledge and experience, strategic management, and leadership (Shantha A., 2019) and this study showed that mentoring and a conducive corporate culture—to help with these problems. This helps workers control stress and prejudice, therefore allowing them to better shape their work and keep good performance (Wilks & Spivey, 2010). Maintaining a good working environment and guaranteeing people feel empowered and valuable depend on addressing occupational inequality.

According to a resilience theory (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998), features of positive self-concept (e.g., personal self-esteem) may reduce the negative consequences of perceived discrimination (Jia, Liu, & Shi, 2017). The findings are most likely explained by the fact that strong personal self-esteem functions as a resilience resource in the face of prejudice, lowering the threshold for acknowledging discriminatory treatment and marinating affective organizational attachment while decreasing intentions to quit. A comparative analysis of different businesses with varying levels of unequal treatment with employees reveals that prejudice lowers levels of motivation. Motivated employees are more innovative and effective problem solvers. Employees in a discriminatory organization are bored, anxious, and less productive. Employees who feel valued at work are more likely to be content with their jobs and experience a sense of belonging to the firm (Uncle Elei, 2016). This paper focuses on the impact of workplace inequality on employee performance, specifically at Pakistani universities. There are several sorts of inequality, including sexual or gender inequality, ethnic inequalities, a lack of resources and opportunity for minorities, and promotion discrepancies. The findings indicate that driven consumers have greater actual and perceived performance, however work uncertainty diminishes performance motivation and employee voice, which is consistent with earlier research and predicted by self and social identity theory (Amjad, 2018). This is especially essential for Pakistani university faculty members, as university environments and the level of assistance provided to various categories of staff influence research achievements and teaching efficiency (Ali, 2019).

6 | CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This examination has given the new skyline by characterizing and drafting a roundabout connection factor in the relationship of workplace inequality and it affects employee performance. This investigation has presumed that independent stress available in the work environment deteriorates the behavior and performance of the employees. This study could be valuable, for researchers, as it outlines the connections between inequality, employee effectiveness and job customization while laying a solid foundation for future exploration. Academic experts can utilize these discoveries to investigate connections in settings or delve into additional factors. Additionally, this research sets a standard for scholars working on dissertations or papers concerning inequality offering an insight into how systemic obstacles impact employee results. In the end this research moves the field forward by providing approaches for organizations to diminish disparities, improve staff welfare and promote career development. The findings laid out will influence both progressions and real-world regulations promoting more supportive atmospheres, in the academic sector.

In the study, it is apparent that discrimination is an evil in the organization. It affects cohesion and reduces creativity in the organization. Several factors are responsible for discrimination in the organizations. The negative stereotypes about people of a particular origin promote discrimination in the workplace. Besides, the poorly trained employees in the workplace do not understand the discrimination laws. It is evident that gender preference in the workplace is discrimination. The management of an organization may prefer to work with employees of a particular sex and origin because of personal perspective. Additionally, the inadequate laws that protect the employees in the organization provide a soft ground for discrimination. Ideally, discrimination exists in different forms. For example, some employees are discriminated against because of gender, origin, color, age, and academic

qualification. Irrespective of the nature of discrimination, the results of the discrimination are negative to the developments in the organization. A comparative analysis of different businesses and organizations with varying levels of inequalities that really creates discrimination that reveals that prejudice and unequal treatment with employees lowers levels of motivation. Motivated employees are more innovative and effective problem solvers. Employees in a discriminatory organization are bored, anxious, and less productive. Employees who feel valued in the workplace are content with their jobs and feel a part of the firm (Uncle Elei, 2016).

7 | RESEARCH LIMITATIONS & FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The study on workplace inequality in academia has limitations, including its geographical and contextual constrained nature, potential biases due to onetime collected data, and its cross-sectional nature. Data can be collected by different time intervals. The staff members of the South Asian universities have been included in this study, but population can change and sector can be changed. It fails to account for the temporal evolution of workplace inequality and its impact on employee outcomes and does not account for intersecting demographic and institutional variables. The study also does not exhaustively explore other potential mediators or moderators, such as organizational culture, leadership styles, and policy interventions. These limitations suggest the need for future research to adopt a more expansive and longitudinal approach, incorporating diverse contexts, methodologies, and variables to build on the foundations established by this study. Future research should incorporate intersectional social categories like race, gender, class, and disability into the analysis of inequality relations and outcomes. This could involve an integrated approach using quantitative and qualitative methods. More research is needed on the connection between historical and current disparities, as well as the effects of injustice on the present. This research framework can be embraced by other fields such as health care or corporate industries where similar patterns of disparities with regard to visibility, remuneration and inclusion.

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