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WOMEN IN ARCHITECTURE IN PAKISTAN: AN INVESTIGATION OF STATE OF WOMEN IN THE PROFESSION

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ABSTRACT

The status of women in architecture institution, reveals a record of achievement on global as well as national level, in a developing country like Pakistan, reflecting the advances made in education and practice but also reflecting the barriers that still await women. Although women are increasing in number as students and graduates, yet they are under-represented in practice. This paper studies the status of women architects in Pakistan through a survey of registered architects, to understand the factors that influence their career participation, selection, retention, and professional growth and development. The results inferred that professional experiences of women likely to be influenced by factors such as, in the work place, in the office system, in the family, in the work place flexibility, professional support in work place, and in the society in general. A comparison of male and female perceptions suggest a statistically significant discrepancy on issues like gender inequalities in work place, work place support by organization and professional growth. Family commitments and childcare are the challenging factors, while work flexibility is a prominent factor for retention of women. The paper provided the empirical data on women in architecture, in Pakistan with recommendations for professional inclusion, workforce retention, and career long development.

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Introduction

An architectural career is considered one that requires creativity, technical skill and leadership qualities. Though significant increases in women's access to higher education have been achieved, there is still evidence of gender bias in architecture practice around the world. Increasingly, women are entering architectural schools and graduating at the same or higher levels of degree

completion than men, but significantly lower proportions are practicing and influencing the field. Research in Europe and North America has shown the existence of workplace challenges including disparities in professional advancement, gender-based pay differences, sexual harassment, limited opportunities for professional mentorship, and work/family conflicts. Despite greater participation at educational levels, the number of registered women architects are still significantly lower. In the UK, women make up 31 percent of registered architects (ARB), similar trends are seen elsewhere in the developed countries of the world.

Within Pakistan, the issue is particularly significant due to the broader context of women's labour force participation. While the education level of women has been on the rise over the years, their participation in the labor market still lingers. According to the World Bank, women comprise less than a quarter of the country's total labor force.

The architecture profession presents an interesting case within this context. The observations made from various architecture colleges in Pakistan reveal that women make up a considerable number and sometimes even the majority among all the students admitted to these colleges. Nonetheless, this growing presence in the academic world has not been reflected in the profession of architecture in any way. The reasons for this may be many and are associated with factors influencing career development and progress.

While there have been many studies conducted on gender equity in architecture globally, there has been little data collected on the experiences of female architects in Pakistan. In fact, most of the studies that have been conducted use either anecdotal evidence or professional commentary or other such methods as opposed to conducting research on the architectural profession itself. Therefore, very little is known about the perceptions of Pakistani architects about workplace equality, wage equality, promotion, workplace culture, harassment, and professional inclusion.

The current research aims to fill this gap in knowledge by conducting a survey among registered architects in Pakistan. The research looks at issues related to the dynamics of gender and how they affect the profession, along with the factors that influence the participation of women in this field. Through this research, based on the experiences of practicing architects, an attempt is made to develop discourse on gender and professional practice in Pakistan.

Research Objectives

- Examine the current status of women in the architecture profession in Pakistan.
- Examine workplace experiences factors including those influencing participation, retention, and career progression.
- What factors influence women's participation, retention, and career progression within architectural practice in Pakistan?
- Develop recommendations for improving workforce retention and professional inclusion.

Research Questions

- What is the status of women within architectural practice in Pakistan?
- How do male and female architects perceive gender equality within the workplace?
- What measures can improve gender equity and professional inclusion within Pakistani architecture?

Literature Review

Women in Pakistan's Workforce

According to the National Institute of Population Studies (NIPS) Pakistan's current population stands at 215.25 million. Pakistan has the 9th largest labor force in the world, and women make up 23% of the urban labor workforce. This figure has not changed significantly in the last 20 years, according to the collection of indicators of development by the World Bank, compiled in various published sources. This fact by itself is enough to investigate the matter of women in professional disciplines in Pakistan. Additionally, the status of women in Pakistan is not homogeneous because of the predicament of gender with other forms of exclusion in society. Even among women with high levels of education, labor force participation remains low whereby, approximately 25% of women with a university degree in Pakistan are working.

McKinsey & Company's 2021 report titled 'Women in the Workplace' found that there remains a disconnect between commitment companies show towards gender equity and the lack of improvement of daily experiences of women in the workplace. The report gathered data from 45000 people in corporate America. Such a study has not been carried out for the South Asian region, however, in a developing country like Pakistan where women make up half the population of the country, 48%, it may be vital to analyze the state of women in the workplace for analyzing future implications. According to the McKinsey & Company report women's representation has increased across the professional pipeline since 2016 however, the gender gap in the professional world remains wide across the globe regardless of discipline.

Historical Context

The involvement of women in architecture thought often ignored, is over two centuries old. Although until recently women's contributions have been unnoticed, they have in fact exercised influence, particularly, on architecture over the past century. They played a key role in historic preservation through organizations such as the Daughters of the American Revolution (1890); exhibiting their work as early as 1893's World Exposition in Chicago where Sophia Hayden designed the women's pavilion.

Though the journey of women in architecture can be traced back to 19th and early 20th centuries, throughout history, the architectural profession is characterized by a significant gender imbalance. Women have faced numerous barriers to entry and advancement in the field. During the 19th – 20th century pioneering women in architecture began challenging societal attitudes.

Louise Blanchard Bethune and Eileen Gray made notable contributions, but they were exceptions in a male-dominated field. Although the profession saw incidental growth of women in the academic domains of architecture, whereby, women were entering architecture schools in great numbers by the 20th century which even caused shift in the statistics, however, the women in professional practice remained minimal.

The Architects Registration Board (ARB) in 2023, reported that 31% of registered architects in the United Kingdom were women while more recently, the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards reported that women made up 27% of licensed architects in the United States (NCARB, 2025). So, where are the women in architecture? This discrepancy points towards a pattern where women exit the profession at higher rates than men. The reasons for this phenomenon are likely multifaceted. Previous research has identified factors including workplace culture, career interruptions, work-life balance challenges, organizational practices, family responsibilities, limited professional support structures, and experiences of discrimination. The relative importance of these factors varies across countries, professions, and socio-cultural contexts.

The history of women in architecture entails a trend whereby there have been instances of oppression and success. First, women were not allowed into architectural schools until the end of the nineteenth century. For instance, some reputable colleges, including the École des Beaux-Arts in France, started accepting women as their students in 1898, marking a milestone for other institutions globally. This was an indication that there was a progressive admission of women into architecture and, in turn, to become architects. However, college enrollments numbers could not reflect the total number of professionals in the discipline. A study done in the later part of the twentieth century showed that even though women accounted for almost half of all architecture graduates, they formed ten percent of professional architects.

It was a response to the need for diversity that became a pedestal for increased inclusion of women in the architecture workplace.

This period saw a turning point as the professionals realized the need for increasing diversity in the field. Efforts were made to increase the number of women architects, which led to increased awareness of gender disparity. The analyses conducted through different architectural associations revealed that despite the steady increase in female enrollment in architecture schools (up to 46% in 2018), there was no increase in representation in the profession.

Global Trends of Representation of Women in Architecture

Female participation in the field of architecture worldwide varies widely depending on the regions and nations. According to statistical studies conducted through various sources, even though there have been great achievements in terms of female students joining architectural studies, it is not the same case in the practice of architecture. For instance, in countries like the United States and the United Kingdom, the percentage of women registered as architects stands

at about 30-31%. Although the percentage has been gradually increasing because of the equal number of women becoming newly registered architects, such an increase happens amid senior male positions in architectural firms.

A number of barriers have been identified by research as factors causing the gender gap in architecture. Gender stereotypes contribute significantly because people view this sphere as a masculine one. This means that there is a bias toward the skills and achievements of women who work in this area. Moreover, a pay gap still exists between men and women in architecture. Many female architects face the issue of balancing work and family, because of which their careers get interrupted, or they are unable to work as many hours as men. The lack of mentoring options can be considered another obstacle to the professional growth of women. However, there are certain measures that help increase women's involvement in the sphere under discussion on the global level. There have appeared some organizations, including Women in Architecture (WIA), whose goal is to provide women in architecture with the possibility to build professional networks.

Trends in Construction Industry in Pakistan

Pakistan's construction industry sees a negligible number of women, this is no different from worldwide trends, in the United States women make up below 11% of the workforce in the construction industry. Comparatively, the visual arts discipline records a much higher number of women, though formal surveys to verify this information have not been conducted. Women confidently claim some aspects of the 'arts' however domains of business development, construction and project supervision are all considered 'manly' tasks by the public and the profession.

Architecture is often seen as the middle ground between engineering; a discipline that is seen as hard labour requiring frequent interactions with men and independent travel and arts; a discipline that is commonly seen as a hobby rather than a profession especially during financially burdened times in a developing country. In common understanding, an architect's training imparts knowledge in a broad range of subjects and develops the ability to solve complex problems in complex scenarios using creativity and design primarily within the walls of an office space and therefore, the best of both worlds. Although, these thoughts are certainly not applicable to all female individuals who choose architecture as a profession, it is presented as common thought.

In contemporary architecture culture in Pakistan, there exist conversations and discourse on inclusive public spaces, gendered spaces, and dilemmas of social institutions within the academia however, in practice, these conversations are limited to independent reports and surveys by nonprofit organizations. Many aspects of society have seen a shift from the 'gender-typing' of things; meaning the social context that refers to behaviors and values which are more characteristics of one gender than the other.

Even in Pakistan, many roles, and scenarios once gender biased are over time evolving as neutral grounds for all genders to exist. However, in the constructions industry this shift remains

negligible. Moreover, the number of women in the field of architecture especially in practice has consistently been low despite assumably higher ratios of female to male students in architectural schools. Although the reasons for stepping away from the field varies, their departure has not been recognized and remains unaddressed by the educational and professional fields. Despite growing interest, there remains a significant research gap regarding comprehensive statistical data on women's representation in architecture globally and specifically within Pakistan.

The State of Women in Architecture in Pakistan

In Pakistan, the situation for women in architecture reflects both progress and ongoing challenges. While comprehensive statistical data on women's representation within the field remains scarce, anecdotal evidence suggests a significant increase in female enrollment in architectural programs over the past decade however, this increase does not come through in number of women in architecture practice. Informal observations obtained through communications with architecture departments at several Pakistani universities, including NCA Rawalpindi, COMSATS University Islamabad, COMSATS University Lahore, UET Abbottabad, CECOS University Peshawar, Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture, NCA Lahore, University of Management Technology, and the University of the Punjab, suggest increasing female representation within architecture programs. However, comprehensive national statistics documenting enrollment patterns remain limited. Therefore, the apparent disconnect between women's educational participation and professional representation warrants further investigation. While on one side, it may reflect the changing attitudes of society towards women and their career and educational goals, yet as this change does not necessarily reflect in professional numbers, it is also likely that an architecture degree is simply because of being a good middle ground between engineering and the arts. However, there could be several reasons behind this issue. These reasons could include the lack of proper mentoring programs, work-life balance issues, family-related problems, working environment, organizational issues, and discrimination issues faced by some practitioners.It is perhaps the recognition of these obstacles that initiatives such as Women Architecture Pakistan (WAP) have emerged to advocate for women's rights within architecture. WAP aims to empower female architects through networking opportunities and initiatives that promote gender equality.

Recent reviews of gender inclusion within architecture have identified retention, career progression, networking opportunities, mentorship, and workplace support structures as recurring factors influencing women's long-term participation within the profession (Carrasco & Lopez, 2025).

Research Gap

The existing literature indicate that the disconnect between women's architectural education and design practice still exists. Different literature suggest reasons -organizations and leadership styles, constraints for women in design practices, issues of gender and employment relationships, barriers for women in workplaces, work culture, work-life balance, family factors and experiences of discrimination. There are researches done in North America, Europe and Australia that have

looked at issues faced by women such as discrimination at workplaces, gender pay gap, glass ceiling and invisible barriers, poor representation in leadership positions and lower access to networks. These issues are not exclusively the same for Pakistani women because of differences in cultures, social structures and work environments and hence there can't be the same generalization.

There are numerous researches available in Pakistan which explore issue of women in labor force but limited for women in architecture. In addition, most of the existing literature is merely descriptive and anecdotal. More importantly, there is no study that has done an empirical survey of the registered architects in Pakistan about gender issues, such as inclusion at work, discrimination at work, equal pay at work, career progression, policies, and work environment at work.

Another important gap is that there is very little information available on women's progress in architecture from education to practice in Pakistan in terms of comprehensive statistics at a national level. The lack of publicly available longitudinal data makes it difficult to analyze the retention rates, promotion, representation in leadership positions, and advancement in the field. This research tries to fill this gap with empirical data.

This study addresses this gap by providing survey-based evidence from registered architects in Pakistan and offers one of the first comprehensive examinations of the state of women within the architectural profession in the country.

Recent international research suggests that no singular factor adequately explains why women leave architectural practice, and that attrition is often shaped by a combination of workplace, professional, and social influences (Möller et al., 2022).

Theoretical Framework

This research dilates on the involvement and retention issue among female architects in Pakistan. The existing research regarding women in the area of architecture has primarily concentrated on discrimination and gender inequality although the current research follows a wider perspective. The objective of the investigation is to find the reasons why women enter the profession, continue working in it or quit their jobs, or what prevents them from progressing in their careers. Hence, the theoretical framework relies on theories of workforce participation and retention, work-family conflict theory, along with social role theory with workplace equity being used in this case as a supplementary analytical theory.

Workforce Participation and Retention

The guiding principle for this research is the concept of workforce participation and retention. Workforce participation involves the act of entering and remaining in a profession, while retention is concerned with how long one's career is pursued. In examining the issue of employee retention, it has been noted that it is seldom due to a single cause. The determinants of retention

include a variety of factors such as organizational factors, career opportunities, and remuneration systems. (Hom et al., 2017; Hausknecht & Holwerda, 2013).

Representation in architecture cannot simply be analyzed using statistics related to enrollment in educational programs. The apparent increase in the number of women entering the field of architecture is not necessarily reflected in practicing professionals. As a result, the problem is not only in access to education, but also in the dynamics of retention and progression in the profession. The latter argument seems to hold merit in the case of Pakistan, with anecdotal evidence indicating more women enter academia than opt for architecture as a career. As such, working participation is the primary perspective through which the results of this research are interpreted. Rather than assuming a single explanation for underrepresentation, it allows various professional, organizational, cultural, and personal influences to be examined collectively.

Work–Family Conflict Theory

Work–Family Conflict Theory provides a second important perspective for understanding professional participation and retention. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) define work–family conflict as a form of inter–role conflict in which pressures arising from work and family responsibilities become mutually incompatible. Individuals may have trouble balancing professional obligations with family commitments when time, energy, or behavioral expectations in one role interfere with performance in another role.

Given the nature of the profession, the relevance of this theory to architecture is particularly strong. Architectural practice entails long hours, coordination among many players, site visits and irregular hours. The demands of the profession can pose challenges to an individual who needs to balance work with child–rearing or family obligations. Work–family conflict has been established to relate to less job satisfaction, higher intention to turnover, and attrition across professions. (Allen et al., 2000). Within the Pakistani context, where family obligations often influence career choices and professional mobility, this framework offers a useful explanation for workforce participation patterns. The theory is especially applicable to the present study because family commitments, childcare responsibilities, and workplace flexibility emerged as significant concerns within the survey findings.

Social Role Theory

Social Role Theory provides a broader socio–cultural perspective for understanding professional participation. According to Eagly (1987), social expectations influence the roles individuals are expected to perform within society. These expectations shape perceptions regarding appropriate occupations, behaviours, responsibilities, and career trajectories. Eagly and Wood (2012) further argue that occupational outcomes are influenced by culturally constructed social roles that guide individual and collective expectations.

The cultural context of Pakistan determines the nature of involvement in the workforce, as various expectations of families, care, movement, and work contribute to people's choices regarding their careers. These expectations may hinder communication but do not stop them from having a career since such expectations might affect the possibility of advancing in one's position, moving forward in terms of one's career, making the right choice about a particular career, and staying in this profession for a long time.

Social Role Theory is applicable to the field of architecture as this profession combines technical, managerial, and creative areas of activity. The way architecture and work in this sphere is perceived by society may differ in the context of participation aspects from any other profession. Thus, it is possible to find out how cultural expectations and social norms can interact with professional opportunities and experience in the workplace.

Workplace Equity

While workforce participation and retention provide the primary focus of this study, workplace equity functions as an important supporting concept. Workplace equity refers to fairness in organizational practices, opportunities, treatment, compensation, and professional advancement. It encompasses issues such as equal pay, equal treatment, professional recognition, discrimination, harassment, mentorship, and organizational support.

The concept is particularly relevant because workforce participation cannot be understood solely through personal or social factors. Workplace conditions themselves may influence employee satisfaction, career progression, and decisions regarding long-term participation. Previous research within architecture and other professions has identified workplace culture, access to opportunities, promotion systems, and organizational support as important contributors to professional outcomes (Architects Registration Board, 2023; NCARB, 2025; McKinsey & Company & LeanIn.Org, 2024).

Within this study, workplace equity is considered as one of several interacting influences affecting participation and retention rather than as a single explanatory factor. This approach allows professional experiences such as discrimination, unequal treatment, harassment, and pay perceptions to be examined alongside broader workforce and socio-cultural influences.

Conceptual Position of the Study

Fundamentally, the aforementioned paradigm, in totality, suggests that, dearth of representation of women in the field of architecture may not be attributable to any one reason. Participation and retention in the architectural profession, on one hand, seem to be determined by several factors related to professional opportunities, organizational factors, experiences at the workplace, human roles and responsibilities, and, societal gender-roles and expectations on the other. This study therefore, adopts multiple paradigms that, simultaneously, explore workforce retention, work-

family integration, workplace equity, and socio-cultural factors. This multi-paradigm approach forms a balanced basis for understanding survey results.

Methodology

This research paper investigates the state of women in the field of architecture in Pakistan. A survey-based research methodology was used, based on a diagnostic cross-sectional survey shared with registered architects across Pakistan. Given that the study aimed to gather both numerical information regarding workplace experiences and participant perceptions regarding gender-related issues, the research adopted a mixed-methods approach, incorporating primarily quantitative survey responses supported by qualitative observations and comments provided by respondents.

Population and Sampling

This study used licensed and registered architects with Pakistan Council of Architects and Town Planners (PCATP) as the sample. PCATP architects/registered architects formed the sampling frame, and the registered architects were the target population to be surveyed. The study reached these sample members through e-mail lists, networks, and online platform communications. Since access to the entire population of registered architects was limited, the study used a non-probability convenience sampling technique. 165 registered architects completed a questionnaire two times in 2023 and 2024, which appears to have increased the response rate and the number of respondents from a wide range of geographic locations and professional and institutional settings.

Instrument Development

The main survey tool used was an online survey questionnaire. This was created using themes from a literature review of research into the subject of women in architecture, including: workplace equality, discrimination, career development, organizational culture, and gender barriers to career advancement. This tool was pilot-tested using a small group of architects in order to assess any potential issues with usability and interpretation. Additionally, the questions in the survey were written based on some specific criteria that directly stem from the literature reviewed. Respondents were asked to relate their opinions about different topics, including workspaces, discrimination and harassment policies, onsite facilities, coworker attitudes, opportunities in leadership positions, and compensation inequity.

Data Collection Procedure

The survey was distributed to respondents via email and various other online/ social media environments. This method was selected because of the opportunity it provided for broad accessibility, wide geographical coverage, and minimal time required to respond. The online survey allowed for the collection of data from both female and male genders to be analyzed and compare data accordingly.

Data Analysis

In analyzing the responses, descriptive statistical procedures (i.e. Frequencies, percentages, and comparison) were used. Comparisons based on gender were made whenever appropriate in order to infer the gender related perception/performance of the respondents, respectively. Content analysis on open-ended responses was also used in order to find recurring themes and patterns of responses that might give additional contextual explanation to the statistical results. The results were then presented in tables, charts, and figures.

Ethical Considerations

This research was conducted under a volunteered model of participation. Participants were informed of the aims of the research prior to participating and completion of the questionnaire was taken as implied consent. No personal data was collected from participants and the answers were treated with complete anonymity and confidentiality. The data were only used for academic research.

Use of Artificial Intelligence Tools

Artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used in a limited supporting capacity during the preparation of this manuscript. AI-assisted tools were utilized for language refinement, editorial assistance, formatting support, organization of survey data, secondary tabulation of results, and the generation of tables and graphical representations based on the survey dataset. AI tools were not used to generate primary research findings, interpret results, draw conclusions, or replace the authors' scholarly judgment. All outputs produced with AI assistance were carefully reviewed, verified, and validated by the author against the original dataset prior to inclusion in the manuscript. Responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, interpretation, and conclusions of the research remains solely with the author.

Analysis of Survey Findings

The survey collected 165 valid responses from registered architects in all over Pakistan across two time period (2023-2024) of rounds with 45 men and 120 women. For all closed-ended questions, descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) are tabulated separately for Male and Female categories. Chi-squares of independence are reported in order to assess the relationship between gender and responses for each dichotomous, closed-ended question. For ranked multi-select and open-ended questions, responses from respondents first choice for each, first ranked or first-listed response were scored to extract the most important issue in each category.

Respondent Profile

Of the 165 respondents, 92.1% reported being currently employed or employed within the past five years (93.3% of men, 91.7% of women), indicating an economically active sample well placed to speak to workplace conditions. Respondents were distributed across practice (44.2%),

self-employment/freelance practice (25.5%), and academia (23.6%). Monthly income was concentrated in the PKR 50,000–100,000 band (29.1%), followed by PKR 100,000–200,000 (23.6%); a combined 26.0% earned above PKR 200,000 or below PKR 20,000 at the extremes. By role, the sample spanned early-career (Junior Architect, 19.4%) through senior and ownership-level positions (Principal Architect/Partner, 23.0%; Senior Architect, 15.2%), giving the survey reach across the seniority spectrum.

Perceptions of Gender Equity in the Workplace

Table 1 summarizes responses to the core equity items, disaggregated by gender. Across every item, women reported a less favorable workplace experience than men; on seven of the ten binary items this gap was statistically significant.

Table 1:

Survey item	Overall	Men (n=45)	Women (n=120)	χ^2 test
Currently/recently employed	92.1%	93.3%	91.7%	n.s.
Architecture is a gender-inclusive profession	48.5%	48.9%	48.3%	n.s.
Male and female architects treated equally	63.0%	82.2%	55.8%	χ^2=8.68, p=.003
Female effective on site visits	64.8% Yes / 26.7% No / 8.5% Other	—	—	χ^2=4.42, p=.035
Workplace is gender-balanced	69.7%	95.6%	60.0%	χ^2=17.94, p<.001
Gender hindered a raise/promotion	37.0%	26.7%	40.8%	n.s. (p=.134)
Firm offers flexible hours to women	54.5%	77.8%	45.8%	χ^2=12.21, p<.001
Firm provides dedicated facilities	58.8%	73.3%	53.3%	χ^2=4.61, p=.032
Witnessed/faced gender discrimination	48.5%	31.1%	55.0%	χ^2=6.55, p=.010
Firm has anti-harassment policy	62.4%	68.9%	60.0%	n.s. (p=.385)
Men and women receive equal pay	71.5%	86.7%	65.8%	χ^2=5.99, p=.014

Seven gaps have reached statistical significance. Men were significantly more likely than women to report that their workplace is gender-balanced (95.6% vs. 60.0%; χ^2=17.94, p<.001) and that flexible working hours are offered to women (77.8% vs. 45.8%; χ^2=12.21, p<.001) — the two largest and most robust gaps in the dataset. Significant gaps also emerged on equal treatment (82.2% vs. 55.8%; p=.003), equal pay (86.7% vs. 65.8%; p=.014), witnessed/faced discrimination (31.1% vs. 55.0%, reversed direction — more women report witnessing it; p=.010), dedicated facilities (73.3% vs. 53.3%; p=.032), and perceived site-visit effectiveness (p=.035).

Only gender-inclusivity of the profession as a whole, gender's role in blocked promotions, and anti-harassment policy existence showed no significant gender split — the same three items that were non-significant at the smaller n=100 subsample, now confirmed as genuine null results rather than an artefact of sample size.

This pattern suggests that male and female architects may experience workplace conditions differently despite expressing similar views regarding the profession's overall inclusivity. The divergence becomes most evident when respondents are asked about day-to-day workplace experiences, organizational support, facilities, and workplace flexibility.

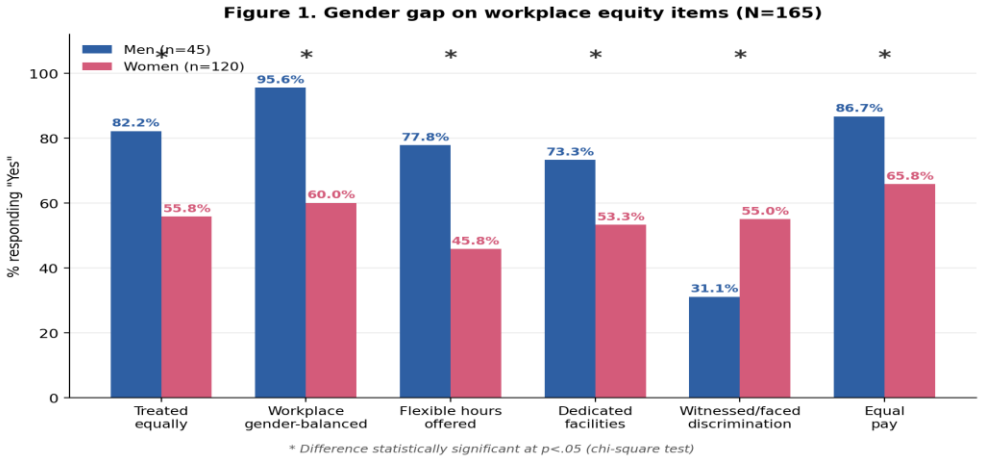

Figure 1. *Percentage of male and female respondents answering "Yes" on six core workplace-equity items. Asterisks mark gaps statistically significant at p<.05 (chi-square test of independence). Source: survey data, N=165.*

Site Visits and Fieldwork

64.8% of respondents affirmed that female architects are as effective as men on site visits, 26.7% disagreed, and 8.5% qualified their answer (most commonly noting that academic site visits differ in nature from professional ones). Separately, 13.9% of respondents reported that their firm's site-visit policy excludes women from site-visit tasks altogether, while 47.9% reported that every architect is expected to conduct site visits regardless of gender, and a further 20.0% are given individual choice. The coexistence of broad affirmation of women's field competence alongside a minority of firms formally excluding women from that same fieldwork indicates perceived competence has not fully translated into equal task assignment.

Sources of Workplace Grievance and Attrition

Ranked first among grievances raised by female architects: family commitments/childcare (43.6%), followed by long working hours (26.1%) and the attitude of co-workers, subordinates, and associates (25.5%); gender-based salary disparity was ranked first least often (4.8%),

suggesting salary, while present as a concern, is experienced as less immediately pressing day-to-day than scheduling and workplace culture.

Reasons for leaving a previous position followed a similar logic: an unsatisfactory salary package was the leading reason (30.3%), followed closely by lack of professional growth (27.3%) and an unsuitable work environment (15.2%).

Asked what forms of gender inequality they had personally experienced or witnessed, the dominant response was unequal workplace treatment — most commonly articulated as male architects being held to a lighter standard while female architects are expected to produce or achieve more in the same time (37.4% first-ranked; a further 28.8% cited unequal treatment without this specific framing). Disparity in salary (10.1%) and bullying (5.8%) were cited less often as the primary concern, and 7.9% of respondents reported experiencing none.

What Would Improve Retention

Flexible working hours was the single most frequently first-ranked retention factor (36.4%), well ahead of childcare facilities (14.5%), a healthy and unbiased work environment (13.3%), and physical/psychological security (13.3%); equal salaries (9.1%) and mentorship (8.5%) were ranked first least often. Set against the equity findings above, this is the paper's clearest actionable result: flexible hours shows the largest, most statistically significant gender gap in current provision (45.8% of women report having it, vs. 77.8% of men) and is simultaneously the single factor respondents most frequently identify as the top priority for retention — making it a natural centerpiece for the Recommendations section.

Discussion and Interpretation

The results of this survey provide first empirical information regarding the experience of women as architects in Pakistan. The research was motivated by a sense that a disconnect exists between the higher numbers of women entering architectural schools, and the lower number of women practicing as architects. The survey results, however, do not suggest that the disconnect is due to any one factor. Instead, the participation, retention, and career advancement of women architects is likely to be affected by the intersection of professional experiences, organizational factors, family obligations, employment issues and social norms.

In terms of employment, the findings of the study reveal women remain engaged within the profession. More than 91% of the women surveyed indicated they currently or recently worked in the profession within the last five years, supporting the notion that women architects are still participating within the context of the profession and the professions has the potential to continue to contribute to the profession. Despite relatively high participation levels reported by these women, they demonstrated less positive experiences within the workplace across multiple scales when compared to men, including with regard to treatment in the workplace, work-life balance,

access to flexible work arrangements, provision of dedicated space, compensation, and experiences of discrimination.

In terms of work participation and retention, the findings imply that professional stability is probably due to a combination of workplace conditions, not just a single factor. Answers from the surveyed respondents centered on pay, professional development prospects, workplace conditions and family obligations as being factors affecting employment decisions. As evidenced by the workforce retention literature, the concept of retention is not only concerned with pay, but is contingent upon a combination of work organizational climate, organizational context and individual factors.

Perhaps the most important of these is the impact of family obligations and the concept of work-life balance. This survey confirms that family obligations and childcare are the most frequently reported stress factors for female architects and that flexible working hours are the most significant factor in increasing retention. Flexible working hours also have the most statistically significant gender gap. This confirms the Work-Family Conflict Theory, which suggests that simultaneous pressures of work and family obligations as sources of conflict could affect the course of career development, job satisfaction, and employment participation. The findings imply that the ability to balance work and family life is likely to be an important factor affecting the long-term career retention of women architects in Pakistan, where family obligations are likely to continue to be an integral part of professional and personal life.

These results seem to support the applicability of Social Role Theory. While architectural practice has been increasingly accessible to women through the progression of educational opportunities, more widespread cultural norms still seem to play a role in how women participate professionally. The profession is situated in a position at the crossroads of technical, managerial, creative and construction work. As introduced in the review of the literature, culture sometimes views architecture as an intersection between engineering and the visual arts. This view may have an effect on career choice, and what is expected in professional practice. Factors such as family obligations, work environment flexibility and sociocultural factors are recognized by respondents as having an impact on continued practice, implying the effect may be far more cultural and institutional than organizational.

Alongside these concepts, equity in workplace was another important concept in the survey results. Women appeared to be much less likely than men to express an opinion that they have been treated equally, received equal pay, engaged in work-life balance, and experienced good working conditions. Furthermore, women reported their experience of discrimination much more frequently than men. Although these findings do not indicate that discrimination alone can explain trends in participation in the profession, the information provided suggests that professional experience continues to exert an influence on the experience of the profession for different groups of people.

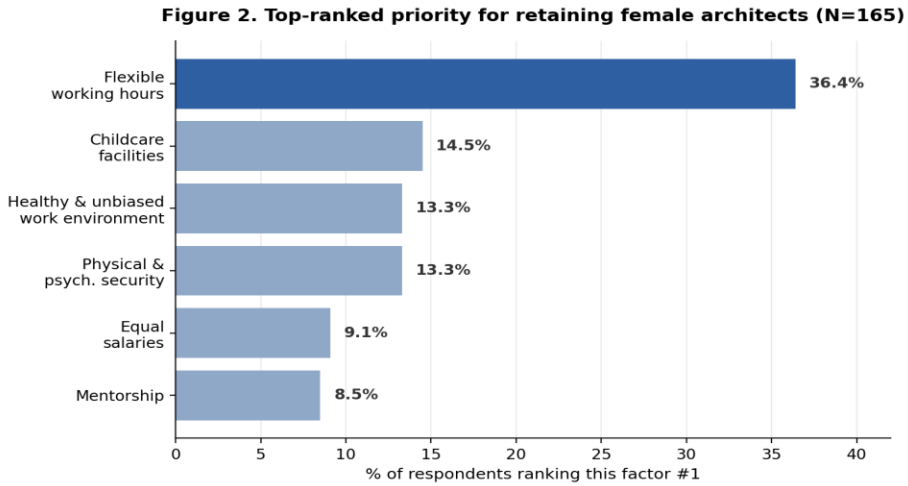

Figure 2. *Percentage of respondents ranking each factor first when asked what would most help retain female architects in the workplace. Source: survey data, N=165.*

The results related to site visits offer a rich insight into the nature of work. Although by and large, participants believed that female and male architects undertake similar roles during site visits, it appears from a number of studies that some practices continue to remove responsibilities for work on site from female architects. This suggests that a shared belief as to professional competence may not always equate to equal opportunities within the career territory. It is also hypothesised that these variations in role and responsibilities will impact upon professional exposure, learning and progression in the long term.

This research makes an important contribution regarding the identification of flexibility as a key issue for the workforce. Out of all the possible changes made, flexible working conditions were ranked as the most likely intervening event to increase retention. This discovery is remarkable in itself since it was revealed to be not only the strongest retention advice but also one of the greatest gaps reported by respondents and can therefore lead us to a conclusion about one of the most feasible ways to promote long-term retention in the occupation.

The research results point towards a significant amount of other factors such as work practices, organizational structures, family constraints, career development opportunities and social factors which are likely to have an impact on the working lives of women architects in Pakistan. While workplace inequality may exist in Pakistan, the results of this survey seem to point towards the fact that retention and involvement is likely to be governed by a complex web of other interconnected factors. Therefore, attempts to raise the status of women within the profession should not necessarily be restricted to equal opportunity measures alone. Instead, greater flexibility in the work place, provision of job resources, career development opportunities and organizational practices, which enable people to work more efficiently in the long-term, need to be improved.

These findings support the conclusions of Möller et al. (2022), who found that women's attrition from architecture is rarely attributable to a single cause and is instead influenced by multiple interacting professional and personal factors.

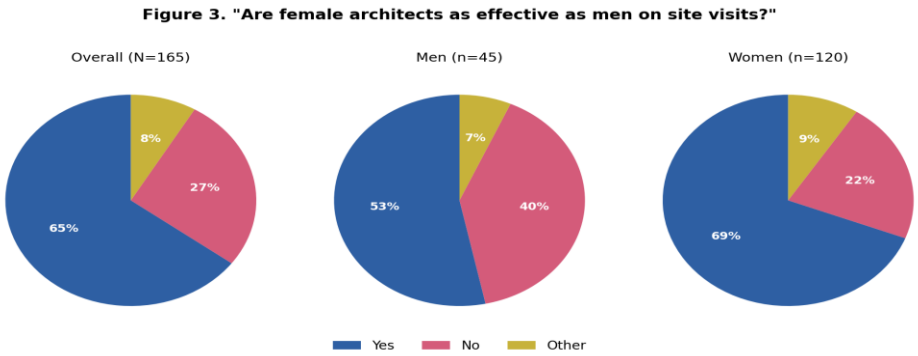

Figure 3. *Responses to "In your opinion, are female architects as effective on site visits as men?" shown overall and by gender. "Other" includes qualified responses such as noting that academic site visits differ from professional ones. Source: survey data, N=165.*

Recommendations

Policy-Level Recommendations

Appropriate institutions like the PCATP along with relevant stakeholders ought to engage in a periodic data collection exercise concerning the involvement of the workforce in terms of retention, representation in leadership positions, and career progress. Currently, the unavailability of thorough national statistics makes it hard to comprehend trends in the workforce and limits the process of policymaking based on evidence.

Firm-Level Recommendations

Flexible working arrangements are crucial and prominent for architectural firms since nearly all respondents indicated that flexibility at work is a main factor contributing to their decision to stay working in their current mode of employment. Flexible hours can help people arrange their work and family life more effectively. In addition to that, companies must do their utmost to develop clear procedures for advancement in their firms and policy of providing equal opportunities as well as establish means of reporting cases of discrimination and harassment. In general, it should be noted that respondents have different views on the importance of workplace experience.

Institutional Recommendations

There is a need for architectural institutions to bolster mentorship avenues by creating closer connections among students, graduates, and working professionals. Increased exposure to foreign career trajectories may help learners have a clear picture of the realities of career practice and

progress. Other stakeholders, like educational institutions, professional organizations, and employers, need to work together to offer training, development activities, and networking opportunities to encourage effective lifetime participation in workforce careers.

Research Recommendations

It is recommended that future studies are conducted with larger research samples and wider geographical areas investigated. Longitudinal research which follows graduates' careers after completing architecture training would add invaluable knowledge regarding their career progress, pursuing a job and retaining position in industry. Further qualitative studies can be made to discover how family duties, working environment, and professionalism in general affect their career choices in Pakistan.

Limitations of the Study

The findings of this study must acknowledge several limitations. Firstly, the study used a convenience sample composed of registered architects, which raises the question of how representative the results are of the experiences of all architects in Pakistan. Secondly, the results are based on perceptions self-reported by the participants, and may be influenced by an individual's bias, memory, and interpretations of the events. Thirdly, while the number of respondents is valid for exploratory study, the sample size may compromise the generalization of the results across regions, organizational forms, as well as types of practice. Finally, the study only gives a snapshot of participants' views concerning their past experience. Notwithstanding these restrictions, the research yields fruitful empirical information on gender issues in the field of architecture in Pakistan and lays a basis for bigger studies in future.

One more constraint is the lack of reliable national statistics on the female population engaged in architectural education and practice in Pakistan. In contrast to a number of countries where the required data is regularly published by professional bodies in the form of gender-divided information about the workforce, such information in Pakistan is relatively scarce. Consequently, the hope for large-scale comparison of education and practice-related information is somewhat diminished due to limited accessibility of publicly available information.

Conclusions

This paper studied the condition of women in the field of architecture in Pakistan and compared it with the global trend of female participation in this profession. Based on literature and survey data the research concluded that the gap persists between women's growing engagement in architectural education and their involvement in real-life professional practice.The results showed that women architects face obstacles related to workplace culture, professional promotion, support from the organization, and recognition for their work. Though there are some differences in how men and women perceive professional equality, some important factors

affecting women's participation in workforce may be mentioned including workplace experience, organizational policies, personal life balance and social expectations.

The research adds to the restricted amount of literature on female architects in Pakistan by presenting empirical findings from certified architects in addition to identifying important aspects for professional associations, employers, and educational institutions that still need improvement. Gender equity in architecture cannot be achieved merely through raising the number of female architects. It requires thorough changes in professional settings, organizational culture, and professional conduct that affect career growth and retaining women.

Future studies should continue this research by conducting larger national studies, as well as in-depth interviews and longitudinal studies on female architects' career paths and professional experience in different areas of Pakistan.

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