

EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROTECTION AGAINST HARASSMENT OF WOMEN AT WORKPLACE ACT, 2016: EVIDENCE FROM HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS OF QUETTA

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Abstract

This study, using a sequential explanatory mixed-methods approach, evaluates the experience of Higher Education Institutions of Quetta, Balochistan, Pakistan's Protection Against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act 2016 (PAHWWA Act). Data were collected through a structured questionnaire for the quantitative component of study with 94 academic staff and administrative staff from seven public and private HEIs; qualitative data were elicited through open-ended survey questions to 32 purposively selected participants. Chi-square tests, Mann-Whitney U analyses, and binary logistic regression were performed for descriptive and quantitative data, and systematic thematic analysis according to Braun and Clarke (2006) was employed on qualitative questionnaire items. The results point to a real theoretical and documented discrepancy between the formal existence of the Act and its substantial implementation. While 93.6% are nominally aware, reporting of harassment cases is only 9.8%, piles inquiry committees function/ are known to exist in only 29.8% and proper enforcement of penalties as per respondents was only 5.3%. Almost universally culture and social barriers operate: 100.0% say that fear of damaging reputation inhibits reporting, 97.9% report that cultural norms result in not reporting whilst 89.4% report that patriarchal dominance is a major influencing factor. The experience of harassment more than once was a powerful predictor of more negative perceptions overall on every dimension measure of Act efficacy (Mann-Whitney U, all $p < .01$). Binary logistic regression indicated that perceived adequacy of protection was the only statistically significant predictor of perceived workplace safety (OR = 6.565, 95% CI [2.021, 21.327], $p = .002$). Six qualitative themes shed light on the structural, cultural and institution mechanisms underpinning these figures. The paper argues for multi-layered reform agenda including mandatory sensitization, independent committee of inquiry, and institutional accountability with periodic audits of their driving the act, easily accessible reporting mechanism and a culturally sensitive and contextually specific policy initiative to turn the PAHWWA Act into lived experience for women in the higher education sector of Quetta so that the legislative intent may be enforced in letter and spirit.

1. Introduction

The Protection Against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2010 (Amendment) Ordinance was promulgated in Pakistan in 2016, which expanded the definition and scope significantly following an amendment (Wajahat et al., 2021). The Act requires inquiry committees to be set up at all places of employment that employ three or more persons, defines time periods for complaint resolution and outlines penalties against offenders and non-compliant institutions (Deeba, 2021). It is arguably the most important piece of gender-rights legislation in the post-independence legal history of Pakistan, formalizing state commitment to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) to which Pakistan became a signatory in 1996 (Khan, 2015).

Despite the existence of a strong legislative framework, both at federal as well as provincial levels, evidence from different parts of Pakistan suggests that the implementation of the Act remains inconsistent and uneven (Nishtar et al., 2013). This implementation gap is most evident in Balochistan – Pakistan's largest but least developed province – where a unique blend of ingrained cultural traditions, patriarchal social structures, feudal power dynamics and extreme levels of institutional capacity shortfall combine to form an environment wholly unsuited to formal complaint-making (Ullah et al., 2025). Even Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), which supposedly operate as bastions of progressive ideals and a place for the cultivation of professionalism, are not immune (Faiz, 2015). The study presents an important contribution to the existing literature because it is the first systematic, mixed methods study that has been conducted in the implementation of the PAHWWA in the provincial capital of Quetta, Balochistan. The study combines qualitative findings from a thematic analysis of 32

respondents from seven institutions with quantitative findings from a survey of 94 employees from seven institutions, to give depth and breadth of evidence to not only show what is happening (the extent of harassment, reporting, availability of complaint mechanisms etc.) but why (the institutional failings, cultural constraints, and individual calculations that combine to explain the limited impact that Act has had on operability).

This study has three contributions to the literature. It provides empirical, disaggregated, and collection of evidence from a geographically and culturally specific context, which has been identified in existing research as being understudied. Second, because of its mixed methods approach, statistical trends can be expressed in the voices of the participants, leaving conclusions that are theoretically sound but practically informative. Third, it raises an observation about culture, where some respondents argued that women were 'safeguarded' in Quetta city 'culturally' and not 'by law', which calls into question prevailing law-centered policy approaches and calls for a more nuanced policy approach.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Workplace Harassment: International and Domestic Framework

Workplace harassment represents a type of violence against women that involves a systematic assault on women's ability to engage in formal employment, progress professionally or lead mentally healthy (ILO 2019; Un Women, 2020). At the international level, human rights violations in workplaces due to harassment is addressed in Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (Shaw et al., 2018), Beijing Platform for Action (1995) and ILO's Violence and Harassment Convention No.190 (2019). Together, these instruments create a normative framework that requires all states parties to enact

legislation and set up complaint mechanisms at the national level while ensuring compliance (Shaw et al., 2018).

PAHWWA Act 2016 is the main domestic instrument in Pakistan in fulfilment of this obligation (Sojo et al., 2016). The Act defines what amounts to harassment, be it verbal or written, or physical misconduct; its procedural framework comprises specified composition, timelines and powers of inquiry committees; and it covers individual perpetrator as well as liability of the organization for failing to fulfil its requirements. Crucially, the Act requires institutions to publicize its provisions, provide awareness training and ensure that all staff are made aware of their rights – duties whose performance, as this study illustrates, is consistently flouted across HEIs in Quetta.

2.2 Implementation Challenges in the South Asian Context

Academic literature on gender-protection legislation in South Asia consistently records a significant divide between the intent of policy makers and operational reality (Htun and Weldon, 2012; Kapur, 2005). Various interrelated issues have been cited as explaining this gap: limited institutional capacity, a lack of legal awareness among possible complainants and those in leadership positions within institutions, the cultural norms that associate complaint-making with stigma, political economies that favor influential perpetrators at the expense of victims (Sojo et al., 2016).

Research on implementation challenges in Pakistan has documented particularly severe hurdles. The public sector in Pakistan provides systematic disincentives to making formal complaints about workplace harassment for women, including ostracism, pressure from family and from the community more generally (Pokorny, 2026). Some forty years earlier, Mumtaz and Shaheed (1987) already made the case that legal reform without cultural change

leads to legislation that is paper thin – a finding this study deems very relevant to the Quetta context close on four decades later (Noreen & Musarrat, 2014).

The notion of ceremonial compliance, introduced by DiMaggio and Powell (1983) in their seminal paper on institutional isomorphism, closely resembles the implementation patterns observed herein. Understanding how and why multinational organizations adopt formal structures, is important because that signals legitimacy to audiences outside. In the case of PAHWWA, inquiry committees may be formed not so as to effectively deal with complaints but in order to meet a regulatory requirement – creating an illusory sense of compliance without ever addressing the underlying dynamics of power.

2.3 Cultural Context: Balochistan and the Honor Economy

Deep-rooted tribal hierarchies and feudal power asymmetries, combined with an "honor" economy that polices women's conduct in ways that limit their ability to exercise formal legal entitlements have been identified as key features of Baluchistan's social fabric (Usman, 2011). In her seminal work on affective economies, Ahmed (2004) maintains that shame is not simply an individual emotion, but a socially disciplining force: the fear of public shame assembles formidable architectures of silence that formal legal protections cannot easily breach (Ahmad, 2019).

2.4 Research Gap

However, existing studies of PAHWWA Act implementation have largely approached academic institutions only through corporatization within their case study regions initially focused on the major urban centers – Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad (Awan & Saleem, 2017; Khan, 2019). More generally, Quetta and Balochistan are poorly represented in the empirical literature. First, this study directly

tackles this geographical and institutional gap with findings relevant for Quetta-relevant policy reform as well as providing new perspective on a wider theoretical question regarding implementation strategies in contexts of considerable cultural constraint.

3. Theoretical Framework

This research draws from three overlapping theoretical perspectives. An initial institutional theory – particularly DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) notion of ceremonial compliance – contributed the conceptual vocabulary for interpreting why organizations may adopt the formal architecture of compliance while failing to make its functional substance. The theory argues that organizations facing external regulatory pressure will develop highly visible compliance structures mainly for legitimacy and not operational efficiency, a phenomenon that the present study terms symbolic implementation.

On the other hand, as Kapur (2005) and Menon (2012) show feminist legal theory is helpful in understanding when law can act as a vehicle of real gender justice versus functioning simply to legitimize patriarchy. This perspective focuses the analytic lens on both the gap between emancipatory promise and enacted potential in law but also – as is the case in Quetta – a structural, institutional, and cultural gap.

Third, and relatedly, the rational choice model of reporting behavior, as theorized in organizational psychology (McDonald, 2012), does not frame non-reporting as an individual failure to act with courage but rather a rational response to foreseeable systemic outcomes: when professionals reasonably expect the costs of reporting (in social stigma, professional consequences and likelihood of institutional action) to exceed the benefits – non-disclosure is then clearly the best course. This new framework fundamentally shifts policy attention from individual-level agency to structural incentive

reform, a reorientation well-supported by the findings of this study.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design

The study follows a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018) where Phase 1 involves quantitative data collection and analysis followed by qualitative data collection planned to help explain and further contextualize the statistical results. The design was selected because the research questions necessitated survey data to provide statistical documentation of patterns of prevalence, reporting rates, and relationship between prevalence and predictors, and participant narratives of mechanisms, constraints, and calculations contributing to patterns.

4.2 Quantitative Component

The data were collected from 94 subjects including academic and administrative staff of seven Higher Education Institutions from Quetta: Sardar Bahadur Khan Women's University (SBK Women's University), Balochistan University of Information Technology, Engineering and Management Sciences (BUIITEMS), University of Balochistan, University Law College, Quetta, National University of Modern Languages (NUML), Government Girls Degree College Quetta Cantonment, and Al-Hamd Islamic University. Purposive focus on representativeness in terms of institution type (public/private), designation and gender was used with a convenience sampling technique. The questionnaire consisted of seven parts: A. Demographics; B. awareness of the PAHWWA act and the availability of an enquiry committee; C. types of workplace harassment experienced; D. reporting behavior and barriers to reporting; E. perceived effectiveness of the act on five dimensions; F. perceived cultural or social barriers to reporting; and G. perceived impact on workplace culture or recommendations for remediation.

The remaining questions (Section E and G) used a 5-point Likert scale (where 1 = Strongly Agree and 5 = Strongly Disagree). There were also binary (Yes/No) and three-select (Yes/No/Not sure) items in sections F and G. SPSS Version 26.0 was used for the analyses, which included: descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages); chi-square tests of independence and Fisher's exact tests to assess categorical associations; Mann-Whitney U tests in order to compare Likert-scale group comparisons ordinally; and binary logistic regression for multivariate prediction. There were few missing values (<2%); one variable (incident reported) had one missing value providing a valid N of 92 for reporting related analyses.

4.3 Qualitative Component

Written responses from thirty-two participants (n = 32) to seven open-ended prompts were embedded within the questionnaire. These included: effectiveness of local implementations of the Act; barriers to reporting; cultural factors that may restrict the reach of the Act; awareness (or not) of rights and obligations under the Act; perceived institutional safety; gendered/community norm influences on understanding, buy-in for and support for implementation in local contexts; recommendations regarding areas needing development or strengthening. Participants were purposively sampled to achieve equal gender balance (16 female, 16 male), and sample variation with respect to employment category, seniority, and type of institution. Data were analyzed following Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic coding framework which proceeded through initial open coding, focused coding, and theme development across two independent rounds of coding.

4.4 Ethical Considerations

All participants provided informed consent, participant codes (P1–P32 for qualitative

participants; Q1–Q94 for quantitative respondents) were utilized to maintain anonymity and confidentiality was maintained throughout. At any stage participants had the ability to withdraw free of penalty. Prompts about harassment or cultural norms were framed with added care to minimize distress and social desirability bias.

4.5 Limitations

The use of a convenience sample from participating institutions only weakens the statistical generalizability to centers beyond those who took part. Despite the guaranteed anonymity of responses to mitigate social desirability bias, sensitive self-report data are vulnerable to this type of bias. Near-complete separation issue in logistic regression for reporting model is acknowledged and discussed. In case of all inferential findings made these limitations are properly considered in the interpretations.

5. Results

5.1 Data Screening and Sample Overview

With regard to the dataset, it was sequentially screened before analysis. Variables are mostly categorical or ordinal; thus, the results have been expressed in frequencies and percentages combined with non-parametric tests based on chi-square whenever appropriate.

5.2 Socio-Demographic Characteristics

The sample consisted of 53 females (56.4 percent) and 41 males (43.6 percent); the most common respondents were aged between 41 and 50 years old (46.8 percent), held doctoral qualifications (64.9percent), worked in permanent employment (89.4%) and were employed in public sector institutions (70.2%). Work experience was evenly distributed across mid- and senior-career levels. The entire demographic profile is shown in Table 1.

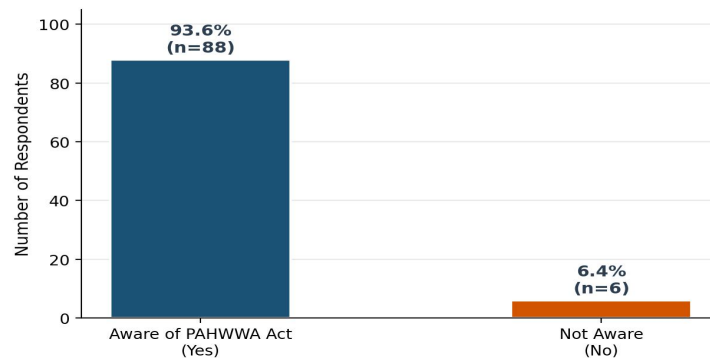
Table 1: *Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 94)*

Variable	Category	n	%
Gender	Female	53	56.4
	Male	41	43.6
Age Group	20–30 years	1	1.1
	31–40 years	25	26.6
	41–50 years	44	46.8
	51+ years	24	25.5
Qualification	PhD	61	64.9
	MPhil	26	27.7
	Master's	7	7.4
Designation	Lecturer	55	58.5
	Assistant Professor	22	23.4
	Associate Professor	6	6.4
	Administrative Staff	11	11.7
Employment Type	Permanent	84	89.4
	Contract	8	8.5
	Visiting	2	2.1
Institution Type	Public Sector	66	70.2
	Private Sector	28	29.8
Professional Experience	1–5 years	5	5.3
	6–10 years	30	31.9
	11–15 years	29	30.9
	16+ years	30	31.9

5.3 Awareness of The Balochistan PAHWWA Act 2016

While awareness of the Act was high (n = 88, 93.6%), few respondents (6.8% of those aware) reported formal institutional training – the channel required by the Act. More frequent sources of awareness included colleagues (25.0%) and institutional communications (23.9%).

28.8% of the respondents confirmed that an inquiry committee was established, while 44.7% reported its absence and another 25.5% were not aware if a proper committee was established or not – indicating a combined implementation failure of 70.2%. The awareness distribution is shown in Figure 1; and the sources of awareness are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 1: Awareness of PAHWWA Act 2016 Among Respondents (N = 94)**Figure 2. Sources of Awareness about PAHWWA Act 2016 (Multiple-Response; n = 88 Aware Respondents)****Table 2: Awareness of PAHWWA Act 2016, Sources of Awareness, and Inquiry Committee Availability (N = 94)**

Variable / Category	Response	n	%
Awareness of PAHWWA Act 2016	Yes	88	93.6
	No	6	6.4
Sources of Awareness (Multiple Response, n = 88 aware)			
	Yes	21	23.9
Source: Institution	Yes	15	17.0
Source: Media	Yes	6	6.8
Source: Training / Workshops	Yes	22	25.0
Source: Colleagues / Peers	Yes	30	34.1
Source: Other			
Inquiry Committee in Institution	Yes	28	29.8
	No	42	44.7
	Not Sure	24	25.5

5.4 Workplace Harassment Experience and Types

The majority (n = 58, 61.7%) reported ever having experienced workplace harassment. Most common was verbal harassment (n = 67, 71.3%), followed by psychological (n = 20, 21.3%) and online harassment (n = 19, 20.2%). While no

respondent reported the sexual harassment, this result is interpreted as a sign of deep social stigma attached to reporting such conduct rather than an absence of the troubling behavior. Distribution of type of harassment is shown in Figure 3, and the complete outlines can be found in Table 3.

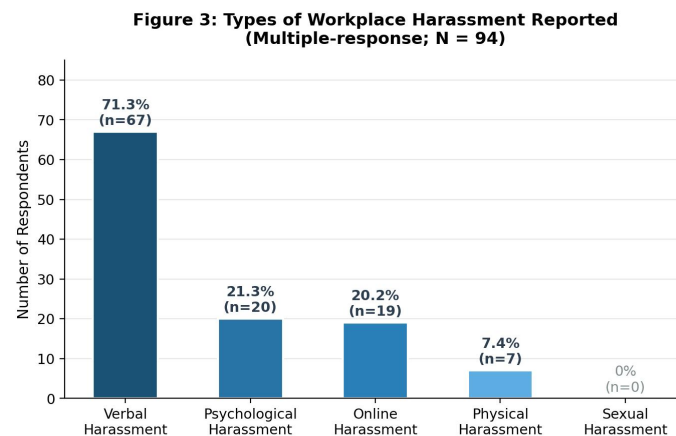


Figure 3. Types of Workplace Harassment Reported by Respondents (Multiple-Response; N = 94)

Table 3: Workplace Harassment Experience and Types (N = 94)

Variable / Category	Response	n	%
Experienced Workplace Harassment	Yes	58	61.7
	No	36	38.3
Types of Harassment (Multiple Response, N = 94)			
Verbal Harassment	Yes	67	71.3
Psychological Harassment	Yes	20	21.3
Online / Cyber Harassment	Yes	19	20.2
Physical Harassment	Yes	7	7.4
Sexual Harassment	Yes	0	0.0
Incident Formally Reported (Valid N = 92)	Yes	9	9.8
	No	83	90.2

5.5 Reporting Behavior and Barriers to Non-Reporting

Of the 94 respondents, 92 provided valid responses to the question on harassment reporting. Of these 92, only 9 (9.8%) had made a formal report on an incident. The main obstacles were low fidelity to the complaint system (n = 42, 44.7%), social stigma (n = 34, 36.2%), cultural

barriers (n = 14, 14.9%) and other causes (n=4, 4.3%). The purpose of figure 4 is to highlight visually the reasons for non-reporting, only one respondent (1.1%) noted fear of direct retaliation – the main deterrent in western context studies but it does show that deterrents are systemic and socio-cultural rather than coercive on an individual level.

Figure 4: Reasons for Not Reporting Harassment Incidents (Multiple-response; N = 94)

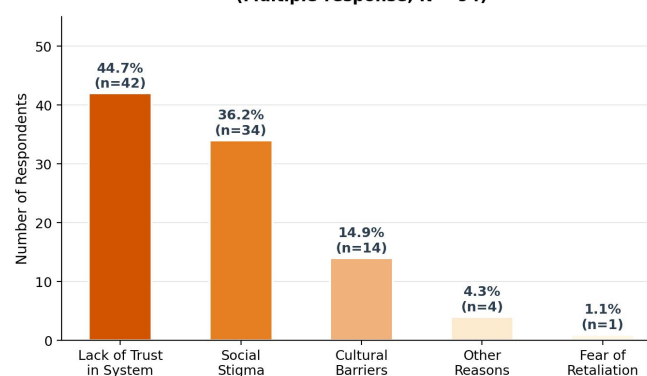


Table 4: *Reporting Behavior and Barriers to Formal Reporting (N = 92-94)*

Variable / Barrier	Response	n	%
Reporting Status (Valid N = 92)			
Incident Formally Reported	Yes	9	9.8
Incident Not Reported	No	83	90.2
Reasons for Non-Reporting (Multiple Response, N = 94)			
Lack of Trust in the Complaint System	Yes	42	44.7
Social Stigma	Yes	34	36.2
Cultural Barriers	Yes	14	14.9
Other Reasons	Yes	4	4.3
Fear of Retaliation	Yes	1	1.1

5.6 Perceived Effectiveness of the PAHWWA Act 2016

There was mixed opinion on the effectiveness of Act. In terms of implementation effectiveness, 39.3% agreed or strongly agreed, 36.2% disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 24.5% were neutral (nearly even split). 48.9% had a positive view around protection adequacy. The majority

of respondents reported "Not Sure" for complaint handling (68.1%), confidentiality (62.8%) and penalty enforcement (66.0%), reflecting high levels of uncertainty about institutional processes. The results on the two main effectiveness items are shown on a diverging Likert chart in Figure 5, and are fully detailed in Table 5.

Figure 5: Diverging Likert Chart - Perceived Effectiveness of PAHWWA Act 2016 (N = 94)

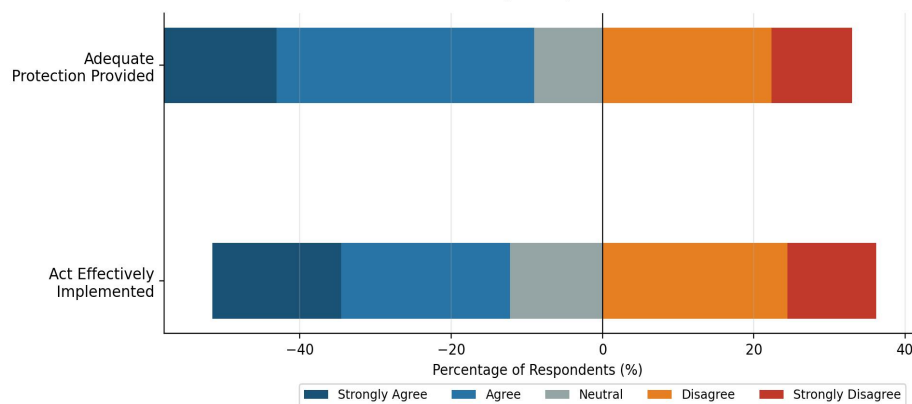


Figure 5. Diverging Likert Chart: Perceived Effectiveness of the PAHWWA Act 2016 (N = 94)

Table 5: *Perceived Effectiveness of PAHWWA Act 2016 (N = 94)*

Item (1=SA ... 5=SD)	SA n(%)	A n(%)	N n(%)	D n(%)	SD n(%)
Act Effectively Implemented	16 (17.0)	21 (22.3)	23 (24.5)	23 (24.5)	11 (11.7)
Adequate Protection Provided	14 (14.9)	32 (34.0)	17 (18.1)	21 (22.3)	10 (10.6)

Item (Yes / No / Not Sure)	Yes n(%)	No n(%)	Not Sure n(%)
Complaints Handled Fairly	15 (16.0)	15 (16.0)	64 (68.1)
Confidentiality Maintained	9 (9.6)	26 (27.7)	59 (62.8)
Penalties Enforced Properly	5 (5.3)	27 (28.7)	62 (66.0)

Note. SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; N = Neutral; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree.

Upper panel uses a 5-point Likert scale. Lower panel uses Yes/No/Not Sure categorical response.

5.7 Cultural and Social Barriers

There was near unanimous support for all three items of the cultural barrier. A total of 94 respondents (100.0%) endorsed that being afraid of negative consequences regarding its reputation deters from reporting – a true ceiling effect in survey research. Dissimulated by cultural norms not to report was endorsed by 97.9% (n = 92) of

the participants and a total of 89.4% (n = 84) recognized patriarchal dominance as important driving force. Combined this finding show that cultural barriers work as constants at the systemic population level rather than individually modifiable risk factors. Full distribution is shown in Table 6.

Table 6: *Cultural and Social Barriers to Reporting Workplace Harassment (N = 94)*

Variable	Response	n	%
Cultural Norms Discourage Reporting	Yes	92	97.9
	No	2	2.1
Fear of Reputation Damage Deters Reporting	Yes	94	100.0
	No	0	0.0
Patriarchal Dominance Influences Reporting	Yes	84	89.4
	No	10	10.6

5.8 Qualitative Themes

From conducting a thematic analysis on the written responses of 32 participants, 6 overarching themes were obtained. Table 7 showed the themes, the contents of each theme, and the codes of the participants the data in Theme 1 – Symbolic Implementation created the most up-building impression in the dataset. One senior faculty member at a public university summed up the theme:

“Enforce the Act in letter and spirit. Law is being broken, for pending cases and to protect the culprits. This should demonstrate what is to be done and of course how to be done but, right now, gurus walk cavalierly on campus. Bold steps needed.”

(P14, Male, Associate Professor, Public HEI)

Theme 4 – One of the most startling data observations from the study – coincided with the findings of Low Awareness of Legal Rights –: two

Head of Department participants stated that the way how the Act actually works only became apparent to them when they read the questionnaire itself. As one female HoD noted:

“Not aware of the Act yet. Reading it as I write this it has great mechanisms to work with – but in our institution silence is better than speaking of what annoys you for fear of social shaming. What surprised me about the Act is what it requires our institutions to do.”

(P20, Female, Head of Department, Private HEI)

Theme 5: Productive Analytical Complexity: A minority of predominantly male respondents claimed Baloch cultural values – those inhibits prospective harassers with as much force as prospective complainants – offer a kind of practical social safety net the law cannot mimic. We see this perspective clearly in the data, and it requires a policy response, not a shrug.

Table 7: *Qualitative Themes Identified Through Thematic Analysis (n = 32)*

Theme No.	Theme Label	Core Content	Participant Codes
1	Symbolic Implementation	Formal structures exist without functional substance; inquiries inactive; perpetrators protected	P2, P7, P14, P19, P26
2	Cultural & Patriarchal Barriers	Honour economy, family pressure, feudal authority,	P1, P4, P9, P12, P21, P28

		patriarchal composition	committee	
3	Fear-Driven Silence & Institutional Mistrust	Expected inaction, visibility cost of complaint, institutional complicity	P3, P6, P11, P17, P24, P30	
4	Low Awareness of Legal Rights	Leadership ignorance of obligations; staff unaware of rights; two HoDs first learned of Act during survey	P5, P8, P16, P20, P29	
5	Contested Views on Safety	Minority male perspective: Baloch cultural norms provide alternative protection	P10, P13, P22, P31	
6	Pathways for Strengthening Implementation	Audit-linked accountability, independent committees, digital reporting, visible prosecution	P2, P7, P15, P23, P27, P32	

Note. Themes derived through inductive coding following Braun and Clarke (2006). Participant codes are illustrative, not exhaustive. P = Participant; codes are anonymized.

5.9 Suggestions for Improvement: Thematic Analysis

Qualitative processing of the open-ended answers of all 94 quantitative participants resulted in six thematic clusters (see content analysis). Table 8:

Table 8: *Thematic Analysis of Suggestions for Improvement of PAHWWA Act 2016 (N = 94)*

Theme	Representative Participant Suggestions	Approx. Frequency
Awareness & Training	Seminars, workshops, legal literacy programs, training for newly inducted staff, awareness sessions	~28 responses
Enforcement & Implementation	True enforcement of Act in its full spirit, practical alignment with law, zero-tolerance policy	~22 responses
Complaint Mechanism	Accessible helpline, digital reporting platform, Ombudsman access, transparent inquiry process	~15 responses
Victim Protection	Confidentiality assurance, whistleblower protection, safe reporting channels, protection from pressure	~14 responses
Legal Reforms & Penalties	Deterrent penalties, timely judicial action, accountability mechanisms, case follow-up	~12 responses
Institutional Support	Female representation in committees, gender sensitization, grievance timelines, audit compliance	~9 responses

5.10 Perceived Impact of the PAHWWA Act 2016

Among, 95.7% (n = 90) agreed that more awareness programs should be conducted. The actual impact upon workplace safety was a more divided picture: 44.7% positive regarding safe environment improvement (SA + A combined),

compared to 38.3% negative. Confidence to report (44.7% positive, 38.3% negative) and professional atmosphere improvement (36.2% positive, 38.3% negative) were associated with similar near-equal splits. Figure 6 shows the diverging Likert chart for those positive impact items, with Table 9 showing the full distribution.

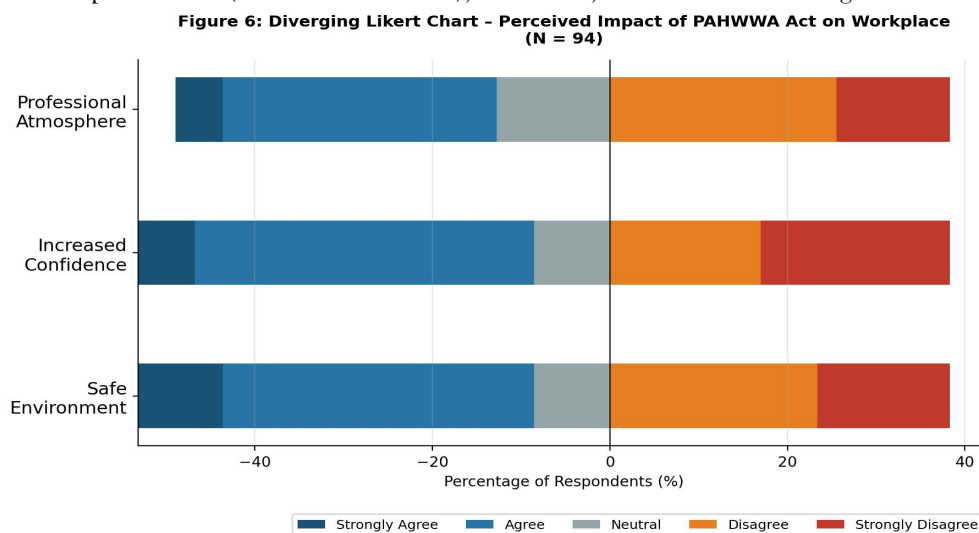


Figure 6. Diverging Likert Chart: Perceived Impact of the PAHWWA Act 2016 on Workplace Culture (N = 94)

Table 9: Perceived Impact of PAHWWA Act 2016 on Workplace Culture (N = 94)

Item	SA n(%)	A n(%)	N n(%)	D n(%)	SD n(%)
Act Helped Create Safe Environment	9 (9.6)	33 (35.1)	16 (17.0)	22 (23.4)	14 (14.9)
Act Increased Confidence to Report	6 (6.4)	36 (38.3)	16 (17.0)	16 (17.0)	20 (21.3)
Professional Atmosphere Improved	5 (5.3)	29 (30.9)	24 (25.5)	24 (25.5)	12 (12.8)

Note. SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; N = Neutral; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree.

5.11 Association between Demographic Characteristics and Awareness

In order to estimate whether knowledge of the Act differed by demographic subgroup, we computed chi-square and Fisher's exact tests. Only qualification level provided a significant prediction ($\chi^2 = 7.543$, df = 2, p = .023): Same as above, master's degree holders had a lower

awareness than Mphil and PhD holders. All tests reached significance at $p < 0.05$ and there were no significant associations for gender (Fisher's $p = .227$), institution type ($p = .174$), full label ($\chi^2 = 4.545$, $p = .208$), experience ($\chi^2 = 1.420$, $p = .701$), or their kind of employment ($\chi^2 = 0.663$, $p = .718$). The extremely high overall level of awareness (93.6%) introduces a ceiling effect, rendering subgroup differences statistically undetectable. Table 10 presents all results.

Table 10: *Association Between Demographic Characteristics and Awareness of PAHWWA Act 2016 (N = 94)*

Variable	Aware Yes n(%)	Aware No n(%)	Test Statistic	Df	p
Gender (M/F)	40 (97.6%) / 48 (90.6%)	1 / 5	Fisher's exact	-	.227
Institution Type (Pub/Priv)	60 (90.9%) / 28 (100%)	6 / 0	Fisher's exact	-	.174
Qualification	-	-	$\chi^2 = 7.543$	2	.023*
Designation	-	-	$\chi^2 = 4.545$	3	.208
Experience	-	-	$\chi^2 = 1.420$	3	.701
Employment Type	-	-	$\chi^2 = 0.663$	2	.718

Note. *p < .05. Fisher's exact test used for 2×2 tables; Pearson chi-square for larger contingency tables. The high awareness rate constrains test power due to small expected cell counts in the "Not Aware" category.

5.12 Association between Institution Type and Inquiry Committee Availability

There was a statistically significant relationship between institution type and availability of an

Table 11: *Cross-Tabulation: Institution Type and Inquiry Committee Availability (N = 94)*

Institution Type	Yes n(%)	No n(%)	Not Sure n(%)	Total
Public Sector (n = 66)	25 (37.9%)	21 (31.8%)	20 (30.3%)	66
Private Sector (n = 28)	3 (10.7%)	21 (75.0%)	4 (14.3%)	28
Total (N = 94)	28 (29.8%)	42 (44.7%)	24 (25.5%)	94

Note. $\chi^2 = 15.050$, df = 2, p < .001. Percentages computed within institution type. Percentages within rows may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

5.13 Association Between Awareness, Inquiry Committee, and Reporting Behavior

Fisher's exact test found no significant association amongst awareness of the Act and the incident reporting (p = 1.000), chi-square analysis showed no significant association in inquiry

Table 12: *Association Between Awareness, Inquiry Committee Presence, and Harassment Reporting (N = 92)*

Variable	Reported n(%)	Not Reported n(%)	Test	p-value
Awareness: Yes (n = 88)	9 (10.2%)	79 (89.8%)	Fisher's	1.000
Awareness: No (n = 6)	0 (0.0%)	6 (100.0%)		
Inquiry Comm.: Yes (n = 26)	1 (3.8%)	25 (96.2%)	$\chi^2 = 2.060$	.357
Inquiry Comm.: No (n = 42)	6 (14.3%)	36 (85.7%)		

inquiry committee ($\chi^2 = 15.050$, df = 2, p < .001).

Private institutions were far less likely (10.7%) to survey a working committee than were public institutions (37.9%). Yet, both sectors is far from universal adoption: 31.8% of public and 75.0% of private institution respondents confirmed the absence of the committee. Table 11 presents the cross-tabulation.

committee presence and reporting them ($\chi^2 = 2.060$, df = 2, p = .357). Both results are attributable to the critically low reporting event count (n = 9), which severely constrains statistical power. Descriptively, respondents in institutions without a committee reported at a higher rate (14.3%) than those with one (3.8%), a counterintuitive pattern discussed in Section 6.2. Table 12 presents the full results.

Inquiry Comm.: Not Sure (n = 2 (8.3%) 22 (91.7%)
= 24)

5.14 Association between Harassment Experience and Perceived Act Effectiveness

Mann-Whitney U tests showed that statistically significant difference exists between the harassed and the non-harassed respondents on all five items of effectiveness and impact on question 10 ($p < .01$). All members of the non-experienced group rated the dimensions as "Agree" (Mdn =

2.0) while all members of the experienced group rated the dimensions as "Disagree" or "Neutral" (Mdn = 3.0 – 4.0). One important lesson to learn in regard to the Act and public confidence in it is that of disillusionment, because of the lack of a functioning legal system for the needs of those impacted. All U statistics and effect directions are shown in Table 13.

Table 13: Comparison of Perceived Act Effectiveness by Harassment Experience: Mann-Whitney U Tests (N = 94)

Perceived Effectiveness Item	Harassed Mdn	Not Harassed Mdn	U	P	Sig.
Act Effectively Implemented	4.0	2.0	1489.0	< .001	***
Adequate Protection Provided	3.0	2.0	1623.5	< .001	***
Act Helped Create Safe Environment	4.0	2.0	1421.0	.003	**
Act Increased Confidence to Report	4.0	2.0	1474.0	.001	***
Professional Atmosphere Improved	4.0	3.0	1500.0	< .001	***

Note. Mdn = Median. Higher scores reflect more negative evaluations (1 = SA, 5 = SD). All tests two-tailed. ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

5.15 Association between Cultural Barriers and Reporting Behavior

Table 5 shows Cramer's V results Chi-square and Fisher's exact tests revealed only some 12 p the cultural barriers and formal reporting behavior were not significant at $p > .05$). In all instances this does not reflect a lack of underlying relationship, but rather extreme ceiling effects on

all cultural barrier items (97.9–100%yes response rates). If near universal endorsement reduces variance in the independent variable to zero, it can obviate statistical detection of associations. The most important result is likely the descriptive data themselves: the barriers to reporting are so widely supported that they are a denial at the population level, not a differentiator within the sample. The full output is presented in Table 14.

Table 14: Association Between Cultural and Social Barriers and Harassment Reporting Behavior (N = 92)

Cultural / Social Barrier	Reported n(%)	Not Reported n(%)	Test	p
Cultural Norms: Yes (n = 92)	9 (9.8%)	83 (90.2%)	Fisher's	1.000
Reputation Fear: Yes (n = 94)	9 (9.6%)	85 (90.4%)	N/A (no variance)	N/A
Patriarchal Influence: Yes (n = 84)	7 (8.3%)	77 (91.7%)	Fisher's	.252
Social Stigma: Yes (n = 34)	2 (5.9%)	32 (94.1%)	$\chi^2 = 0.361$	.548

Lack of Trust: Yes (n = 42)	2 (4.8%)	40 (95.2%)	$\chi^2 = 1.285$	.257
Cultural Reason Cited: Yes (n = 14)	0 (0.0%)	14 (100.0%)	Fisher's	.345

Note. All tests non-significant ($p > .05$). Ceiling effects on cultural barrier variables substantially reduce test power. N/A = not applicable due to zero variance in one category. Fisher's exact test used for all 2x2 tables.

5.16 Logistic Regression: Predictors of Reporting and Perceived Safe Environment

Two binary logistic regression models were estimated. Model A, on targets of formal incident reporting (N = 92) Due to the limited event count (n = 9), only four theoretically-derived predictors were included: awareness, inquiry committee present, distrust, and social stigma. Overall, the model was marginally significant (LLR $p = .065$, McFadden $R^2 = .150$). None of the individual predictors was significant, though No trust (OR = 0.194, $p = .064$) and social stigma (OR = 0.223, $p = .093$) both displayed marginal trends of directional significance. An extreme

and unstable coefficient resulted from a quasi-complete separation on the awareness predictor, a known technical artefact when all events occur within a single predictor category.

In Model B, we analyzed predictors of perceived workplace safety (N = 94), with the outcome dichotomized as positive (SA + A) or non-positive (N + D + SD). Good fit was achieved by the model (LLR $p < .001$, McFadden $R^2 = .193$). Through logistic regression, perceived sufficiency of protection, B = 1.882, OR = 6.565, 95% CI [2.021, 21.327], $p = .002$ such that belief the Act provides sufficient protection had 6.57 (95% CI, 2.72 to 16.03, $p = .002$) more likely odds to believe their workplace was safe, adjusting for awareness, committee present, and implementation perceived. Table 15 presents both models.

Table 15: *Binary Logistic Regression: Predictors of Reporting Behavior and Perceived Safe Environment*

Predictor	B	OR	95% CI	P	Sig.
Model A: Outcome = Incident Reported (N = 92)					
Inquiry Committee Present	-1.667	0.189	[0.021, 1.696]	.137	ns
Lack of Trust in System	-1.641	0.194	[0.034, 1.098]	.064	ns†
Social Stigma	-1.499	0.223	[0.039, 1.284]	.093	ns†
Overall Model Fit			LLR $p = .065$; McFadden $R^2 = .150$		
Model B: Outcome = Perceived Safe Environment (N = 94)					
Protection Adequacy (Positive)	1.882	6.565	[2.021, 21.327]	.002	**
Act Implementation (Positive)	0.499	1.646	[0.507, 5.347]	.407	ns
Inquiry Committee Present	0.182	1.199	[0.423, 3.401]	.733	ns
Awareness of Act	-0.861	0.423	[0.063, 2.858]	.377	ns
Overall Model Fit			LLR $p < .001$; McFadden $R^2 = .193$		

Note. OR = Odds Ratio; CI = Confidence Interval. ns = not significant; ns† = marginal trend ($p < .10$); ** $p < .01$. Model A outcome:

incident reported (1) vs. not (0), $N = 92$. Model B outcome: safe environment perceived positively (SA + A = 1) vs. Neutral/Disagree/SD (0), $N = 94$.



Figure 7. Conceptual Summary: Pathway from Awareness to Safe Environment and Role of Barriers to Reporting

6. Discussion

6.1 Symbolic Implementation and the Limits of Ceremonial Compliance

The key finding of the study, lack of substantive implementation of PAHWA Act 2016 in the HEIs of Quetta, is supported by an unusual amount of quantitative and qualitative empirical evidence within two samples. The law has established formal frameworks of guardians in some institutions, and guarding function in almost all. This situation is exactly what DiMaggio and Powell (1983) refer to as ceremonial compliance, where an exercise in accountability architecture is lacking in reality and inquiry committees appear to exist for legitimization rather than function.

This difference arises because the extent of functional failure in this case is deeper than what is seen in normal institutional isomorphism: qualitative data indicates that at least the committees are inactive, and at best, that management discourages victims from filing complaints, and the committees are subject to the same wardens that they are supposed to hold accountable. That's an upgrade from ceremonial compliance to what might be termed institutional enablers, which are a different and perhaps more serious implementation failure and need differently shaped responses..

6.2 The Trust Deficit as the Core Policy Problem

The key takeaway from the study is the mix of quantitative and qualitative evidence of institutional trust as the primary barrier to reporting. Themes: The Qualitative Dimension of Distrust and-the Experiential Content of That Distrust: Committees Answerable to Whom They Investigate; Management Guilt-Tripping Victims into Silence; An Institutional Climate in Which the Fear of Being Seen as Making a Complaint Is Described as Worse than the Harassment Itself.

Logistic regression result – Perceived adequacy of protection (OR = 6.565, $p = .$). This conclusion is made more significant by a single important indicator of perceived workplace safety, independent of awareness and committee presence as well as perception of implementation, namely increases (002). This indicates that the additional value of further awareness campaigns or formal committees will be very low until institutions can demonstrate that these will produce fair, visible and protective results. The policy implication is counterintuitive at first glance: the most important amendment could be the publicity surrounding a single case, for which the public, publicized resolution is the most important amendment. The critical value of such a demonstration is that it is more likely than a low-visibility, long-term enforcement effort to break the community-wide habits of behavior (Lowenstein, 1996), which is quite an important

factor in changing institutional culture in the HEI in Quetta.

6.3 Cultural Barriers: Toward a Culturally Intelligent Implementation Framework

With nearly all respondents endorsing cultural barriers, 100.0% fearing reputational damage to the organization, 97.9% discouraged by cultural norms from reporting, cultural barriers are integral to the implementation landscape rather than something that can be said to be a minor component. Qualitative data are useful in giving analytical nuance: These barriers are not just psychological factors on individual women but are infrastructural systemic factors – such as community elders, family honor systems, feudal power – that need to be negotiated when making a decision to report.

While Theme 5 – the conflicting view presented here that regional cultural norms serve to actively safeguard women against harassment – might be too easily dismissed as false consciousness, it should be taken seriously in future investigations. Razack (1998) and Mohanty (2003) too caution that it is possible to universalize categories in rights-based approaches in ways that specific forms of protection are culture-bound and unrecognizable. An enhanced analytic perspective acknowledges that cultural norms can be constraining in the legal arena and can provide a potential form of protection in the community; it is not only a matter of culture being oppressive. Community-level interventions with community leaders (religious, family elders, and community organizations) for norm change are expected to have sustainable implementation impact, whereas regulatory impacts alone are likely to have less impact and may be short-lived.

6.4 The Private Sector Compliance Crisis

The public institutions (37.9%) also had a statistically significant difference in terms of availability of inquiry committee compared to private institutions (10.7%) ($\chi^2 = 15.050$, $p < .$ In contrast, HEIs located in the private sector,

which arguably is the fastest growing part of higher education in Pakistan, are far less likely to have fulfilled even the most elementary structural criterion of the Act and are under minimal regulatory oversight. The result is a significant gap in the regulatory system because 29.8% of the samples were private institutions, and 10.7% of inquiry committees were established at these institutions, leaving HEC and provincial authorities without the capacity to regulate these institutions in the absence of these committees.

6.5 Triangulation of Methods and Theoretical Contributions

This study used a mixed-methods design, which allowed analytical insights that were not available through either method alone. Qualitative narratives of institutional betrayal – victims pressured to drop the charge, perpetrators protected, complainants ostracized – give the experiential content of the quantitative finding that having experienced harassment predicts perception of effectiveness significantly more negatively. The quantitative finding that perceived protection quality leads to perceived safety is further elucidated qualitatively in that what woman fear the most is not personal retaliation but institutional indifference: the fear that nothing will happen – or worse, that she will be punished for speaking up..

The most practically significant finding to emerge from the integration of methods is this distinction between legislative (what an Act says) and institutional (what an Act does) quality. The contributions of the study are two-fold: theoretically, we show that ceremonial compliance can evolve into institutional complicity under conditions of strong patriarchal authority and weak external monitoring, expanding institutional theory; It adds to feminist legal theory through detailing the particular mechanisms through which cultural barriers erode legal protections in a Baloch HEI context. It adds to the rational choice literature

on reporting behaviour, revealing that in this context, the primary cost of reporting is socially relational – anchored, as it is, in the honour economy not the employment contract.

7. Conclusion

This study has produced strong multi-method empirical evidence indicating that the PAHWWA Act 2016 has not been substantially put into practice within the Higher Education Institutions of Quetta. The law exists; the institutional infrastructure does not; the cultural conditions are intensely anti-complainant; and the trust necessary to have any plausible complaint mechanism to work, has never been built. There are also structural, institutional, cultural and individual barriers, which reinforce each other.

These results indicate that an empirical, participant-driven reform agenda exists; one which is achievable and does not sacrifice empirical grounding. Required, position-specific awareness training should be instituted with institutional accountability—not optional seminars but auditable standards linked to funding and accreditation. Second, inquiry committees must function independently of institutional hierarchies, from members who are trained to conduct inquiries in a knowledgeable way and are held accountable to someone outside the institution, and with the authority to act interference. The third is to create reliable, affordable, and digital reporting mechanisms which lower the visibility cost of reporting to within survivable limits for women in Quetta's social environment. Finally, the Higher Education Commission must link compliance with basic audit standards to funding for each institution thereby providing real consequences – along with the real incentives to comply with its regulations – for noncompliance in the private sector. Fifth, a major visible prosecution under the Act – with institutional protection for the complainant to ensure effective participation

– will be necessary to show that this case can achieve justice.

All these interventions should be underpinned by a strong dose of cultural intelligence: The awareness that plans and policies, no matter how well-intentioned, will most likely run into a brick wall if they are not conceived with a deep understanding of the social architecture of Balochistan. Institutional actions by the regulators, including new laws, will not solve the problem of making Quetta safer for women – this will take time and multi-layered collaboration between different regulators and the structures that go beyond the state and which still shape the choices women make on a daily basis—such as families, elders, religious leaders. This study provides evidence that can help reinforce that partnership.

The study should be expanded to other provinces and include probability sampling with different professional groups in both academic and non-academic areas of the Pakistan economy with the measurement of implementation outcomes over time. Comparative studies, examining differential enforcement of the law, in different contexts and settings between public and private employers, will contribute to knowledge of the conditions under which laws on protection of women in labour lead to real changes in behaviour.

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