



Dominance and Emotional Restraint: Quantifying Masculinity Norms in Pakistani Workplaces

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ABSTRACT

Traditional masculinity norms are generally understood to influence men's work ethos and are typically defined by men's emotional control, their dominance, competitiveness and self-reliance; however, there is limited quantitative evidence from non-Western settings. This study investigates the relationship between masculinity norms and workplace behaviors of men employed in Lahore, Pakistan. The survey design was quantitative and cross-sectional, which included 196 working men who completed validated Masculinity Role Norms Scale (MRNS) and a self-developed Workplace Masculinity Behavior Questionnaire (WMBQ). The findings showed a significant moderate positive correlation between endorsement of traditional social norms of masculinity and masculine workplace behaviors ($r = .496$, $p < .001$). The results from regression analyses confirmed the importance of the role played by masculinity norms in the workplace behavior, accounting for around 25% of the variance, and this remained the case after accounting for age and years of experience. Ultimately, the results of this study provide empirical evidence from an organizational context in Pakistan, highlighting the global spread of the norms of masculinity and the cultural specificities of their existence. This study emphasizes the need for institutional and policy shifts to break gendered norms and promote inclusive and equitable workplaces.

Keywords: masculinity norms, workplace behavior, masculinity contest culture,

INTRODUCTION

The meaning of being a man across different societies around the world is not always a biological phenomenon, but a social and cultural script that dictates masculine demands. Masculinity is produced through a complex process of socialization that educates boys and men about what is and isn't proper, which in most cases is based on emotional control, self-sufficiency, dominance, and competitiveness (Connell, 1995; Mahalik et al., 2003). These norms are socially constructed, and they influence the ways that men think about themselves and how they are thought of within different social situations. The implications of social construction of masculinity on the professional and public behavior of men cannot be underrated. Men are often supposed to hide their vulnerability, not seek help, and show their authority, which may affect their communication style, leadership style, and relationships with others at the workplace (O'Neil, 2008; Vandello & Bosson, 2013). With the growing gender diversity of workplaces due to the growing representation of women, the conventional masculinity might lead to tensions, resistance or discomfiture in men who feel threatened by the potential loss of status or power (Berdahl et al., 2018). Recent research suggests that it is not only men who internalize masculinity norms, but they are internalized in organizational cultures. Among such ideas is the Masculinity Contest Culture (MCC), concept that explains a workplace atmosphere in which both genders are under stress to be tough, to deny their weaknesses, and to put work first. Such work environments are associated with unhealthy organizational culture in the form of poor leadership, bullying, harassment, and increased stress and burnout in both men and women (Berdahl et al., 2018). These cultures reinforce the expectation that men are to be in a state of unremitting status competition, not to show signs of weakness, and dominate, which may undermine collaboration, well-being, and organizational citizenship behaviors (Glick et al., 2018). The continuation of these norms has got much to do with the way hegemonic masculinity in organizations is perpetuated.

Masculinity is closely associated with the concept of status, control, and emotional suppression in the Pakistani and the wider South Asian context. Social institutions such as family, religion, and education reinforce these norms and encourage strength, silence, and independence in men and discourage expressiveness in emotionality. Such gendered expectations tend to accompany men to the workplace and can affect their actions, communication, and interactions with others, especially female colleagues and authority (Vandello & Bosson, 2013). The present study relies on the accepted theoretical perspectives that investigate the ways in which some types of masculinity are dominant in situations and the way in which people engage in the continuous process of doing gender in an institutional context (Verdonk et al., 2010).

Organizations with high masculinity challenge cultures tend to have increased turnover, reduced organizational commitment and well-being among workers. Not

only men can be more likely to feel harassed, excluded, and unable to move forward in such environments; women and gender minorities may be affected as well (Bozani, 2021). Additionally, the social construct of meeting masculine demands can discourage men to seek help, share their emotions, or engage in health-promoting behaviors, which has health-related outcomes at both the personal and organizational levels (Stergiou-Kita et al., 2015).

Although the field of masculinity and work relationship has gained recent momentum in scholarly research, there are limited studies that have used quantitative approach to investigate the relationship between masculinity and work in Pakistani workplace settings.

Research Objectives

1. To explore the extent and expression of masculinity norms among working men, focusing on emotional restraint, self-reliance, dominance, competitiveness, and attitudes toward traditionally feminine roles.
2. To examine how masculinity norms shape men's workplace behaviors, including competitiveness, help-seeking, emotional expression, and their communication and interaction patterns with female colleagues.

Research Questions

1. To what extent do working men endorse traditional masculinity norms such as emotional restraint, dominance, competitiveness, and self-reliance?
2. How do masculinity norms influence men's help-seeking behaviors, emotional expression, and stress management in workplace settings?
3. How do masculinity norms shape men's communication, collaboration, and decision-making styles at work?
4. In what ways do masculinity norms affect men's perceptions of and interactions with female colleagues, supervisors, and subordinates?
5. How do working men view traditionally feminine roles or tasks in the workplace, and what role do masculinity norms play in shaping these attitudes?

Research Hypothesis

H1: There is a relationship between masculinity norms and workplace behavior.

H2: Masculinity norms explain variations in workplace behavior.

H3: Masculinity norms predict workplace behavior when the effect of age is controlled.

H4: Masculinity norms predict workplace behavior when the effect of years of experience is controlled.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Masculinity norms, generally defined as socially constructed expectations around the thoughts, feelings and actions of men, have become important factors influencing workplace dynamics and organizational culture.

Social Construction of Masculinity

Masculinity is not a goal or universal condition, but rather a social construct,

which is determined by cultural, historical, and situational conditions. Social constructionist theories stress what is regarded as masculine varies according to society and time, and are constantly negotiated by social interactions, institutions and media representations. This point of view criticizes the essentialist conceptions of gender and draws attention to the fluidity and plurality of masculinities that occur within and across cultures. To give an example, in the process of hegemonic masculinity established as an ideal, other types of manhood are typically relegated, reinforcing power processes and manhood social conventions that men must operate within in their daily lives (Kahn, 2009).

The social construction of masculinity has an impact on the behavior of individuals and social consequences. In many contexts it is expected of men that they deny their emotions, take risks and establish themselves as superior, which is one of the causes of mental health issues and cycles of violence and marginalization (Halabi et al., 2019). It is therefore crucial to understand masculinity as a social construct if gender inequalities are to be tackled with a view to creating a healthy and balanced society.

Social norms are present in workplaces and influence relations of authority, communication, and collaboration.

Workplace Masculinity Norms.

These characteristics of assertiveness, competitiveness, and emotional control that are often related to leadership and productivity are likely to be supported by norms of masculinity in the workplace. These expectations can encourage both men and women to engage in more stereotypically masculine forms of behavior to become successful in their workplaces, but they also serve to reinforce the gender stereotypes and might punish those who do not conform to those stereotypes. The processes also give rise to long-term problems, including the glass ceiling against women and the glass escalator against men in female-dominated careers and ultimately, restrict equality and opportunity in the workplace (Bozani, 2021).

Theoretical Framework

Hegemonic Masculinity

Hegemonic masculinity is the ideal of manhood that is culturally dominant and legitimizes and perpetuates gender hierarchies. It favors some forms of masculinity over others and marginalizes others and solidifies the marginalization of women. The concept has played a role in gender studies since the early 1980s. It highlights that masculinity is not a fixed collection of traits, but power and history construct it as a social practice. Hegemonic masculinity is defined by flexibility and dynamic adaptation that preserves the dominant position by consent and coercion. Lately, scholarship focuses on a more subtle direction. It reiterates the importance of valuing the presence of a variety of masculinities, the influence of local and global processes and power of embodiment and agency in creating gender hierarchies (R. W. Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

Despite the popularization of the concept of hegemonic masculinity, it has been criticized as being too rigid or reductionist in its application, particularly as a fixed

type, rather than as a process. According to researchers we should redefine this phenomenon to learn more about the complexity of gender power. This includes recognition of the agency of women, the central role of race and class, and the possibility of social change. The further elaboration of the idea focuses on its additional utility in understanding gender inequality. It also suggests that future studies should be approached with greater flexibility and with consideration of intersectional perspectives (Messerschmidt, 2019; Yang, 2020).

Masculinity Contest Culture (MCC)

Masculinity Contest Culture (MCC) is a theoretical approach that describes some organizational settings as competitive arenas in which individuals and primarily men, compete to demonstrate their masculinity based on culturally prized standards. The norms are dominance, emotional control, hardness, and work first. The problem of MCC is not a personal attitudes problem only but is also the problem of the organization and its practices, rituals, and reward systems, which create the climate and expectations of the workplace. It establishes four main dimensions, such as Show No Weakness (disapproval of weakness), Strength and Stamina (importance of endurance), Put Work First (importance of work over personal life), and Dog-Eat-Dog (importance of ruthless competition) (Berdahl et al., 2018). All these dimensions build a zero-sum game in which status and resources are allocated according to conformity to these masculine ideals.

What is important about MCC is that it helps to explain diverse dysfunctional organizational outcomes, including toxic leadership, bullying, harassment, burnout, and decreased well-being among men and women. By rewarding individuals who most effectively demonstrate the epitome of hegemonic masculinity, MCCs reinforce male dominance by favoring elite men at the expense of women and non-conforming men (Berdahl et al., 2018). The framework also indicates that organizational norms and practices of leadership perpetuate masculinity contests and that structural interventions, such as leadership change, policy change, and culture change, are required to end masculinity contests and establish more inclusive and psychologically safe workplaces (Glick et al., 2018).

Doing Gender Theory

The first formulated by West and Zimmerman, Doing Gender Theory, is the assumption that gender is not an inherent ability, but an everyday achievement that is entrenched within daily social practices. Gender is not something that is given, but rather something that is practiced, constructed and acted upon in terms of behavior, language, and expectations that are in line with the social norm. This view has been extensively used to examine the way people negotiate gendered demands in many settings, including the workplace, education, and family life. As the example of Pakistan demonstrates, a study of female breadwinners indicates that, not only are gender norms reinforced or even breached by economic role reallocations, but, the renegotiation of social roles, which tend to protect the status quo of gender regardless of financial restructuring, is omnipresent (Shah, 2025).

Gaps in the Existing Literature

There is also a major gap in quantitative studies in Pakistan and South Asia at large that specifically focus on the relevance of masculinity norms to workplace behavior. The available literature has been done mostly in the Western setting and there is very little empirical evidence linking the masculinity contest culture to organizational processes and personal performance in South Asian workplaces. Even though some studies have developed and validated tools to assess masculinity contest culture, they have not been applied to South Asian situations, which implies that they will need to be adapted and validated against local cultures (Glick et al., 2018).

Likewise, qualitative or theoretical studies predominate literature, and very little research has utilized sound quantitative techniques to develop causal links between masculinity norms and workplace performance (Seidler et al., 2016). This empirical void restricts the ability to development culturally specific South Asian policy interventions and workplace programs that are effective. To fill these gaps, additional context-based, quantitative studies with validated measures are needed to gain a better insight into the expressions of masculinity norms on workplace behavior in the region.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a quantitative cross sectional survey design to investigate the connection between masculinity norms and work-related conduct among working men of Lahore, Pakistan.

Survey Method

Data was gathered from a survey method; a structured self-administered questionnaire was used and was administered in both printed and web-based format. To minimize the social desirability bias and to encourage candid responses an anonymous design was used.

Pre-testing

A small number of respondents, 9, were pre-tested prior to full deployment to test the questionnaire. Changes were then made to the layout of the questionnaire according to their suggestions.

Sample Size

A total of 196 male respondents were selected from different organizations in Lahore for the final sample. Initially the results were acquired at 210, after data-cleaning and discarding outlier cases, 196 valid cases were left for analysis. This size sample is sufficient for more advanced statistical methods, including correlation and regression, which typically require 100-150 participants to have sufficient statistical power. The study had almost 200 respondents, lending it good power to draw reliable, generalizable conclusions.

Sampling Technique

Sampling was done through non-probability sampling using purposive and convenience sampling. The sampling method was purposive since only working men could be sampled in the study for the purpose of research. At the same time,

convenience sampling was used in the process of approaching the participants who were easily accessible through the workplace and personal contacts. These methods were applied together to obtain a large and meaningful sample and to accommodate the time and resource limitations.

Measurement Tools

The research involved the use of a structured questionnaire which consisted of two key tools. The researcher measured masculinity norms and associated workplace behaviors using these tools. The items were all rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree), and Reverse-keyed items were reverse-coded during analysis to ensure consistency of scoring.

Masculinity Role Norms Scale (Thompson & Pleck, 1986; MRNS)

The Masculinity Role Norms Scale (MRNS) is a validated and widely used scale developed by Thompson and Pleck (1986) to assess conformity to traditional masculinity norms, such as self-reliance, dominance, competitiveness, and emotional restraint.

Workplace Masculinity Behavior Questionnaire (WMBQ)

The Workplace Masculinity Behavior Questionnaire (WMBQ) is an instrument that the researcher designed to investigate workplace behaviors related to masculinity standards. It includes questions on communication, asking for help, working with colleagues and perception of female colleagues. The WMBQ was pre-tested for clarity and relevance prior to full administration.

Reliability of Measurement Tools.

Cronbach's α coefficients were used to determine the internal consistency of the instruments. The Masculinity Role Norms Scale (MRNS; $\alpha=.735$, 17 items) and the Workplace Masculinity Behavior Questionnaire (WMBQ; $\alpha=.735$, 19 items) both had acceptable levels of reliability ($\alpha \geq .70$), indicating that items within each scale were reliable measures of their intended constructs. The actual scores received for the data were in the range 39 to 100 for the MRNS and 49 to 109 for the WMBQ.

Normality Assessment

The normality of the data was tested for the planned parametric correlation and regression analysis using skewness, kurtosis, and Shapiro–Wilk test. The Masculinity Role Norms Scale (MRNS) was slightly negatively skewed (-1.96) and the kurtosis was 0.52 . The Workplace Masculinity Behavior Scale (WMBQ), on the other hand, had a mild positive skew ($+0.69$) and a kurtosis of $+0.44$. More importantly, Shapiro–Wilk test values were not significant for either scale (MRNS: $.195$; WMBQ: $.284$), supporting the assumption of normality. Hence the data were assumed to be normally distributed.

Population

The population of the study consisted of working men in Lahore, Pakistan as the study aimed to explore the effect of masculinity norms on male behaviors at work. Inclusion criteria were men aged between 20–45 years and were presently employed. Women and unemployed males were excluded to keep in line with the objectives of the study.

Procedure

Structured questionnaires containing MRNS and the self-developed Workplace Masculinity Behavior Questionnaire (WMBQ) were used to collect data. The questionnaires were distributed among 20-45 age group of employed men through non-probability purposive and convenience sampling. The participants were briefed on the purpose of the study and confidentiality was guaranteed before seeking their consent. 210 responses were obtained and 196 were included after excluding outliers and data cleaning.

Statistical Analyses

The data collected was entered into and analyzed with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27. Demographic characteristics of respondents and the main study variables were summarized using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, standard deviations and means. To test internal consistency of scales, reliability analysis was carried out by Cronbach's Alpha.

To test the study hypotheses, inferential analyses were performed. Pearson correlation was used to explore the nature and magnitude of the relationships between masculinity norms and workplace behaviors. A linear regression analysis was used to test the predictive relationship between the masculinity norms and workplace behavior. In addition, multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the combined effects of the masculinity norms, age, and years of work experience on workplace behavior.

Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to ethical guidelines. The first page of the questionnaire included an informed consent form, which included information on the purpose of the study, voluntary participation and assurance of confidentiality. Participants were told the study was for academic purposes only and they could leave at any point with no consequences. All responses were anonymized and personal data (age, gender, workplace) treated as confidential for analysis purposes.

RESULTS

Demographic Profile of the Sample

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1: Representation of Demographic Profile of Sample (N=196)

Variables	f	(%)	M	SD
Age of Participants			29.24	6.96
Education Level				
Bachelor's	111	56.6		
Master's	80	40.8		

PhD	5	2.6		
Years of Experience (current role)			4.61	4.41

Note: *f* = Frequency; % = Percentage; *M* = Mean; *SD* = Standard Deviation

A final sample of 196 working men, between 20 to 45 years of age, participated. (*M* = 29.24, *SD* = 6.96). The average number of years that participants had in their current position was 4.61 years (*SD* = 4.41). Regarding educational qualifications, most respondents had a bachelor's degree (*n* = 111, 56.6%), followed by a master's degree (*n* = 80, 40.8%) and a small proportion a PhD (*n* = 5, 2.6%).

Testing the main hypotheses.

Relationships of Masculinity Norms and Workplace Behavior

The first hypothesis was related to the link between the masculinity norms and workplace behavior.

Pearson's correlation analysis was used to test this hypothesis.

H1. There is a relationship between masculinity norms and workplace behavior.

This hypothesis was tested using Pearson's correlation analysis.

Correlation Analysis

Table 2: Correlation between Masculinity Role Norms and Workplace Masculinity Behavior. (N = 196)

Variables	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	1	2
1. Workplace Masculinity Behavior Scale	74.08 (10.63)	-	.496**
2. Masculinity Role Norms Scale	80.29 (11.18)		-

Note. *p* < .01; *M*= Mean, *SD*= Standard Deviation

The findings revealed that the Masculinity Role Norms Scale (MRNS) had a moderate, statistically significant positive correlation with the Workplace Masculinity Behavior Scale (WMBQ), $r(196) = .496, p < .001$. This suggests that higher endorsement of traditional masculinity norms is associated with increased expression of masculine behaviors in workplace settings.

Predictive Role of Masculinity Norms in Workplace Behavior

The second hypothesis focused on the predictive power of masculinity norms in shaping workplace behavior.

H2. Masculinity norms explain variations in workplace behavior.

Simple linear regression analysis was performed by taking masculinity norms as the independent variable and workplace behavior as the dependent variable.

Regression Analysis

Table 3: Simple Linear Regression Predicting Workplace Masculinity Behavior from Masculinity Role Norms (N = 196)

Predictor	B	SE B	β	t	p	95% CI for B
(Constant)	41.63	4.91	—	8.49	< .001	[31.95, 51.31]
Masculinity Role Norms Scale	0.52	0.07	.50	7.96	< .001	[0.39, 0.65]

Note. $R^2 = .246$, Adjusted $R^2 = .242$, $F(1, 194) = 63.35$, $p < .001$. B = unstandardized coefficient; $SE B$ = standard error of B ; β = standardized beta coefficient; CI = confidence interval.

The results indicated that the model was statistically significant, $F(1, 194) = 63.35$, $p < .001$, with masculinity role norms explaining 24.6% of the variance in workplace masculinity behavior ($R^2 = .246$). Specifically, for every one-unit increase in masculinity role norms, workplace masculinity behavior increased by 0.52 units.

The regression coefficients showed that masculinity role norms were a significant positive predictor of workplace masculinity behavior ($B = 0.52$, $\beta = .50$, $t = 7.96$, $p < .001$). This suggests that higher endorsement of masculinity role norms is associated with higher levels of masculinity-related behavior at the workplace.

Predictive Role of Masculinity Norms in Workplace Behavior While Controlling for Age

The third hypothesis considered whether masculinity norms continue to predict workplace behavior when age is statistically controlled.

H3. Masculinity norms predict workplace behavior when the effect of age is controlled.

Multiple regression analysis was performed, with both masculinity norms and age simultaneously entered as predictor variables.

Multiple Regression

Table 4

Multiple Regression Predicting Workplace Masculinity Behaviors Controlling for Age
($N = 196$)

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p
Constant	41.42	5.97	—	6.93	< .001
Age	0.006	0.101	.004	0.06	.950
Masculinity Role Norms Scale (MRNS)	0.522	0.066	.496	7.91	< .001

Note. B = unstandardized coefficient; SE = standard error; β = standardized coefficient.

The results indicate that the model was statistically significant, $F(2, 193) = 31.51$, $p < .001$, and explained 24.6% of the variance in workplace masculinity behaviors ($R^2 = .246$, Adjusted $R^2 = .238$).

Masculinity role norms significantly predicted workplace masculinity behaviors ($\beta = .50$, $p < .001$), such that greater endorsement of masculinity norms was associated with higher levels of masculine behaviors in the workplace. In contrast,

age did not significantly predict workplace masculinity behaviors ($\beta = .004, p = .950$).

Results suggest that endorsement of masculinity norms, rather than age, primarily shapes men's behavior in workplace settings.

Predictive Role of Masculinity Norms in Workplace Behavior While Controlling for Years of Experience

The fourth hypothesis addressed the role of years of experience as a control variable.

H4. Masculinity norms predict workplace behavior when the effect of years of experience is controlled.

A second multiple regressions were performed using both masculinity norms and years of experience as predictors

Multiple Regression

Table 5: Multiple Regression Predicting Workplace Masculinity Behaviors Controlling for Years of Experience in Current Role (N = 196)

Predictor	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Constant	40.69	4.98	—	8.18	< .001
Masculinity Role Norms Scale (MRNS)	0.524	0.066	.498	7.99	< .001
Years of Experience in Current Role	0.176	0.158	.070	1.12	.266

Note. *B* = unstandardized coefficient; *SE* = standard error; β = standardized coefficient.

The results demonstrated that the overall model was statistically significant, $F(2, 193) = 32.34, p < .001$, and explained 25.1% of the variance in workplace masculinity behaviors ($R^2 = .251$, Adjusted $R^2 = .243$).

Masculinity role norms significantly predicted workplace masculinity behaviors ($\beta = .50, p < .001$), such that higher endorsement of masculinity norms was associated with stronger masculine behaviors in the workplace. Years of experience, while showing a positive directional relationship ($\beta = .07$), emerged only as a minimal and nonsignificant predictor ($p = .266$).

DISCUSSION

There was a moderate positive correlation between approval of traditional masculinity norms and decision to express masculine behaviors at the workplace that was statistically significant. The literature on masculinity contest culture (MCC) corroborates this finding greatly as it views the workplace as a place where men struggle to prove their dominance, self-reliance, and emotional control (Glick et al., 2018). Glick et al. (2018) have created and confirmed the Masculinity Contest Culture Scale in which they found that a workplace with high MCC scores is characterized by negative organizational processes, such as toxic leadership, bullying, and low well-being among both men and women. On the same note, Berdahl et al. (2018) and Ely and Kimmel (2018) suggest that those behaviors should not be considered only as personal characteristics since they are supported by the organizational norms and practices that make men feel obliged to demonstrate their masculinity by means of

competitive and, in some cases, aggressive actions (Berdahl et al., 2018; Ely and Kimmel, 2018). The studies of the various settings, such as the tech industry in China and the male-dominated sectors of the Global South, further show that the norms of hegemonic masculinity are deeply rooted in work cultures and shape not only the behavior of men in question but also their attitudes toward women and non-conforming men (Li and Chan, 2024). These results highlight the usefulness of the fact that masculinity norms and male behavior in the workplace are universal, although the manifestations of masculinity may depend on the culture and industry.

The present study confirmed the results of regression analyses that masculinity norms are a strong positive predictor of workplace masculinity behaviors and that it can explain almost a quarter of the variation. The literature mirrors this predictive relationship in that masculinity contest norms have been found to predict risk-taking, resistance to help-seeking and overvaluing work over well-being. Indicatively, according to Boettcher et al. (2019), masculine role norms are a source of work-related stress and mental health issues in men because men internalize the cultural beliefs to be stoic, competitive, and self-sufficient (Boettcher et al., 2019). Matos et al. (2018) showed that men at places of work that are highly masculinized report that they are more engaged in competitive and status-driven behaviors even at the cost of collaboration and psychological safety (Matos et al., 2018). Further, cultures of masculinity rivalry were associated with lowered organizational citizenship behaviors, heightened turnover intentions and adverse views on gender equity measures (Kuchynka et al., 2018). These results indicate that the development of the intervention focused on the alteration of masculinity norms may significantly affect the enhancement of the workplace culture and employee well-being.

The findings indicated masculinity norms were also a powerful predictor of workplace behaviors among the age groups even though age was not a significant predictor. This is consistent with the research that has revealed that masculinity contest norms are part of all ages, and they do exist in organizational culture, and this is not an issue of the developmental stage of an individual (Reid et al., 2018). Similarly, Reid et al. (2018) also suggested that masculinity contests are a function of the occupational characteristics and team structure and not the age of the individual employees. These findings can be interpreted as a signifier to focus on the organizational level of interventions, as cultural norms and practices are more successful in defining the behavior in the organization than the demographic factors of the individual (Reid et al., 2018).

Furthermore, the masculinity norms continued to predict behavior in the workplace even when years of experience could be controlled. This could be grounded on the fact that the nature of the norms of masculinity was found strong in a comparative study of data on different career stages and levels (Giazitzoglu & Muzio, 2020). Both Glick et al. (2018) and Giazitzoglu and Muzio (2020) find that challenge cultures may influence the behavior of both new and experienced workers, suggesting that the organizational tradition is greater than individual experience (Giazitzoglu & Muzio, 2020; Glick et al., 2018). This sheds light on the importance of addressing the

cultural norms at an organizational level to achieve profound change.

Integration with Broader Literature

The results of this paper are aligned with a body of work, which is becoming increasingly explicit about the ubiquity and frequently adverse impact of conventional masculinity standards in the workplace. Culture of contests based on masculinity has been associated with various negative consequences, such as the growth of stress, poorer well-being, gender discrimination, and the unwillingness toward diversity efforts (Kuchynka et al., 2018). Such cultures do not only damage men by putting them under pressure to adhere to strict standards but also achieve gender inequality by excluding women and non-conformist men (Padavic, 1991).

According to cross-cultural research, the exact manifestation of masculinity can be different in various organizational environments, but the patterns of competition, hierarchy, and suppression of emotions are similar in different environments (Giazitzoglu & Muzio, 2020). More recent interventions focused on diminishing the impact of masculinity challenge cultures- including leadership education, policy reforms, and interventions to demasculinize organizational language- have been found to potentially lead to more inclusive and psychologically safe workplaces (He & Kang, 2025). Nevertheless, the fact that such norms are still prevalent indicates that more profound cultural transformation is required with the help of research and the creation of policies.

These results are important for organizational settings in South Asia, where culturally embedded masculinity norms have received limited empirical attention.

Limitations and Suggestions

This study faced several limitations which suggest future research directions. First, the study was limited to working men of Pakistan and may not be applicable across other cultural or occupational settings. Further studies are warranted to increase diversity of samples (e.g. women, non-binary, from a wider variety of industry and geographic areas for more representative sampling). Second, self-reported data creates the potential for social desirability bias, especially regarding sensitive topics like gender norms. Thirdly, because this research is cross-sectional, it limits the potential for causal inferences to be made concerning the relationship between masculinity norms and behaviors in the workplace. More longitudinal studies are required to gain insight into causal pathways and long-term implications of such norms on workplace outcomes. Lastly, the MRNS and WMBQ are reasonably reliable, but there are measurement limitations. Further research could include the simultaneous use of a range of instruments and mixed methods to collect the complex of masculinity norms. The qualitative studies, specifically in the Pakistani context, would clarify how these norms are negotiated in day-to-day business environments and the culture-specific aspects of their implementation in society.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to explore the impact of traditional masculinity norms on the work behaviors of employed males in Pakistan. The research drew on such

theories as hegemonic masculinity, masculinity contest culture and gender theory to show how characteristics such as emotional restraint, dominance, competitiveness and self-reliance are internalized and manifested in the workplace.

Data was collected from 196 employed males using a quantitative approach using validated scales and scales developed by the researcher. The results showed a stable and statistically significant association between norms of masculinity and workplace behaviors. Emotion suppression, less help-seeking and competitive/dominant interaction were behaviors that were correlated with endorsement of these norms by men. No significant differences are found between patterns and age or years of experience, indicating that these patterns are more influenced by cultural norms than by demographic factors.

The study adds to the scarce empirical literature on masculinity in workplaces in South Asia and highlights the importance of interventions at the organizational and policy level. Work cultures with a focus on masculinity can have a detrimental effect on employee well-being and reinforce gender inequality. Inclusive policies, cultural change, and leadership development will be a key component in changing the norms to ensure healthier and more equitable work environments.

The study has some limitations but also has a lot of insights to offer. The study was conducted in a select sample of working men in Pakistan and self-reported data could have resulted in a bias. Future studies should examine a variety of gender identities, employ longitudinal designs, and investigate the efficacy of intervention for changing negative masculinity norms. Further studies are needed on the effectiveness of organizational interventions to mitigate the impact of masculinity contest cultures in South Asian workplaces, including leadership development programs and inclusive policy changes.

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