



## Second Generation Gender Bias in Female Lawyers: Causes, Consequences, and Remedies

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** Focusing upon second-generation gender bias (2GGB) as the primary cause of gender discrimination in the legal profession, current research is intended to investigate the causes of 2GGB at the workplace, how female lawyers are affected, and how they are handling the effects of this phenomenon.

**Methodology:** The study is based upon an interpretivist approach conducted through semi-structured interviews with 15 lady lawyers having at least five years of litigation experience in the courts of law.

**Findings:** The data analysis indicated three main themes: structural, social, and personal issues causing 2GGB hindering female lawyers' career progression and development. There is little exclusive evidence elucidating the occurrence and prevalence of 2GGB in female lawyers in emerging economies in Asia.

**Value:** This work can be seen as groundbreaking in its exploration of this concept from the perspective of a patriarchal society in the midst of change. The findings of this study will enhance the broader theoretical comprehension of this relatively new and nuanced concept within the realm of female lawyers.

**Keywords:** Second-Generation Gender Bias; Female Lawyers; Workplace Issues; Glass Ceiling.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Given the massive number of stressors in today's workplaces, including insufficient resources (J. Abbas, 2020a), prolonged working schedules, escalating work demands (J. Abbas, 2024b; Jiakui et al., 2023), and changing organizational dynamics in terms of digitalization and technology (Kazmi & Abbas, 2021), it's not astonishing that most of the workers report dissatisfaction with their jobs (Shahzad et al., 2020). Nevertheless, these relatively obvious and overt stressors cause just a fraction of the female stress workers to experience because of more implicit and hidden aspects (Habib et al., 2019). Such aspects may include gender biases, discrimination, sexual harassment (J. Abbas, 2024a; Batool et al., 2023), workplace

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horizontal and vertical hostility, and other such factors (Giles, 2021; Wang et al., 2022). These stressors are often the most intricate and challenging to cope with and combat, mainly because they're often imperceptible (Opoku & Williams, 2019).

Predominantly talking about the legal profession where female workers deal with the problems of inappropriate resources and few opportunities to grow mainly because of the cultural scene in which they are surviving, particularly in the developing countries. The legal profession is supposed to be one of the most prestigious professions worldwide. But in most developing countries, especially in Asia, it is dominated by males. The position of female lawyers in developing countries of Asia is not like other developed countries (Swartz & Amatucci, 2018). Women started taking part in law-related professions in the 1960s. However, the gap between male and female law associates is quite conspicuous. Even though many females are graduating with law degrees, only a few of them dare to opt for it as a career. Most of them switch to the professions which are more accepting of ladies, like teaching or judiciary (Holden, 2019; S. M. Khan & Abbas, 2022).

Overt and explicit activities and practices at the workplace which prohibit females from career advancement come under first-generation gender bias (1GGB). They can be easily spotted as being done knowingly and intentionally based on gender (Addo, 2020). They may include sexual violence, harassment, psychological and financial mistreatment. Such practices consciously and purposely exclude women in decisions like arranging a training program, hiring a workforce, compensating employees, and making promotional decisions (Yaghmour et al., 2021). Such practices are targeted to impede performance and obstruct the career growth of the female workforce. In addition to such visible phenomena like 1GGB, some other factors are also covertly and implicitly linked to and reflective of gender bias; these factors vary from workplace to workplace and are unique to the context of the work settings (Wei et al., 2023). The offending party is implicit and inadvertently done and is called second-generation gender bias (2GGB) (Coles, 2021).

2GGB results from gender stereotypes and societal expectations of males and females in society. It is even said that such practices are carried out, knowingly and unknowingly, for men to be in authoritative and dominant positions (Batara et al., 2018). In such a situation, even female workers have the conception that gender bias does not prevail in the organization (Ibarra, Ely, and Kolb, 2013). 2GGB may not always be a conscious effort as the person committing it may not intend to exclude or harm a female; it may occur due to the values and perceptions of a person about gender roles in society. Nevertheless, it still exists and thwarts females to move on to the higher echelons of power and authority at the workplace (Giles, 2021). Some researchers, such as Opoku and Williams (2019) and Kolb and McGinn (2008), have suggested 2GGB as one of the primary causes of constant gender leadership disparity in the workplace. Being on the positive side, it is also argued that when females feel

empowered and not victimized when they are cognizant of the subtle and pervasive effects of second-generation bias, they are in a position to defy those effects. They can come forward for leadership roles provided they are qualified but are overlooked (Kumari, Abbas, et al., 2022; Kumari, Ali, et al., 2022; Williams, 2018).

Employees' career development can be viewed with dimensions, namely structure, culture (Pan et al., 2022), and action (J. Abbas & Dogan, 2022). In the current study, the career of female lawyers in developing countries in Asia is approached using the lens of these dimensions to present a holistic view of how women respond and cater to workplace dynamics. 2GGB is considered a structural impediment that shapes the alternatives females have for their careers and entrepreneurship. An interdisciplinary analytical framework is proposed in this study to understand 2GGB, which female entrepreneurs come across as an obstacle to success. The structural underpinnings of 2GGB have been clarified to help women managers recognize the circuitous paths to leadership in organizations.

## **2. STATUS OF FEMALE LAWYERS**

Most developing countries in Asia are predominantly patriarchal societies where males play the primary roles of authority and women are subordinate. Such a cultural scenario has some serious repercussions on the prospects of the lives of males and females (Ali et al., 2011). Women in this region have to encounter multiple problems that cause hindrances in their progress. A review of the life of women in Pakistan has approved the fact that most women are facing these problems (Akhter & Akbar, 2016). Qanoondan (2017) quoted Nawaz, a practicing Barrister in Pakistan who highlighted the issues of female lawyers in Pakistan and said;

“It is very difficult to practice as a women lawyer in Pakistan because they have to encounter a lot of barriers constructed by men, they have problems in getting clientele, they cannot go to banks, companies, can't go out at night. They have to compete with men, and men don't care in this country. In other jurisdictions in the United Kingdom, the United States, or other countries of Europe, men, and women have an equal field to compete in; in this country, they don't have an equal field. Touts, munshis, and readers further add to the difficult dynamics; they offer cases and make money; I never knew that until a long time some time ago, and that's how I came to know this secret of being successful. Because of these and a lot of other reasons, there are very few women who have their chambers and have gone up to the top" (Qanoondan, 2017).

The researchers jotted several other prevailing issues, including gender discrimination, insufficient authority for making a decision, and financial instability

of women (Baloch & Batool, 2019). In addition to lots of other factors behind the problems of females like lack of women empowerment, orthodox style of society, low educational status of women, etc. (Fan et al., 2023), the most important is male dominance in most of the areas of their lives (Akhter & Naeem, 2011; H. Khan et al., 2022). It leads to restraints in the development way and uplifts the females in society (Xiao et al., 2022). According to World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2021, Pakistan is ranked at the second-lowest in the world for gender equality (Global Gender Gap Report, 2021). It is considered one of the most challenging places for women to work on an equal basis in the world. United Nations Development Program's (UNDP) report of 2021 has also ranked Pakistan 153rd out of 156 countries on the gender parity index. Pakistan is ranked the seventh among eight South Asia, only better than Afghanistan (UNDP, 2021).

One of the main reasons causing the females to be disadvantaged with lack of empowerment and deficient autonomy in Pakistan is the perception of males about the role of females (Abbas, Hashim, and Alzuhairi, 2018; Pervez and Iraqi, 2018). Female lawyers have to encounter an intimidating and unfriendly environment in Pakistan, having little or no progress in the coming years. While females outperform males in public and private law schools across the country, they are almost negligibly seen in the top echelons of legal practice and the judiciary. Pakistan is the only country in South Asia where no female had ever been appointed as a justice of the Supreme Court (Malik, 2018).

## **2.1. The Focus of Current Research**

There is a scarcity of information regarding the impact of 2GGB as a social concern in the workplace, specifically within the legal field in developing Asian countries. Very few studies have focused on this phenomenon in Pakistan, the location of the current study. This study seeks to address a significant void in research by examining the experiences of female lawyers. This study aims to delve into the experiences of the respondents at the workplace, specifically examining the types, reasons, and impact of 2GGB. It will analyze these experiences through the lens of structure, culture, and action dimensions of their careers, ultimately exploring how they are managing this phenomenon. Thus, this study is aimed to address the following queries:

1. What are the reasons for 2GGB at the workplace?
2. How are these women affected by 2GGB?
3. How are they handling the effects of 2GGB at the workplace?

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study follows a constructivist and interpretivist epistemological approach for data collection and analyses. This methodology ensures a deeper insight into the experiences of the persons who have gone through the situations of gender biases leading to enriching data with richer meanings (Zahle, 2021).

The study has followed the interpretivist approach, which is based upon in-depth interviews to collect information regarding the profession, aspirations, opportunities, and limitations female lawyers face at the workplace. Personal lived experiences are invaluable as they are not overt or explicit in research; instead are more hidden and covert (Morse, 1994). Semi-structured interviews were conducted to facilitate a deeper exploration of the challenges and biases experienced by female lawyers. Such interviews allow formality and enable the flexibility to explore areas in which valuable data might not be captured otherwise. It ensures an easy-going free flow of dialogue and poses the opportunity for additional discovery of new information (Evans & Lewis, 2018).

#### 3.1. Sample

The key informants for this study are 15 practicing female lawyers (see Table 1). All respondents have at least 5 years of litigation experience in the respective courts. Snowball sampling is used to look for the anticipated number of participants in the study. Rawalpindi and Islamabad's courts were chosen, considering that being the capital, twin cities signify the maximum level of representation of female lawyers in the country. When the lawyers' responses started appearing repetitive and reached saturation, the researcher stopped collecting further data. Depending upon the preferred language of the respondents, all interviews were conducted in Urdu and English. Keeping in view the study's exploratory nature, all the respondents were asked open-ended questions, which were developed after a thorough review of existing literature. The interviews started with demographic information, and then respondents' perception was inquired about the 2GGB in female lawyers. On average, an interview lasted for approximately 45-60 minutes each. Respondents were approached at their workplace, i.e., their law chambers. After their consent, the interviews were recorded on the researchers' cell phones. The recorded interviews were keenly transcribed, and content analysis was completed to formulate the study's dataset.

**Table 1** *Profile of interview participants*

Participant	Age	Experience	Marital status	Qualification
P1	37 Years	10 Years	Single	MA /LLB
P2	35 Years	9 Years	Married	MA/ LLB

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P3	30 Years	5 Years	Single	MA/ LLB
P4	33 Years	8 Years	Single	BA/ LLB
P5	45 Years	14 Years	Married	MA/ LLB
P6	50 Years	25 Years	Married	MA/ LLB
P7	53 Years	23Years	Married	BA/ LLB
P8	47 Years	15Years	Married	BA/ LLB
P9	48 Years	18 Years	Married	BA/ LLB
P10	40 Years	12 Years	Divorced	MA/ LLB
P11	32 Years	6 Years	Single	BA/ LLB
P12	51 Years	25 Years	Married	BA/ LLB
P13	32 Years	7 Years	Single	BA/ LLB
P14	43 Years	14 Years	Married	BA/ LLB
P15	47 Years	16 Years	Single	MA/ LLB

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MA\* Master of Arts

BA\* Bachelor of Arts

LLB\* Bachelor of Laws

## **4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

The recordings of the interviews were transliterated verbatim in Urdu and then translated into English by an English language expert to minimize the chances of loss of meaning due to translation. The researchers piloted narrative and framework analysis to ensure robustness and vigor. Initial meaning units or subordinate themes were highlighted in the transcripts, out of which similar meaning units were grouped into sub-themes and subsequently grouped into main themes. A similar approach of qualitative nature is followed by Abbas (J. Abbas, 2020b).

Twelve sub-themes were identified from the data leading to 3 main themes explaining structural, cultural, and personal dimensions of 2GGB in the career paths of female lawyers. These main themes were identified through deductive reasoning by applying the framework and narrative analysis through open coding (J. Abbas & Sağsan, 2019). The basis of the grouping of themes was the prevalence of repetitive keywords, phrases, and a combination of related lower-order themes. The quotes of lawyers have been translated into English.

### **4.1. Structural Issues**

The main theme inculcating structural issues is composed of two sub-themes: caused by people and caused by work. The structure is a visual diagram explaining what people do, the reporting method, and how decisions are formulated to achieve the goal (Kenton, 2019). Structure and people are considered basic elements of an organization (SHRM, 2015). Almost all of the study participants mentioned the

influence of structural aspects in the legal profession of a female lawyer. Females are subject to unintended systematic discrimination through formal and informal processes and work structures (Ahmad, 2020). As one respondent quoted:

"In my first year of practice, all the girls who started with me left. Most of them opted to teach or prepare for judiciary exam or work in a company."

**4.1.1 Issues caused by people:**

Legal profession has multiple stakeholders, including lawyers, judges, court staff, and clients. As the study respondents were female lawyers, we took male and female lawyers as separate stakeholders.

**Table 2** Main themes of the study

Themes	Subordinate themes	Description	
<b>Structural Issues</b>	Caused by People	Male colleagues Female Colleagues / Horizontal hostility Judges Court staff Clients	The attitude of male lawyers towards female lawyers The attitude of female lawyers towards female lawyers The attitude of judges towards female lawyers The attitude of court staff towards female lawyers The attitude of clients towards female lawyers
	Caused by Work arrangement	Work structure Glass ceiling Working hours	Work policies, work restrictions, and developmental opportunities Few females reach the top positions Length and suitability of working hours
<b>Social Issues</b>	Masculine culture	Biasness Gender stereotypes Restricted access to networks	The inclination of society towards male lawyers Generalization about gender roles and work specializations Difficulty in moving alone and to outstation, limited access to police stations, Inappropriate for females to hire touts

	Homophily	People try to have a relationship with people like them
	Unsure future	The family decides either to continue profession after marriage or not
	Social rejection	Being law aware and outspoken for girls is considered as a constraint in getting married
	Outlook	Females are being judged on their attire
	Political dynamics	Having a position in the bar is considered prestigious by the people
<b>Personal Issues</b>	Personal characteristics	To survive in this profession females, have to be committed, resilient and perseverant
	Psychological issues	A lot of practicing lawyers suffer from psychological traumas while continuing the profession
	Family-related Coping	Family support is detrimental  How females deal with the problematic dimensions of the law profession

*4.1.1.1. Attitude of male lawyers towards female lawyers:*

The legal profession is divided into litigators and corporate lawyers; the former appears in courts for presenting cases, whereas the latter is primarily responsible for the day-to-day transactional work of the firms. Litigating lady lawyers face more barriers in professional advancement than corporate lawyers due to more exposure to the visibly male-centric nature of the courts (Shahid, 2019). Females' attitude from their male colleagues leads to defensiveness, denial, or uneasy sympathy, leading to a familiar discomfort and feeling of being trivialized, objectified, and exhausted while at work (Kurowska-Pysz et al., 2024; Zaman & Malkani, 2018). One of the veteran respondents mentioned: “male lawyers cannot even bear the lady lawyers sitting in the courts. They try to upset them by deliberate touching or by any means so they may lose their confidence to conduct the case.”



The attitude of senior lawyers toward young female lawyers, apart from few genuine mentors, is uncaring and dispiriting. They do not extend the required cooperation to young lawyers (Niazi, 2017). One participant quoted: “when you start as a female lawyer career, the first harassment that you face from your seniors is the attitude showing this field is not for girls.” One of the common experiences encountered by lady lawyers is the prevalence and discussion of gender issues to conduct a trial by male counterparts. They do not hesitate to comment on the personal appearance of a female lawyer during the courtroom proceedings to intimidate female lawyers (Smithey, 2017). One litigator quoted:

“I have seen if a female wins a case, the male counterparts accuse her of using immoral antics,” She further mentioned, “after targeting the character, they target the faith of lady lawyers by relating them to controversial believes or friends.”

#### 4.1.1.2. *Horizontal hostility:*

Occurs when a female faces a biased attitude from a fellow female. In the absence of such peer support, a toxic environment is created at the workplace, damaging reputations and lacking positivism. Female-to-female harassment doesn't become conspicuous and remains invisible (Mizrahi, 2003). One respondent quoted:

“When a lady is established in this profession, she wants to get hold of the scenario and does not want other females to get at her position. If only females protect the other females, much progress can be made in their careers.”

Such working relations sabotage the working environment, leading to insecurity at individual, professional, and organizational levels (Mena, 2016).

#### 4.1.1.3. *Attitude of judges.*

The subsequent most crucial bias for lady litigators arises from the attitude of judges towards them. Their attitude varies from patronizing to predatory. In litigation, clients perceive their lawyer to be credible depending upon the judge's perception of the lawyer. The attitude of judges towards female lawyers, in general, seems discriminatory. They favor a name over the arguments presented, which is very disappointing, to say the least (Shahid, 2019). The argument propounded by a senior lawyer is welcomed with a smile, and if presented by a young or a female lawyer, is handled in a very belittling way (Niazi, 2017). As one participant mentioned:

“Judges give gestures as if a female lawyer does not know the law compared to a male senior lawyer. A male lawyer is considered more credible than a female lawyer.”

As stated by an interviewee: “Even few judges demand personal favors from female lawyers; they ask for exchanging text messages or calls in response to listening to their cases or opportunity to writing shreds of evidence. They expect females to show polite attitude and maintaining contacts with them in off timings.”

#### 4.1.1.4. *Attitude of court staff.*

Another bias faced by female lawyers is from the court staff, including readers, assistants, and peons. Roaming in high court feels like moving around the streets of the marketplace. Men in the halls of the high court and courtrooms badly stare at the passing by females (Zaman & Malkani, 2018). One of the participants of the study mentioned:

“When a female lawyer enters the court, the reader and the court staff behave as if some amusing object has arrived. They harass her through their gestures and conduct.”

#### 4.1.1.5. *Attitude of clients.*

Women lawyers have to face the same biased attitude from their clients, who consider them less competent and less politically skilled than their male counterparts. Clients consider that lawyers pay less attention to the case because of their domestic responsibilities. Gaining clients' trust in the lower courts cases is complicated (Shahid, 2019). One respondent stated:

“Clients do not prefer female lawyers. Cases of criminal nature and bail matters are usually not assigned to females.”

In such conditions, female lawyers have to put in double effort to win credibility in the eyes of the clients (Quartey, Akuffo-Kwapong, and Etone, 2021).

### **4.1.2. Issues caused by work arrangement**

#### 4.1.2.1. *Work structure.*

The work structure of the legal profession is organized so that the lady lawyers are being given the in-house and research jobs while male attorneys are assigned to go for litigation work. One of the respondents who was working with a law firm stated:

“Females are given ordinary responsibilities. They are not supposed to defend a case. Whether you are dealing with a small or a large law firm, you have to sit by

your senior's side without any purpose while he is dealing with his clients. The clients are happy, and so is the senior lawyer.”

Females have to face pervasive pressure to perform equal or better than their male colleagues. The assertive lady lawyers are stereotyped for being strict and blunt, whereas docile and benign are labeled as weak and unfit for the field. Females also face discrimination in their pay not only by their employers but even by clients (Shahid, 2019). They are neither praised nor get rewards similar to ones offered to their male counterparts for the same level of effort (A. Anwar et al., 2023; Webb & Loughlin, 2016).

#### 4.1.2.2. *Glass ceiling.*

No female Presiding Justice has ever been appointed in the Supreme Court of Pakistan in the history of 74 years. Even the representation of females as judges in the high courts is minimal, exhibiting only 7 of 112 high court judges. Similarly, this number is very nominal in India, i.e., 3 and 7 in Bangladesh (Zaman & Malkani, 2018). They have no representation in constitutional institutions, including the Federal Shariat Court and the Council of Islamic Ideology. Such a situation of keeping them away from decision-making authorities makes them more vulnerable to different biases (K. Anwar, 2015). One lawyer mentioned: “In my career of 25 years, I have not seen a single initiative for the promotion of women lawyers. There is not even a single female Supreme Court judge in the history of 70 years.”

#### 4.1.2.3. *Working hours.*

Another critical challenge that men and women encounter in different careers is work-life balance. The legal profession is a vigorous and strenuous duty requiring a great deal of time and energy to produce the optimum results (Butler, 2016). Law firms demand total commitment and frequently expect lawyers to put work first and be endlessly available to perform professional tasks (Nelson, 2020). Female lawyers expected to fulfill social and family obligations must deal with unpredictable work hours (Harveston, 2017; Sarwar & Imran, 2019). As one participant of the study responded:

“Female lawyers have to face a lot of pressure because of prolonged working hours; males have an edge as they are not supposed to take care of the kids and look after their family in the evening.”

## **4.2. Social Issues**

### **4.2.1. Masculine culture.**

Women in dominant male societies have to cope with a patriarchal mindset resulting in seclusion and exclusion, limiting their access to developmental benefits (Bhattacharya, 2014). The primary reason for curtailing women's empowerment is the conception of males about the role of women (Isran & Isran, 2012).

#### *4.2.1.1. Biasness.*

Ismat Mehdi, an advocate, who runs Ismat Law Associates, has mentioned her expected output, which was supposed to be double the amount of work allocated to male associates (K. Anwar, 2015). She further said that her colleagues took her seriously when she efficiently handled the excessive workload. One respondent quoted: "While sitting in a courtroom having a few ladies and stereotypical men around, I wonder where I have come; it was better to opt for a teaching career than to be at this awful place."

#### *4.2.1.2. Gender stereotypes.*

Mishra (2015) contends that in a population of 73 women legal professionals, 25 accepted to experience gender discrimination in one way or the other at the District Court of Lucknow (India). As a result of such problems, females have no option except to switch to the professions more accepting of women, including teaching or office jobs (Bambauer & Rahman, 2019). Men undermine women's competence by using both sexualized and nonsexual tools (Imosemi, 2021). People in this profession have a judgmental attitude towards female lawyers:

"When you join as a fresh law graduate, you are being told to go home cook food and raise kids; this work is not for girls."

#### *4.2.1.3. Restricted access to networks.*

To succeed in professional liaising, play a catalytic role. Likewise, lawyers are required to network with touts (mostly a poorly educated person working for attracting clients on a commission basis), investigation officers, police staff (Qaisrani, Liaquat, and Khokhar, 2016). Males are involved in social interactions. Therefore, they possess larger social circles and have more chances to network with clients (Sarwar & Imran, 2019), which adds to the problem of preferring male lawyers over female lawyers. As mentioned by an interviewee: "Females have family restrictions of not going outside the city for presenting the cases or going to the police station. At the same time, their male counterparts have an alliance with investigation officers. Male lawyers also appoint touts in the police stations who grab cases from there and take a commission."

#### **4.2.2. Homophily.**

Most people like to network with individuals having comparative social status and gender. Senior lawyers are involved in developing social interactions with people having similar backgrounds, gender, and experiences (Sultan et al., 2020). Resultantly, females remain out of such loops of social interaction at the workplace, depriving them of the guidelines of seniors. They are mostly excluded from informal social activities. So, they miss out on the opportunities to generate collegial support and client contacts (Butler, 2016). Because of such alienation, they cannot get challenging and high visibility assignments. This creates a self-perpetuating barrier; when women feel unsupported, their turnover intention is augmented, ultimately leaving (Smithey, 2017).

#### **4.2.3. Unsure future.**

A female's access to resources is ensured through relationships with men and alters throughout the life cycle, from her father's house to her husband's (Critelli, 2012). Her decision to continue or leave her professional career is based upon the will of her family men. Females are also unclear about their upcoming course of actions in careers because of the challenges of married lives. Religion is comprehended in a narrowly defined manner, and the ruling elite has manipulated it to bolster insecure regimes (Yaqub, 2019). Female lawyers stop practicing law lesser because of the job and more because of frustrations of reduced professional and development opportunities and the work environment (Patwari & Ali, 2020).

#### **4.2.4. Social rejection for marriage.**

A successful lawyer is expected to be confident, law knowledgeable, attentive to detail, socially connected, and highly competitive (Korotkova, 2020; Ladah, 2019). Mishra (2015) conducted a study where only 26% of the female law professionals were married, whereas 66% were unmarried. Many unmarried females depict that women lawyers face problems in this regard (Noorani & Shakir, 2021). When they can be called professionally well-grounded, it becomes too late to be considered apposite for marriage. Furthermore, it is also evident that while hiring female lawyers, firms make sure to include questions about the plans of getting married (Malik, 2018). The respondents of the study shared similar thoughts: "It is tough for female lawyers to get married as they are not considered good wives or daughters in law because they know the law and work with men. I started my career after my marriage, and I am sure that if I had started my profession before marriage, it would have been challenging for my parents to marry me."

#### **4.2.5. Outlook.**

People are judged by their appearance. In the judiciary system, lady attorneys encounter misogynistic remarks about their dress and interactions with others (Harveston, 2017). It arises a feeling of discomfort among female lawyers when the male counsels and coworkers critically observe and pass offensive comments on their appearance and outlook in the courtroom during proceedings just to intimidate her (Smithey, 2017). Such statements lower morale and diminish the confidence of young lawyers, eventually leading to their negative growth (Niazi, 2017). One interviewee mentioned: "The appearance and outfit of the females matter a lot; people do not hesitate to comment on personal things like covering one's head or choosing the color of lipstick. They often have to suffer the filthy staring from the people in the courtroom."

#### **4.2.6. Political dynamics.**

The literature indicates that many conspicuous leaders of the sub-continent like Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Muhammad Iqbal, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Mohandas K. Gandhi were also lawyers (Zaman & Malkani, 2018). There are different bar councils at the national, provincial, and local levels in the country, each having its own political and ideological affiliations. One of the respondents mentioned:

"Judges favor the president or vice president of the bar, and they are considered more credible, even the clients feel elevated and confident on the fact that their lawyer has some position in the bar or is a famous personality."

### **4.3. Personal Issues**

#### **4.3.1. Personal characteristics.**

Lawyers are different from the general population in several characteristics like decision making, values, and personality traits (Ferraro et al., 2017). Female lawyers are considered more hard-working, loyal, and detail-oriented than their male counterparts (Noorani & Shakir, 2021). They are more concerned about personal and social motivations (Kumari et al., 2021), personal growth, and social change, contrary to their male colleagues, who are motivated by prestige and monetary benefits (Truong & Le, 2020). One of the lawyers responded: "I think females are better lawyers. They are sincere by nature and give appropriate time to the client with full honesty. They are straightforward and do not try to exploit the client. As male lawyers keep on giving the false hopes to the client and keep on making money from them."

### **4.3.2. Psychological issues.**

The legal profession is often characterized as an occupation in crisis. Different stakeholders, including law professors, economists, psychologists, and researchers, have reported and measured the troubles in the field (Rothstein, 2007). Nelson (2020) explained it as a “tri-partite crisis” constituting upon: dissatisfaction of a lawyer leading to mental health issues, a deterioration in professionalism, and subsequent waning of public perception. One of the most senior respondents quoted: “If you sit in the lady bar, more than 50 percent of the females are having psychological problems.”

This crisis may arise because of the inherent personality traits, academic training, working conditions, or a combination of all of these factors (Snyder, 2014). When combined with fellow workers' misogynistic comments and attitudes, the stress resulting from exhaustion and distress results in a bad mental state (Harveston, 2017).

### **4.3.3. Family support.**

Family support is considered one of the essential resources to cope with the stringent work demands of being a legal professional. Family may provide support in one of the two dimensions: by understanding the strenuous work demand of the legal field or by offering help in household responsibilities. While studying female lawyers in India, Mishra (2015) contends that 77% of the female lawyers seek support and cooperation from their families, whereas 23% lack it, making their lives more challenging and problematic. One interviewee stated: “When I joined the profession, my brother and father stopped talking to me, they advised me to stay away from this profession, but now they feel pride in introducing me as their sister and daughter.”

Furthermore, unmarried professionals may support their parents and other family members. Still, it becomes very challenging for married females to continue the profession, keeping in view the lack of support from in-laws.

### **4.3.4. Coping.**

Females have to back off their law career because of structural, cultural, and personal factors, sometimes caused by horizontal hostility. It's not about the interactions of males and females at the workplace but the structural and social elements designed to debase and disempower women in the legal profession (Zaman & Malkani, 2018). Measures must be taken to promote inclusive culture devoid of 2GGB by constituting power structures meant to marginalize women rather than empower them.

All of the respondents suggested inculcating some specific personal attributes, including; resilience, determination, commitment, consistency, bravery, and attentiveness to cope with the challenges of the legal field. Some also mentioned the family support and support of some colleagues as the coping mechanism. At the same time, few participants considered insensitivity and compromise as the coping technique. As one of them responded: “The success of a female lawyer mostly depends upon her courage to survive in such circumstances; only the strong and brave can survive in this profession. Females ultimately start accepting and tolerating the harmful practices of this field.”

**Table 3:** *Main themes and responses of respondents on each theme with final percentages*

Main themes	P 1	P 2	P 3	P 4	P 5	P 6	P 7	P 8	P 9	P 10	P 11	P 12	P 13	P 14	P 15	
Male colleagues	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100%
Horizontal hostility	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●		●	●	87%
Judges	●	●		●	●	●	●	●			●	●	●	●		73%
Court staff		●				●	●								●	33%
Clients	●	●		●	●	●	●		●	●	●		●		●	73%
Work structure	●	●		●			●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	73%
Glass ceiling	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	93%
Working hours	●	●		●		●			●	●				●		47%
Biasness	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	87%
Gender stereotypes	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	93%
Restricted access to networks				●	●	●			●	●	●	●	●	●	●	67%
Homophily	●		●	●		●				●	●	●		●	●	60%
Unsurety of future	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100%





## **5.1. Research Limitations**

Depending upon the research approach adopted and the sample collected for the study, the study's findings cannot be generalized. As the sample was drawn only from the female lawyers in one of the developing countries in Asia (Pakistan), it is recommended to study the same concept in the other regions.

## **5.2. Conclusion**

The study provides insights into how structural, cultural, and personal biases affect litigating lady lawyers. The practical implications may suggest that by overcoming this subtle aspect of the legal profession, more females can be inspired to further perform at the optimum to achieve top-level positions in the legal setup. It further suggests that godfathers of the legal work can support female talent by incorporating the desired alterations in the structural and cultural dimensions of this field and benefit from this untapped talent of female lawyers.

More operative and sustainable gender policies should be developed to expedite the optimal co-existence of both male and female lawyers. This would enhance the quality of working conditions for female lawyers and increase equality and diversity in the country's legal fraternity. No legislation can be used to tackle the 2GGB as we can use in the first-generation bias, which is more apparent and can be overcome by altering policies. So structural and cultural reforms at a general level and individual reforms at the specific level are required to respond to this inconspicuous mammoth. It is evident from the findings that males and females unconsciously fortify the existing structures and cultures by blindly following them and reinforcing the presence of such implicit biases. So, the first step is to be aware and confront the prevailing problem to reduce its occurrences.

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