

## Portraying the multifaceted interplay between sexual harassment, job stress, social support and employee's turnover intention amid COVID-19: A Multilevel Moderating Model

**Muhammad Aqeel**<sup>1, \*</sup>

Foundation University Islamabad, Rawalpindi Campus, Pakistan.

[aqeel.1924@gmail.com](mailto:aqeel.1924@gmail.com)

**Jaffar Abbas**

Antai College of Economics and Management, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, 200240  
Shanghai CHINA

School of Media and Communication, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, 200240 Shanghai  
CHINA.

[dr.jabbas@outlook.com](mailto:dr.jabbas@outlook.com)

**Saqlain Raza**

Faculty of Management Sciences, Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto Institute of Science and  
Technology (SZABIST), Islamabad, Pakistan.

[dr.saqlain.raza@outlook.com](mailto:dr.saqlain.raza@outlook.com)

**Jaffar Aman**

Department Sociology & Anthropology, Karakoram International University, Gilgit, Pakistan.

[jaffar.aman@outlook.com](mailto:jaffar.aman@outlook.com)

### **Abstract**

*The education industry plays a vital role in social development. However, employees' job turnover is challenging as it involves massive human and institutional financial costs. This research paper innovates by exploring the linkage between social support, sexual harassment, job stress, and job turnover intention amid COVID-19 crisis. The study examines how social support moderates the relationship between job stress, sexual harassment, and job turnover intention among educators teaching faculty members. The investigators applied the technique based on convenient sampling with a cross-sectional design for desired data collection. The study received 200 respondents' feedback from 10 January 2021 to 31 August 2021. (Male teachers, n= 100; female teachers, n=100) and their ages range from 25 to 59 years. The score was M=25.25, and the standard deviation score was SD=10.24. The data reports on the teachers' responses received from various public and private universities in Rawalpindi and the Federal city of Islamabad, Pakistan. The study's results indicate that sexual harassment statistically correlates positively with employees' work stress and job intention turnover. However, it correlates negatively among teachers with social support. The results exhibit that employees' job stress predicts job turnover intention positively and significantly. The study shows that social support moderates the association between sexual harassment, job stress, and teachers' job turnover intention. This research will*

*help raise awareness of severe problems in the workplace. The educational environment would also help address this severe problem in Pakistan's academic and other industries.*

**Keywords:** Workplace stress, COVID-19, sexual harassment. Job stress. Job turn over intention. Social support.

## Introduction

At the beginning of 2020, a sudden epidemic spread, posing a huge threat to the health and lives of people around the world (Ceccato & Loukaitou-Sideris, 2022; Hafsa et al., 2021; Jackson, 2021; Lai et al., 2022; Shuja, Aqeel, Jaffar, et al., 2020; Tsai et al., 2022). The pandemic brought significant losses to the firms' employments, economic activities and global economy (Abbas et al. 2021; Aman et al. 2022; Ge et al. 2022; Liu et al. 2022; Mamirkulova et al. 2022; Mubeen et al. 2021). The pandemic caused numerous challenges for the public health as well as the business firms, which has affected educational, travel, and tourism firms massively (Abbas et al. 2019; Aqeel et al. 2021; Aqeel et al. 2022; Azizi et al. 2021; Li et al. 2022; Rahmat et al. 2022; Yao et al. 2022). Social media and technology played a vital role in this crisis to carry on educational and economic activities worldwide (Fu and Abbas 2022; Moradi et al. 2021; Sarfraz et al. 2021; Toqeer et al. 2021; Wang et al. 2021; Zhou et al. 2021). The pandemic caused a public health emergency because immediate treatment against the virus was not available (Abbas 2020; Lebni et al. 2021; Shoib et al. 2021; Su et al. 2021; Su et al. 2021; Su et al. 2020; Yoosefi Lebni et al. 2021). The vaccine development to treat this disease became a global health crisis, as medical treatment was not effective that emotionally affected individuals' mental health (Abbas 2020; Moradi et al. 2020; Moradi et al. 2021; NeJhaddadgar et al. 2020; Shuja et al. 2020; Su et al. 2021; Su et al. 2021).

As a vital force in improving people's livelihood, increasing employment and supporting innovation, small and medium-sized enterprises provide financial support for 80% of China's employee employment, 50% of tax revenue, 60% of GDP, and 70% of innovation (Aman et al. 2019; Khazaie et al. 2021; Lai et al. 2022; Mubeen et al. 2021). Conversely, due to their limited ability to resist sudden pandemic attacks, such as the impact of coronavirus 2019 disease, their pathetic anti-risk capability resulted in a more significant job turnover prevalence. It led to a greater rate of job turnover in disruptive manufacturing and production processes (Ceccato & Loukaitou-

Sideris, 2022; Liu et al., 2018; Toqeer et al., 2021). The epidemic of COVID-19 has suddenly enhanced the employees' job stress, which leads to turnover intention among employees (Aqeel & Ahmed, 2018; Bautista et al., 2020; Boudrias et al., 2020). This study aimed to examine the relationship between sexual harassment, job stress, turnover intention, and social support among teachers in Pakistan. In addition, this study examines the moderating role of social support in teachers' sexual harassment, job stress, and turnover intention. Scholars have considered sexual harassment as a severe mental health problem in the global workplace over the past few years. There are shreds of evidence that many women experience harassment in the workplace (Abbas et al., 2019; Aqeel et al., 2021; Aqeel & Akhtar, 2017; Colmore et al., 2019; Hassan et al., 2015; Merkin & Shah, 2014; Munawar, Aqeel, & Husain, 2015; Rashid et al., 2021; Sarfraz et al., 2021; Tsaras et al., 2018).

Sexual harassment description refers to define it “demands for sexual favors, unwanted sexual advances, and other physical or verbal behavior of a sexual nature.” However, both females and males can experience or encounter sexual harassment in the workplace (Das, 2009; Saif et al., 2021). Today, sexual harassment in the various workplaces is a growing problem around the world (Das, 2009). Many previous research papers have shown that sexual harassment experiences are associated with adverse work-related outcomes, such as work stress, job turnover intentions, physical and mental health disorders (Chan et al., 2008). Sexual harassment affects and reduces emotional commitment to employees work and female workers' job satisfaction (Shaffer et al., 2000; Shupe et al., 2002). Past literature exhibits that sexual harassment indicates an association between psychological distress and poor mental and physical health in male and female employees (Aqeel et al., 2015; Hashmi et al., 2013; Huerta et al., 2006; Shuja, Shahidullah, et al., 2020). Likewise, once female and male employees work in an organizational environment that is hostile and aggressive towards women, their mental health is reduced even in absences experienced by personally hostile consequences (Miner-Rubino & Cortina, 2004). A similar study reports that workplace sexual harassment can lead to mental health problems, including stress, anxiety, and depression. As a result, it leads to lower workplace performance and reduced productivity (Baba et al., 1998). Similarly, several previous studies have shown that sexual harassment is associated with harmful work outcomes (Quick et al., 1992). This study also explained that sexual harassment is associated with adverse job outcomes, including job involvement, job stress, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, job turnover intention, delinquency, absenteeism, mental health, and

physical health (Shaffer et al., 2000; Shupe et al., 2002; Willness et al., 2007). Likewise, it shows an association between incivility, employees' well-being, and workplace mistreatment (Lim & Cortina, 2005).

Pakistan is a male dominated society and women are still struggling to realize their constitutional rights in the society (Akhtar & Metraux, 2013). Although sexual harassment is not clearly defined in Pakistani culture, it facilitates murderous acts against women, including rape, honor killing, bride burning, acid throwing, and domestic violence. Law in Pakistan protects the human rights of all citizens regardless of their religion, race, or language (Akhtar & Metraux, 2013; Nosheen, 2011; Shuja, Aqeel, & Khan, 2020). However, in some cases, culture cannot stop trafficking in forced sex and labor, human trafficking, women's deprivation of property, lewd phone calls, Child marriage, and torture (Nosheen, 2011). In some cases, women in Pakistan face violence, and their family members mistreat them (Azadi et al. 2021; Fattahi et al. 2020; Paulson et al. 2021; Yoosefi Lebni et al. 2020). Numerous early studies have shown that sexual harassment is associated with negative job outcomes such as job stress, job turnover intention, and job satisfaction for both male and female employees (Amah, 2009). Hence, if employees feel uncomfortable with their work environment, they are more likely to develop job stress and turnover intentions in the workplace (Amah, 2009; Aqeel et al., 2022; Aqeel & Rehna, 2020; Sidrah et al., 2015). A similar study established that sexual harassment was inversely associated with turnover intentions, employee job's satisfaction, and organizational working environment (Shahzad et al., 2011). Consequently, sexual harassment is more likely to increase turnover intention in female employees (Faley et al., 1994; Shahzad et al., 2011). This study primarily focused on exploring the association between sexual harassment, job stress, job turnover intention, and social support among Educator teaching staff in Pakistan. In addition, the study examines how social support moderates the linkage between teachers' sexual harassment, job stress, and turnover intention.

## **Methods**

### **Research Objective and Hypotheses**

Based on theoretical and empirical shreds of evidence mentioned above, the current research aims to examine the association between sexual harassment, job stress, turnover intention, and social support among Pakistani teachers. Besides, the study explores the moderating role of

social support between sexual harassment, job stress, and job turnover intention. This designed research study proposed the following hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1 (H1): A higher prevalence of sexual harassment will be associated with higher job stress and job turnover intention among Educator teachers.

Hypothesis 2 (H2):

A higher prevalence of social support will be associated with a higher level of sexual harassment, job stress, and job turnover intention in Educator teachers.

### **Research Methodology:**

The study is a cross-sectional design and applied a statistical approach based on a convenient sampling for data collection. The study gathered 200 respondents' responses from 10 January 2021 to 31 August 2021. (Male teachers, n= 100; female teachers, n=100) and their ages range from 25 to 59 years. The score was  $M=25.25$ , and the standard deviation score was  $SD=10.24$ . The data reports on the teachers' responses received from various public and private universities in Rawalpindi and the Federal city of Islamabad, Pakistan. This study evaluated whether sexual harassment of male and female faculty staff affects their job turnover intention and job stress in Pakistani culture. Most teachers are young, educated, and reside in urban cities. 50% of participants were male faculty (n = 100), and the other 50% were female (n = 100) from public and private universities in Islamabad and Rawalpindi, Pakistan.

### **Instruments**

This study used four standardized psychological tools to collect data on Educators' teaching employees related to social support, sexual harassment, job stress, and turnover intention. Additionally, investigators focused on determining the sexual harassment problem. They asked male and female faculty how often they had experienced specific sexual harassment behavior by colleagues and students over the past two years.

### **Sexual harassment questionnaires**

The study used this tool to measure sexual harassment for employees at workplace environment (Fitzgerald et al., 1988, 1995). It also examined how males and females had experienced gender

harassment and unwanted sexual attention from their colleagues in the last two years. Participants were responded on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (Never) to 5 (Most of the time). Sexual harassment questionnaires have revealed adequate reliability and validity (Fitzgerald et al., 1988, 1995).

#### **Job stress scale (Parker & Decotiis, 1983).**

This study utilized the job stress scale to measure work stress among teaching staff. Parker & Decotiis (1983) developed this scale to assess the influence of job stress among employees. They designed the scale to examine employees' feelings of being under significant time pressure. It consists of 13-items. The investigators asked the participants to respond on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). The job stress scale has revealed adequate reliability and validity (Parker & DeCotiis, 1983).

#### **Job turnover intention scale (Mobley et al., 1978).**

This research article applied the above scale to measure teaching staff turnover intention. Mobley et al. (1978) developed this instrument to measure employees' feelings and behavior related to job turnover intentions. It contains a five-point Likert scale, indicating 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). The turnover intention scale has revealed adequate reliability and validity (Mobley et al., 1978).

#### **Social support scale (Zimet et al., 1988).**

This present paper has utilized social support instrument to assess its impact on the teaching faculty of Educators. Zimet et al. (1988) designed this research tool to measure social support effects on employees in various organizations. This instrument comprises 12 items. The research tool is based on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). The social support scale has shown adequate reliability and validity (Zimet et al., 1988).

#### **Procedure**

The Ethical Review Board of the Department of Psychology, National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad, Pakistan, approved the conduct of the survey. The investigators obtained ethical approval to execute this study from the higher authority of the National University

of Modern Languages, Islamabad, Pakistan. The study used four scales to measure job stress, turnover intention, social support, and sexual harassment in male and female teachers. The study recruited 200 teachers from different public and private universities in Rawalpindi and Islamabad, Pakistan. Before starting the survey, this study obtained oral and written informed consent from all volunteer participants. The investigators briefly explained the purpose and nature of the survey to volunteer respondents. The researchers assured the participants that research information would be kept confidential. The received data is strictly for research purposes only.

### Data analysis plan

The study has dealt with the missing values of all scales by using an imputation technique on SPSS-20 (Field, 2013). The study applied the product moment correlation method to examine the association between sexual harassment, job stress, job turnover intention, and social support in Pakistani teachers (Field, 2013). Finally, this study incorporated a moderation analysis to examine the moderating role of social support between sexual harassment, job stress, and job turnover intention among Educator teachers (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

### Result

**Table 1:** Alpha coefficient, correlation matrix, mean and standard deviations of sexual harassment, job stress, job turnover intention, and social support in teachers (N=200)

<i>Variables</i>	<i>α</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
1. Sexual Harassment	.75	19.58	4.48	-	.37**	.24**	-.36**
2. Job Stress	.89	36.08	9.94		-	.53**	-.33**
3. Job Turnover Intention	.72	8.68	3.33			-	-.27**
4. Social Support	.89	43.83	11.04				-

*Note.* \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

Table 1 shows satisfactory levels of the Cronbach Alpha reliability related to sexual harassment, job stress, job turnover intention, and social support among Educator teachers. The present study results revealed that sexual harassment was statistically positively and significantly associated with job stress and turnover intentions in Educator teachers. Moreover, this study demonstrated that job stress was statistically positively and significantly associated with job

turnover intention in teaching staff. Similarly, the results also illustrated that sexual harassment was statistically negatively associated with teachers' social support.

**Table 2:** The moderating role of social support between teachers' sexual harassment, job stress, and job turnover intention (N=200).

Models	DV	IV	B	SD	$\beta$	p	R <sup>2</sup>	F <sup>2</sup>
1	<i>Job stress</i>	Constant	1.046	.365		.00		
		<i>Sexual harassment</i>	.34	.01	.44	.01	.023	7.11**
		<i>Social support</i>	-.10	.03	-.20	.00		
		SH*SS	-.09	.08	-.26	.00		
2	<i>Job turnover intention</i>	Constant	1.046	.365		.00		
		<i>Sexual harassment</i>	.23	.01	.14	.01	.051	4.01*
		<i>Social support</i>	-.13	.03	-.18	.00		
		SH*SS	-.07	.01	-.24	.00		
3	<i>Job turnover intention</i>	Constant	1.21	.31		.00		
		<i>Job stress</i>	.10	.28	.11	.01	.055	5.71*
		<i>Social support</i>	-.15	.01	-.32	.00		
		JS*SS	-.03	.01	-.31	.00		

Note. SH\*SS = Interaction between social support and sexual harassment, JS\*SS = Interaction between social support and job stress, \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

In Model 1, the study results show that sexual harassment has a significant and positive linkage in predicting job stress among Educator teachers. It also indicated that social support predicts job stress negatively and significantly in employees. Similarly, the interaction between social support and sexual harassment was negatively significant and predicted job stress in teachers. This study shows that social support moderates the relationship between teacher sexual harassment and work stress. Likewise, this moderation model demonstrates that sexual harassment leads to lower job stress because it favors teachers with higher levels of social support.



The study results of model 2 demonstrated that sexual harassment was positively significant in predicting job turnover intention in Educator teachers. Model 2 also revealed that social support was negatively significant in predicting job turnover intention among teaching staff. Additionally, the relationship between social support and sexual harassment was negatively significant in predicting job turnover intention in teachers. This study's results demonstrated that social support played the role of moderator between sexual harassment and job turnover intention. Besides, this moderation model explained that sexual harassment was associated with lower job turnover intention because it favors a higher level of social support in teachers.

The results of model 3 exhibited that job stress was positively significant in predicting job turnover intention in teachers. It also displayed that social support was negatively significant in predicting job turnover intention among teaching staff. Besides, associations between social support and job stress negatively indicated job turnover intention in teachers. This study's results revealed that social support played the moderator role between job stress and job turnover intention in teachers. Likewise, this moderation model explained that sexual harassment was associated with lower job turnover intention because it favors teachers' higher level of social support.

## Discussion

This study designed a framework based on the theoretical and empirical shreds of evidence to investigate the relationship between sexual harassment, job stress, turnover intention, and social support among educator employees. Besides, this present model analyzes the moderating role of social support between teaching staff sexual harassment, work stress, and job turnover intention. The study's primary purpose was to examine this relationship between the selected variables of the research model. The information received reports on teachers' feedback from multiple public and private universities in Rawalpindi and Islamabad, Pakistan. The findings suggest that sexual harassment is statistically positively linked to employee job stress and intention turnover rates. However, it correlates negatively among teachers with social support. The results exhibit that employees' job stress predicts job turnover intention positively and significantly. The study shows that social support moderates the association between sexual harassment, job stress, and teachers' job turnover intention. This research will help raise awareness of severe problems in the workplace. The educational environment would also help address this severe problem in Pakistan's

academic and other industries. These results are consistent with the earlier study's findings. Many previous studies results revealed that sexual harassment is associated with adverse job outcomes, including job involvement, job stress, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, job turnover intentions, delinquency, absenteeism, mental health, and physical health (Shaffer et al., 2000; Shupe et al., 2002; Willness et al., 2007).

Besides, it is associated with incivility and employee' well-being, and workplace mistreatment (Lim & Cortina, 2005). This study's results demonstrated that social support played the role of moderator among sexual harassment, job stress, and job turnover intention. Likewise, this moderation model explained that sexual harassment was associated with lower job stress and job turnover intention because it favors teachers' higher level of social support. Many previous studies have revealed that sexual harassment experience is associated with work-related negative consequences, including job stress, job turnover-intention, and physical and mental health illness (Chan et al., 2008). For instance, it affects and decreases affective commitment to their jobs and job satisfaction of women workers (Shaffer et al., 2000; Shupe et al., 2002). It is also associated with psychological distress and poor mental and physical health in male and female employees (Aqeel et al., 2015; Hashmi et al., 2013; Huerta et al., 2006; Shuja, Shahidullah, et al., 2020). Further, both female and male employees' mental health is reduced once they are doing jobs in organizational settings experienced as hostile and aggression toward the female, even in the absenteeism of individual hostility experiences (Miner-Rubino & Cortina, 2004). Similar studies reported that workplace sexual harassment leads to mental health problems, including stress, anxiety, and depression, resulting in decreased workplace performance (Baba et al., 1998).

### **Limitation:**

This research survey reports some limitations that arose while conducting this research. The sample of this study represents the data received from Educator's teaching faculty. The investigators recruited respondents and took a sample of 200 teachers, including males and females, equal to 50% participation from a limited number of Institutes. Large sample size and extensive data consisting of female participants of private institutes will produce interesting results. Therefore, the generalization of these results cannot be linked to all of the population. Therefore, this study strongly recommends that future research include larger samples of males

and females from both the private and public institutes with different factors to generalize the findings to the overall Pakistani population.

### Conclusion:

The focus of this study is to analyze the impact of sexual harassment on educator teachers' job stress, job turnover intentions, and social support. This study investigates the association between sexual harassment, job stress, turnover intention, and social support in employees. Besides, this model examines the moderating role of social support between teaching staff sexual harassment, work stress, and job turnover intention. The analysis concluded that despite harassment, Pakistanis teachers affiliated with Educator kept their personal and professional lives separate. The teachers mainly focused and were forced to continue working due to poverty and unemployment. Correspondingly, the results concluded that stress is the main reason for the turnover intention rate in Pakistan.

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