ONLINE ISSN: 3007-3197 | PRINT ISSN: 3007-3189

http://amresearchreview.com/index.php/Journal/about

Annual Methodological Archive Research Review
http://amresearchreview.com/index.php/Journal/about
Volume 3, Issue 6 (2025)

# Workplace Discrimination and Psychological Distress. Moderating Role of Perceived Supervisor Support and Self-Compassion: Case of Marginalized Population in Pakistan

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## Article Details

**Keywords:** Psychological Distress, Workplace Discrimination, Self-Compassion, Perceived Supervisor Support, Marginalized Communities

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## ABSTRACT

The present study endeavored to find out the impact of workplace discrimination on psychological distress, moderating role of self-compassion and perceived supervisor support. Study targeted marginalized communities in Pakistan who are exposed to discrimination. In this regard, 440 people belonging to marginalized groups including transgender, disabled, pregnant women and religious minorities from all over Pakistan working in public and private organizations were selected as sample through convenience sampling. Close ended questionnaire was used to collect data and analyzed using PLS SEM 3. Results showed significant relationship between workplace discrimination and psychological distress. Moderation effect of perceived supervisor support was also validated while self-compassion did not. Results can provide organizations to extend their support in terms of promoting and accepting diversified workforce improving mental health and professional growth.

## INTRODUCTION

Acquaintance with socio-economic and psychological stressors in daily life may cause mental health issues among individuals that include common mental disorders such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Stress that can be short-lived, contextual, also a constructive force moving performances, but if prolonged can convert into chronic stress, that negatively affects health and well-being. Psychological Distress (PD) can be described as the "fairly predictable arousal of psycho-physiological (mind-body) systems which, if prolonged, can fatigue or damage the system to the point of malfunction or disease." (Girdano et al., 2012). In the context of workplace, among the numerous predictors of psychological distress workplace discrimination (WD) holds a prominent position. Discrimination and unequal treatment at workplace are getting common in our society as the workforce diversity is increasing while a great number of instances of WD go unreported that leads to elevated stress. In a study by (Stahl-Gugger & Hämmig, 2022), workplace violence and discrimination found to be predicting factors of psychological distress amongst healthcare specialists in Switzerland. Talking about minority groups who have always been a soft target of social discrimination are more vulnerable to psychological disorders (Hoy-Ellis, 2023). Meyer (2003) presented the first integrative expression defining minority stress through minority stress model. It is a framework that focusses on the principal role of stressors exclusively lived by the members of a minority group, that includes demonstrating violence, stigma, and judgement and targeting the vulnerable group; as possibly prominent factors that leads to declining physical and mental health (Frost & Meyer, 2023; Matsuno et al., 2024; Meyer, 1995).

It is witnessed that recognizable disparities prevail for marginalized communities in all spheres of their lives such as health, employment opportunities, legal formalities, and access to residential and other life services. In many instances, they become silent and invisible victims of discrimination, violence, social stigma, and assault. At times they are bullied and face mistreatment by members of family, peers, neighbors and colleagues. On contrary, social justice demands that all of us being personally responsible members of a society should work with others while accepting their differences (Rawls, 1971). Social discrimination based on identity may penetrate in the system and, therefore, can be intrusive. It will create disturbance and an imbalance in distribution of resources leading to negative social and economic outcomes (Ben et al., 2022; Thorat, 2024). Consequently, it may hinder individuals from achieving their full potential whether in social functioning or mental health and well-being as they both are inter-

related. Considering marginalized groups, they face stigma and discrimination since their childhood at their homes, schools, public places and at workplaces too. When they are discriminated, marginalized and isolated on the basis of their differences, it may lower their levels of self-efficacy and career expectations while increasing their psychological distress (Miner et al., 2019).

Drawing the foundation on Conservation of Resource theory, individuals struggle to retain their existing resources (conservation) and gain new ones (acquisition) which are matters, circumstances or other things that are valued by people (Folkman, 2010). On the basis of this theory, workplace discrimination as a stressor would result in psychological distress, which is an employee's reaction when one recognizes threats to his or her resources in a certain situation (Hobfoll, 1989). Every human being responds to stressors differently. Some individuals show signs of anxiety, sleep disorders depression, fatigue and material misuse (Danna & Griffin, 1999; Quick et al., 1987), moreover irritability while others respond to it by avoiding situations that cause them psychological distress. Relying on the framework of the COR theory, we treat workplace discrimination as a process that drains employees' psychological assets and affects employees' emotions. In addition, we intend to explore whether an organizational element (Perceived Supervisor Support) and personal element (self-compassion) might play a moderating role in the relationship between workplace discrimination and psychological distress.

Although workplace discrimination has always been a trending topic in discussion in the field of research and there are established relationships between workplace discrimination and its negative impact on individuals as well as organizations, there is still a room to explore mediators, moderators and other factors that are directly related positively or negatively. Furthermore, discrimination is perceived differently in various cultures based upon the norms and values followed by the people and society. Not to forget its deleterious effects on marginalized groups of the society including transgender, disabled persons, pregnant ladies, religious communities especially in a developing country like Pakistan. The current study contributes to the literature on workplace discrimination, psychological distress and perceived supervisor support and self-compassion.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS (PD) AND WORKPLACE DISCRIMINATION (WD)

At workplace, stress is backed by several internal as well as external elements. Keeping oneself align with dynamically changing environments may lead to workplace stress (Audenaert et al.,

2017). Among the numerous predictors of psychological distress at work, workplace discrimination holds a noticeable position. Workplace discrimination is defined as unfair or mistreatment of employees on the basis of their personal attributes that are peripheral to employment. These may include, age, gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, religion or any form of disability (Anwar & Ullah, 2020; A. Brown et al., 2021; Filut et al., 2020; Moya & Moya-Garófano, 2020; Satyen & Becerra, 2022). Other instances of workplace discrimination also reported higher levels of depression (Marchiondo et al., 2019; Xu & Chopik, 2020), chronic illness and overall health. Riley et al. (2021) studied psychological distress in junior doctors which concluded that gender and racial based discrimination serves as a source of PD. Not only they affect mental health by stimulating psychological distress (Pascoe & Smart Richman, 2009), but stress as a result of workplace discrimination may cause an immense impact on work attitude and behaviors, job satisfaction (Marchiondo et al., 2019) and many time leads to turnover intentions (Nam et al., 2024; Ning et al., 2023). Individuals who are isolated and marginalized on several grounds including their disability, sexual or religious orientation and pregnancy; are likely to become victims of psychological distress.

According to Social Identity Theory (SIT), individuals tend to relate with others whom they find similar in characteristics and identities (Tajfel et al., 1979). Social identity theory (SIT) was originated as a theory of relations, disputes and cooperation relations and cooperation between groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) Saeri et al. (2018) reported that social connectedness has a significant impact on mental health of the individuals. This strengthens the fact that people in isolation become depressed and anxious McCallum et al. (2021). As workforces are getting progressively diverse and workers coexist with dissimilar colleagues, such individual differences result in social categorizations of people in group and out group which impacts group member interactions (e.g., Tsui et al., 1992) that eventually laid the foundation of intention or non-intentional discrimination (Bourhis et al., 1994).

Considering minority groups, transgender employees are discriminated on the basis of their sexual identity that impact their psychological well-being negatively. As transgender are one of the most marginalized communities globally as well as in our Pakistani society, they face discrimination in everyday life (Arvind et al., 2022) resulting in psychological distress and deteriorating mental health. Discrimination at workplace may include mistreatment from colleagues, verbal abuse, delay in promotions or non-provision of gender-appropriate bathrooms etc. Moreover, those transgender peoplee with multiple minority statuses e.g. (race or ethnicity

along with transgender stigma) experience higher psychological distress than their similar counterparts who face only gender identity stigma (Millar & Brooks, 2022).

Apart from transgenders, women at work also faces multiple kinds of discrimination including pregnancy discrimination (Hassard et al., 2023) , gender based discrimination leading to depression (Kim et al., 2022). Operationalizing workplace gender discrimination to the Pakistani society where women constitute about more than half of the population but are downgraded to secondary role. In a study of female doctors in Pakistan, more than 50% of the sample reported workplace harassment and mistreatment resulting in declining mental health (Malik et al., 2021). According to the Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, "No citizen otherwise qualified for appointment in the service of Pakistan shall be discriminated against in respect of any such appointment on the ground only of race, religion, caste, sex, residence or place of birth" (ILO, 2011). Despite having established laws, workplace discrimination remains a pervading problem. Disabled people and religious minorities are also not spared from the filthy impact of workplace discrimination. Wu & Schimmele, (2021) reported that religious discrimination is deteriorating to mental health. In a study by Hashem & Awad (2021), results showed that individuals who experience higher religious discrimination also experienced higher psychological distress.

On the basis of the above presented literature, it is hypothesized that

**H1. *Workplace Discrimination has significant impact on Psychological Distress***

**PERCEIVED SUPERVISOR SUPPORT**

Immediate supervisor is the one who poses an influence on subordinates' performance and behavior while acting as a representative of the organization (Asif et al., 2023; Rathi & Lee, 2017). Perceived Supervisor Support (PSS) is described as one's feeling towards their supervisor/manager who recognizes their contribution and performance at workplace and shows concern about their physical and mental well-being (Brands, 2016). In the development of employee potential, supervisor's support can be helpful in creating a supportive working environment. In many cases, perceived supervisor support significantly decreases the adverse impact of work stress on job satisfaction. Several positive effects of supervisor support have been reported in literature. In a study, Nabawanuka & Ekmekcioglu (2021) reported that supervisor's role is important in promoting employees potential, to maintain work-life balance that ultimately affects their well-being positively. In another study, perceived supervisor support and perceived organization support predicts constructive organization citizenship behavior with employee

engagement being the mediator (Kumar & Punitha, 2022). It is also to noted that perceived supervisor support decreases turnover intentions of employees having stronger sense of high organizational identification (Jun et al., 2023).

Supervisory support is best described using Leader Member Exchange Theory (LMX). It lays its foundation in the basic premise that different kinds of association developed between leaders and their subordinates in the working environment. These associations are identified by psychological or physical effort, emotional support or informative material resources bartered amid the two groups (Liden et al., 1997). Construction of the LMX association is a combined struggle by both the manager and the employee based on inter-personal skills from both sides makes the quality of the association better (Organ, 1974; Sears & Holmvall, 2010). LMX relationships can be viewed through two different dimensions. For instance, a supervisor may consider the relation as a lower standard one while the subordinate considers the relation as a higher standard one. The circumstances where subordinate consider the supervisor behaving with him in a well manner, the positive paybacks of a higher standard LMX association would be comprehended from the employee/subordinate (Cogliser et al., 2009). In the cases of workplace discrimination, having a strong relationship with supervisor can protect subordinates to fall victims of extreme negative effects of discrimination. The generation of psychological distress is among the most deteriorating outcomes of workplace discrimination (Li et al., 2022) and earlier researches has reported that social support at workplace reduces the harmful effects of traumatic circumstances on person's well-being, for instance (Babin & Boles, 1996; Parasuraman et al., 1992). Similarly, Viswesvaran et al. (1999) also reported that social support assist in decreasing workplace stress and increasing well-being of employees.

Social support in different forms have been recognized as a valuable resource that may help employees in dealing with stressful situations. As evident from the researches that presence of supervisor support reduces workplace stress and burnout, occupational stress and psychological health problems amongst social professionals (Beddoe et al., 2016). Since workplace discrimination is one of the major causes of stress it's assumed that PSS can lower negative impact of workplace discrimination on stress. It is found to be reported as a catalyst against deteriorating influence of strain on psychological health (Hatzenbuehler et al., 2009). In a study by (Chami-Malaeb, 2021a) supervisor's role played a significance role in improving psychological health of nursing staff in Lebanon. According to a research, among many coping strategies against stress; supervisor support is quite helpful in managing stressful situations

(Morgan & Gore, 2019). Supervisors, as powerful organizational representatives, provide combatting strategies to instances of discrimination, and convey to their employees the worth they hold in the company (Munc et al., 2017).

On the basis of above discussion, it is hypothesized that

***$H_2$:*** *Perceived Supervisor Support plays a moderating role in the relationship between Workplace Discrimination and Psychological Distress such that higher the perceived supervisor support, lower will be the negative impact of workplace discrimination on psychological distress.*

**SELF-COMPASSION**

Self-compassion is defined as the feeling of kindness and caring about oneself when encounter difficult situations (NEFF, 2003). It gets popular in the initial 2000s by educational psychologist Kristin Neff. The notion was primarily theorized as a self-attitude consisting of "three main components: (a) self-kindness, being kind and understanding toward oneself in instances of pain or failure rather than being harshly self-critical; (b) common humanity, perceiving one's experiences as part of the larger human experience rather than seeing them as separating and isolating; and (c) mindfulness, holding painful thoughts and feelings in balanced awareness rather than over-identifying with them" (NEFF, 2003). It improves mental health of individuals. People with increased self-compassion are in a better condition of psychological well-being. A meta-analysis conducted by Zessin et al. (2015) reported that self-compassion is highly associated to psychological well-being. Researchers believe that people with high self-compassion counter hardships in a better way than less self-compassionate people hence avoid being a victim of psychological stress. This has been endorsed by Marsh et al. (2018) who examined the relationship between self-compassion and psychological distress in adolescents, and found that higher levels of self-compassion were associated with lower levels of distress. In another study, women with breast cancer were studied for the levels of self-compassion in the presence of distress; results revealed that lower levels of distress were reported in females having higher self-compassion (Sherman et al., 2017). Similarly, in another study in which stress was measured among parents of adults with intellectual and development disabilities, and found that greater self-compassion was related to lower levels of stress and depression, even after presence for other identified stressors (Robinson et al., 2018). In a study of transgender persons, overall self-compassion as well as outness as transgender were significantly and negatively related to emotional distress (Allen, 2017). Therefore it can be said that self-compassion acts as a buffer in coping up with challenges Stutts et al. (2018). Another feature of self-compassion incorporates

keeping a balance in one's situation so that he/she is not pulled away with emotions and fall victim to stress. When individuals experience tribulations, those who are low in self-compassion may fall easily to the negativity of the circumstances and stumble in their emotions. On contrary, those who are able to maintain balance in the situations of stress and deal with the difficulty with mindfulness (K. W. Brown & Ryan, 2003) more successfully. In similar way, when there are cases of workplace discrimination, self-compassion being a barrier can lower the chances of getting a person depressed and fall victim to stress. It is due to the fact that they don't burden themselves with self-criticism and over-identification rather pampering themselves with care and kindness ultimately providing a psychological self-support (Leary et al., 2007). During the recent pandemic a study reported that smartphone-based intervention used for increasing self-compassion showed a positive significant impact on emotional eating and stress (Schnepper et al., 2020). Around the world, organizations are having diverse workforce and excelling in their performance by utilizing expertise of people from different backgrounds. Despite of the fact, in recent years, rise in incidents of incivility, victimization, discrimination, toxicity and other incidents of inappropriate and toxic behavior prevalent in organizations have been observed (Lennartz et al., 2019; Maestas et al., 2017). In the context of workplace, a few current researches reported that self-compassion is one of the factor that impacts employees happiness, success and dealing challenging situations at workplace (Chen, 2018; Weiss, 2018). Leary et al. (2007) proposed that self-compassion can also be used as a proactive factor in enhancing well-being and positive psychological handling of challenges. When dealing with challenges and handling negative emotions resulting in depression, self-compassion can act as a medicine in different life's stages (Kaurin et al., 2018). As well as it also negates the adverse influence of work-life balance on psychological wellbeing (Rafique et al., 2018).

On the basis of above discussed studies, it is proposed that self-compassion is a notable factor in predicting person's well-being but question arises whether it acts as a moderator or mediator. Self-compassion can play dual role in relationships. it has been hypothesized as both a moderator (e.g., Linardon et al., 2020) and a mediator (e.g., Swami et al., 2019). Hence, in this study, we propose that

***H*$_{3}$** ***Self-compassion plays a moderating role in the relationship between Workplace Discrimination and Psychological Distress such that greater the self-compassion, lesser will be the negative impact of Workplace Discrimination on Psychological Distress.***

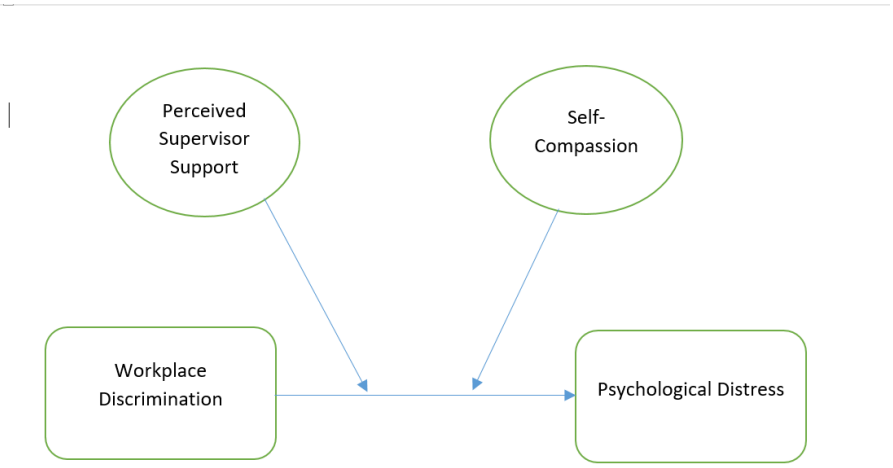



**FIGURE 1: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

## METHODOLOGY

The study follows quantitative approach that involved 440 individuals who belong to marginalized groups of society including pregnant ladies, transgender people, disabled persons and religious minorities working in public and private organizations of Pakistan. Demographic details are mentioned in Table 1(a). The sample was selected through convenience sampling. It is a non-probability sampling method used due to unavailability of large number of data pertaining to employees working in the country. The data were collected during November and December 2024. Participation in this research was made voluntary and confidentiality of data was completely guaranteed.

For data collection a close ended questionnaire was used consisting of pre-developed scales related to constructs used in the study. To measure workplace discrimination, Everyday Discrimination Scale (Kershaw et al., 2016) was used where one item out of 9 (You are provided with less services at a restaurant) was removed due to its irrelevancy to the context. Psychological distress was measured by 10 item Beirut Distress Scale (BDS- 10) (Malaeb et al., 2022). The moderator Perceived Supervisor Support was measured using a short adapted version of SPOS by following the procedure used by (Hutchison, 1997; Kottke & Sharafinski, 1988; Rhoades et al., 2001). Another moderator Self-Compassion was measured through (Neff et al., 2021). First part of the questionnaire was based on demographics and then respondents were asked to answer the items on 5 point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

**TABLE 1(A): SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC DETAILS OF PARTICIPANTS**

| Characteristics | % | n |
|---|---|---|
| **Age** | | |
| 15 to 24 | 5.4 | 24 |
| 25 to 34 | 45.4 | 200 |
| 35 to 44 | 36.3 | 160 |
| 45 and above | 12.7 | 56 |
| **Gender** | | |
| Male | 34.5 | 152 |
| Female | 31.8 | 140 |
| Non-binary | 24.5 | 108 |
| **Disability** | | |
| Yes | 28.1 | 124 |
| No | 71.8 | 316 |
| **Pregnancy** | | |
| Yes | 9.09 | 40 |
| No | 22.7 | 100 |
| **Religion** | | |
| Muslim | 50.9 | 224 |
| Non-Muslim | 49.09 | 216 |
| **Organization type** | | |
| Public | 52.7 | 232 |
| Private | 47.2 | 208 |

## RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Construct validity of each construct can be validated by assessing outer loadings of each indicator constituting its corresponding construct. In the current research, CFA has been conducted first to check the validity of all the four constructs in the study. Table 1 shows all factor that has outer loadings >0.6 except for few including PSS4 (0.099), SC1 (0.367), SC5 (0.383), SC3 (0.547), PD1 (0.530), PD7 (0.529), PD4 (0.557), PD6 (0.577), PD5 (0.541), PD2 (0.579) having outer loadings of <0.6 were removed as factor loadings of 0.6 and above are considered acceptable for proving convergent validity of the respective constructs (Hair et al., 2010; Sarstedt et al., 2021) .

## RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

Reliability measurements are normally verified by internal consistency methods (Straub et al., 2004). It can be determined by Cronbach Alpha (CA) and Composite Reliability (CR) values. According to (Hair et al., 2010) CA and CR values must be greater than or equal to 0.7. In this analysis, it has been found that the value of Cronbach Alpha is greater than 0.7 for all the constructs except for Self Compassion SC which is 0.608 which according to (Ursachi et al., 2015) values of 0.6-0.7 also depict an acceptable level of reliability. Composite Reliability (CR) values are all greater than 0.7 while rho-A values are all above 0.7 accept SC which is 0.624 which also according to (Haji-Othman & Yusuff, 2022) lies in the acceptable range. Therefore, we can say that all of the constructs shows satisfactory internal consistency (Table 2). Additionally, the study measured convergent validity that indicates how well a construct is represented by its certain group of items (C.-L. Chin & Yao, 2023).In PLS SEM analysis, convergent validity is determined through Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value which should be greater than 0.5 (Hair et al., 2010). In this analysis, all the construct show AVE values above than 0.5 (Table 2) which proves convergent validity of the instrument used. Further discriminant validity is measured using two methods. Firstly by Fornell-Larcker Criterion, that verifies a construct possess stronger correlation with its own indicators than with other constructs in the model (Hamid et al., 2017). This is achieved by comparing correlations between various constructs with the square root of the AVE for each variable. Table 3 shows the discriminant validity of the model. Compared to correlations with other constructs, the square roots of the AVEs are greater. This suggests that the discriminant validity of each concept is supported, as it shares greater variation with its own indicators than with other variables in the study. To further validate the discriminate validity, we used the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) of correlations, that compares the average correlations across constructs with the average correlations within constructs. Table 4 shows all value of HTMT ratio are below 0.9 which indicates potential presence of good discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015).

**TABLE 1: FACTOR LOADINGS GREATER THAN 0.6**

| Psychological Distress | Loadings |
|---|---|
| I have stomach heartburn | 0.819 |
| My ideas are puzzled | 0.624 |
| I usually have constipation and Diarrhea | 0.829 |
| I have stomach cramps | 0.868 |
| **Perceived Supervisor Support** | |
| My supervisor cares about my opinions | 0.924 |
| My supervisor really cares about my well-being | 0.943 |
| My supervisor strongly considers my goals and values | 0.952 |
| **Self-compassion** | |
| I am obsessing and fixating on everything that's wrong | 0.663 |
| I feel impatient and intolerating toward myself | 0.799 |
| I feel I am struggling more than others right now. | 0.775 |
| **Workplace Discrimination** | |
| You are treated with less respect than others | 0.884 |
| You are treated with less courtesy than others | 0.865 |
| People act like you are not as smart | 0.793 |
| People act as if they are afraid of you. | 0.613 |
| People act like they think they are better than you | 0.793 |
| People act as if they think you are dishonest | 0.776 |
| People often call you by names that makes you uncomfortable | 0.708 |
| At times you are treated in a way that makes you distressed | 0.814 |

**TABLE 2 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY ANALYSIS**

| | Cronbach's Alpha | rho_A | Composite Reliability | Average Variance Extracted (AVE) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **PD_** | **0.792** | **0.796** | **0.868** | **0.625** |
| **PSS** | **0.935** | **0.965** | **0.958** | **0.883** |
| **SC** | **0.608** | **0.624** | **0.791** | **0.560** |
| **WD** | **0.911** | **0.934** | **0.927** | **0.616** |

**TABLE 3: FORNELL-LARCKER CRITERION**

| | PD_ | PSS | PSS*WD_ | SC | SC*WD | WD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **PD_** | 0.791 | | | | | |
| **PSS** | -0.369 | 0.940 | | | | |
| **SC** | 0.666 | -0.155 | -0.156 | 0.748 | | |
| **WD** | 0.579 | -0.315 | -0.182 | 0.507 | -0.065 | 0.785 |

**TABLE 4: HETEROTRAIT-MONOTRAIT RATIO (HTMT)**

| | PD_ | PSS | PSS*WD_ | SC | SC*WD | WD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **PD_** | | | | | | |
| **PSS** | **0.420** | | | | | |
| **SC** | **0.899** | **0.250** | **0.201** | | | |
| **WD** | **0.645** | **0.307** | **0.186** | **0.663** | **0.093** | |

**STRUCTURAL MODEL ANALYSIS**

In PLS (Partial Least Squares) modeling, the structural model demonstrates the relationships between the latent variables. It emphasizes on how those latent variables affect each other by using path coefficients to compute the relationships between them (Hair et al., 2021). The study evaluated structural model by means of 5000 bootstraps method using Smart-PLS3. Moreover, as per the determination coefficient $R^2$, the model shows 59% variance in psychological distress explained by workplace discrimination. The value of $R^2$ must be between 0 to 1 (W. W. Chin, 1998).

**TABLE 5: PATH ANALYSIS STATISTICS**

| | Beta coefficients | Sample Mean (M) | Standard Deviation (SD) | T Statistics | P Values |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **PSS*WD_ -> PD_** | -0.166 | -0.167 | 0.026 | 6.431 | **0.000** |
| **SC*WD -> PD_** | 0.070 | 0.066 | 0.032 | 2.196 | **0.028** |
| **WD -> PD_** | 0.232 | 0.232 | 0.034 | 6.912 | **0.000** |

The results show that workplace discrimination significantly impacted psychological distress ($\beta$ =0.232, t=6.912, P=<0.05). Further, the significance of self-compassion and perceived

supervisor support as moderators is also highlighted by the analysis. The results showed that the moderating effect of perceived supervisor support in the relationship between workplace discrimination and psychological distress is significant and negative with values (β = -0.166, t=6.431, P=<0.05). While the moderating effect of self-compassion in the relationship between workplace discrimination and psychological distress is significant but positive with values (β =0.070, t=2.196, P=<0.05).

**DISCUSSION**

Employers and employment mechanism have proved to be uncompromising majority of the times when it comes to accommodate people having contrasting identities specifically to those who belong to the marginalized segments of the society. The research studied people including transgender, pregnant women, disabled persons and religious minorities. These people are discriminated at their workplaces resulting in elevated psychological distress. Earlier researches in various contexts have also highlighted that such inflexibility becomes an annoying experience and brutal reality that thy confront every day. These discriminatory experiences affect their mental well-being resulting in distress (Attell et al., 2017; Smith & Read, 2024; Taylor et al., 2013; Todorova et al., 2010). Pregnant women and disabled employees who already feel uncomfortable with their physical condition get more triggered by other people judgmental remarks. Further people categorized as third gender (other than male and female) are adversely affected by continuous criticism and mocking consequently their mental health starts declining. These results are synchronized with the results of previous studies presented in a systematic review (Pinna et al., 2022). In addition, the roles of perceived supervisor support and self-compassion as moderators in the relationship between workplace discrimination and psychological distress was also analyzed. As the results established evidence that workplace discrimination significantly influenced psychological distress. Findings further validated the moderating role of perceived supervisor support which proved its significance as a moderator. It can be concluded that, perceived supervisor support buffers the influence of workplace discrimination on psychological distress — the more supervisory support a person has, the less harmful discrimination becomes. Previous researches also proved the positive role of supervisory support in coping burnout, stress and maintain well-being (Chami-Malaeb, 2021b; Hashemi et al., 2021; Kikunaga et al., 2023). When such people who are usually an easy target of discrimination because of their distinctive identification, have supportive supervisors, it become much easier for them to handle daily stressors and people negative attitude. On contrary, the role

of self-compassion is found to be significant with $p<0.05$ but negative with $\beta = 0.070$. It indicates that the more the self-compassion a person has, the more harmful discrimination becomes. Although that is generally not the case in majority of the circumstances. It is to be noteworthy that in certain situations, populations and context, self-compassion may involuntarily elevate stress levels due to increased self-awareness or specific cultural influences. An earlier study also reported that self-compassion not always leads positive results due to different context and lack of awareness among people about self-compassion (Anasori et al., 2023). In populations who face minority stress such as transgender or religious minorities, heightened self-awareness may result in improved vigilance and distress. Goffman (1986) research on stigma showed that people form marginalized communities may indulge in constant self-assessment to adjust among the society becomes mentally challenging and results in elevated stress. This unexpected finding related to self-compassion may also be due to reasons like continuously experiencing self-judgement and harsh criticism from others while being in constant struggle to meet unrealistic cultural and societal standards of perfection makes it extremely difficult for people to practice self-compassion in their daily lives (*The Power of Self-Compassion From a Mental Health Perspective*, n.d.; Wolfe, 2022). This finding open arena for further researches to study self-compassion in various contexts and cultures in order to understand its contrasting behavior.

## CONCLUSION

Workplace discrimination is a widespread concern experienced by people belonging to marginalized groups. Not just it disturbs their work performance but also deteriorate their physical and mental well-being. This study reveals that workplace discrimination is one of the major reasons of psychological distress among marginalized people. It also validates the role of perceived supervisor support as a coping element. This research has significant implications for the prevention and management of psychological distress. Management of organizations are required to be aware of and cater such issues including by orienting counselling sessions that teaches other people to accept diversity among themselves, while train marginalized employees to not become victim instead take stand for themselves, learn to be resilient and report such incidence whenever happen.

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