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Examining Linguistic Profiling and Career Development Through the Lived Experience of Service Sector Employees in Pakistan

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Abstract

Purpose: Understanding linguistic profiling and its substantial consequences on employee career development is essential in diverse workplaces. This study utilizes Levinson's eras and career development theories to analyze the complicated relationship between linguistic profiling and biases, which hamper employee career development.

Methodology – This study used an interpretive methodology and conducted thematic data analysis. It documented lessons learned from diverse viewpoints through semi-structured interviews with 19 participants conducted in November and December 2022.

Findings – The study demonstrates that linguistic discrimination occurs in diverse workplaces. After data exploration, four intriguing themes appeared. The first theme was related to employees who were discriminated against because of various languages. This shows how often language choice affects employees. The second theme examined how linguistic profiling intersected with marginalized groups, increasing discrimination. The third theme, linguistic profiling and career development showed that bias had a huge influence on career progression. The fourth theme emphasizes organizational policies for preventing language discrimination, promoting career growth, and inclusive organizations.

Originality – This study advances the understanding of linguistic profiling and career development in a multilingual society. In addition, it furthers discourse and provides ways to minimize biases, creating a more inclusive workplace environment.

Keywords: linguistic profiling, career development, intersectionality, discrimination

Introduction

The dynamics of discrimination and bias are multifaceted (Anderson, 2007; Barrett *et al.*, 2022). Beyond surface-level diversity such as gender, age, ethnicity, race, etc., language serves as a powerful but largely overlooked factor in workplace discrimination. (Schmitt-Rodermund and Silbereisen, 1998; Shulman *et al.*, 2015). Linguistic profiling involves making judgments based on language use (Halteren, 2004; Hughes and Mamiseishvili, 2014). This practice significantly impacts employee career opportunities, growth, and workplace inclusion. Linguistic profiling occurs when a listener utilizes auditory signals to detect social characteristics such as race, gender, sexual orientation, or geographic origin. In this study, we focus on the intricate web of linguistic profiling, together with several aspects of careers including self-concept, career growth, influence of contextual factors, and bias-coping strategies (Lent *et al.*, 1994). Therefore, this study enhances our knowledge of the intricate interplay between linguistic profiling and career outcomes, seeking to create inclusive work environments.

The power of language in shaping perceptions and reinforcing biases cannot be underestimated (Halteren, 2004) because language shapes perceptions and sometimes leads to biases and discrimination. The intersection of biases compounds difficulties, making career development more challenging for individuals, and can be a tool used to discriminate against cultural identity and social affiliation. (Chetana and Mohapatra, 2017). Lanning *et al.* (2018) found that linguistic profiling creates a complicated web of biases that impact employee career pathways. To create inclusive and fair workplaces, language profiling must be understood in terms of other forms of discrimination. Organizations may begin establishing strategies and interventions to promote fair employee treatment and equal career development, regardless of language background, by examining these overlapping biases and how they influence career possibilities, promotions, and professional progress.

Purpose

This study examines linguistic profiling in Pakistani workplaces and its complex links to bias, seeking to understand how linguistic profiling and biases affect career paths. Pakistan has a diverse population and a rich language legacy, including Urdu, Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto, Balochi, and other regional and provincial languages. Unfortunately, Pakistan allows us to study how language profiling interacts with other employment discriminations (Hughes and Mamiseishvili, 2018; Manan *et al.*, 2021). For example, in multiple settings, employees who speak regional languages may face discrimination. Due to linguistic profiling and biases, people have trouble obtaining equal work and career opportunities. Furthermore, linguistic profiling can affect economic mobility (Mansoor, 2004). English-speaking people may have an added advantage in career development (Manan *et al.*, 2016) because they are considered a dominant language in the country. However, regional language speakers may experience language-based discrimination and have limited career opportunities (Haidar and Fang, 2019). Hence, studying the intricate relationship between linguistic biases and careers in Pakistan holds substantial significance.

Theoretical Framework

This study builds on previous research (Hughes and Mamiseishvili, 2014; Baruch and Sullivan, 2022) on employee career development. This study utilizes Levinson's eras (Levinson, 1986a) and career development (CD) theories (Super and Jordaan, 1973), to examine how linguistic profiling affects employee careers. CD theory provides a conceptual understanding of managing one's career. It emphasizes the significance of self-concept and social and environmental influences on career choice and advancement. The intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 2017) helps explain complex links between race, ethnicity, and language. The intersectionality approach acknowledges that people have many social identities, resulting in different discriminations. Therefore, this study analyzes race, ethnicity, and

language to see how linguistic profiling intersects with bias and discrimination and affects professional growth. Addressing these biases allows organizations to establish conditions where people may succeed on their knowledge, skills, and abilities rather than language perpetuating discrimination and limiting career advancement.

Career development theory and linguistic profiling

Linguistic profiling and workplace discrimination can be examined in the context of Super and Jordan's (1973) theory to determine their effect on individuals' career development (Schmitt-Rodermund and Silbereisen, 1998). Super's (1973) work conceptualizes career development in terms of life stages. This theory acknowledges that individuals progress through different career stages caused by various factors. CD theory measures individuals' careers by comparing their ages with various tasks they encounter. This study examines links between linguistic profiling based on race, ethnicity, and gender discrimination in workplace dynamics (Baruch and Sullivan, 2022). The objective of this review is to highlight gaps leading to a comprehensive understanding of linguistic profiling (Hughes *et al.*, 2023).

CD theory acknowledges that people deal with various career stages and various factors significantly influence their choices. As individuals navigate their career stages, linguistic profiling shows stereotypes based on language use and accents (Iles and Mabey, 1993). Linguistic profiling can significantly cause psychological problems and influence people's careers in diverse workplaces. Stereotypes play a vital role in shaping people's self-concept, career aspirations, and overall development (Anderson, 2007). A significant concept in career development is the self-concept, in which people perceive themselves in terms of knowledge and abilities (Stringer *et al.*, 2011). Linguistic profiling disrupts self-concept by fostering negative perceptions of language skills. Discrimination against people may be linked to the type of language they use, since people view accents as key to organizational positions. Linguistic stereotypes can cause self-doubt and limit the pursuit of chosen career

paths. So, we utilize CD theory to study linguistic profiling and workplace discrimination, and to understand how language biases affect career development (Hughes et al., 2023).

Levinson's eras model and career development

Career development is a complex process that evolves throughout an individual's life. We demonstrate Levinson's Eras theory (Levinson, 1986a), which shed light on transitions on individuals early career establishment and achievement. Levinson's (1986) theory is grounded in the belief that adults go through distinct life stages, each characterized by specific challenges and transitions. The theory consists of four eras: early adult, age 30, midlife, and late adult transitions (Smart and Peterson, 1994). This model is relevant to this study because study participants were within the age ranges described in the theory. We employed this model to understand different cycles of transition employee undergo in diverse workplace dynamics in Pakistan.

Literature Review

Linguistic Bias and Career Progression

Linguistic biases intersect career progression stages, influencing individual career stages and growth opportunities (Creed and Hood, 2015). In the initial stage, language stigma may prevent people from receiving opportunities. Organizations prefer individuals who speak a particular language with accent, hurting marginalized language speakers (De Klerk and Bosch, 1995). This disadvantage may impede career advancement by limiting options. Literature indicates that linguistic biases impact careers as individuals advance (Anderson, 2007; Stringer *et al.*, 2011). Zentella (2014) indicated that linguistic profiling assumes an individual's language usage in terms of competence, IQ, and leadership potential. This bias may be harmful to promotion and access to leadership positions.

Linguistic profiling perpetuates workplace disparities hindering career advancement (Creed and Hood, 2015). Nonstandard dialect speakers may be seen as incompetent, which

might hinder their careers, securing promotions, and managerial opportunities. Robbs (1991) indicated that language proficiency bias can overshadow an individual's qualifications and achievements, preventing career development. These biases result in choices and cause systemic organizational inequalities (Hur *et al.*, 2014). Linguistic preferences inhibit people from stigmatized language origins from becoming leaders, thereby limiting diversity and representation. Lack of diversity affects innovation, inclusive policy formulation, and workplace inequality (Pless and Maak, 2004).

Career development also depends on environmental factors and circumstances which can hinder career progression for various language groups and perpetuate workplace inequalities (Super and Jordaan, 1973). Organizations' linguistic biases contribute to discriminatory practices within their working environments (Robbs, 1991). Linguistic biases influence organizations' HR processes including hiring, promotion, or leadership selection processes, can add to systemic inequalities, and limit career prospects of individuals who speak languages perceived negatively within workplaces.

Linguistic profiling hinders career development opportunities for individuals and reduces diversity in organizational-level positions (Bice and Kroll, 2019). Barriers to advancement for diverse individuals reinforce power hierarchies and exclude various perspectives in decision-making processes (Maass *et al.*, 1989). Lack of representation hinders innovation and inclusive policies (Mauranen and Jenkins, 2019). Linguistic biases have far-reaching consequences (Shulman *et al.*, 2015) when individuals speaking languages that are perceived negatively may be denied access to various training and development programs due to biased perceptions of their language skills. These missed opportunities can hinder their skill development, limit their exposure to new ideas, and career growth.

Levinson's Eras Model Adult Development and Career Transition

Each transition presents unique tasks and developmental challenges that individuals must navigate. Early adult transition (17-22) is particularly relevant to individuals in their 20s, as it marks their entry into the adult world. This phase involved forming a preliminary life structure, exploring career options, and establishing initial patterns of intimacy. Understanding how individuals in their 20s negotiate these tasks provides insights into their early career decisions and interpersonal relationships (Levinson, 1986a).

The age 30 phase represents a period of reevaluation and adjustment as individuals move from their early twenties to their late twenties. During this phase, individuals often confront the realization that certain life choices made during early adult transition may require reassessment. Career decisions, relationships, and personal aspirations come under scrutiny, prompting individuals to refine their life structure (Cooke, 1994). Here individuals have a greater sense of responsibility, as individuals seek to align their ambitions with practical considerations and societal expectations. It may also involve a shift from entry-level positions to more specialized roles. Exploration of career options becomes more refined, as individuals strive for greater clarity about their professional goals (Ornstein *et al.*, 1989).

Midlife transition represents a critical juncture, occurring in forties (Smart and Peterson, 1994). This involves a major reevaluation of life, profession, and personal achievements. Here, people generally seek greater meaning and purpose (Pringle and McCulloch Dixon, 2003). Midlife career shifts may include reassessing past accomplishments and setting new ambitions. People want to grow in their careers and do more meaningful work (Ornstein *et al.*, 1989). This stage balances personal interests with financial security, as people seek greater synergy between their values and ambitions (Levinson, 1986b).

Late adult transition typically occurs in sixties and beyond. This phase reflects on a lifetime of experiences. Individuals often confront issues related to retirement, legacy-

building, and the broader impact of their life choices on future generations. From a career development perspective, individuals may engage in activities that contribute to societal well-being (O'Neil and Bilimoria, 2005). Career decisions during this era are often influenced by a desire for legacy-building and leaving a lasting impact.

Methods

Research context

Pakistan is known for its linguistic diversity, with many languages spoken nationwide (Shackle, 2006). Pakistan's national language is Urdu, a lingua franca for communication among people from different provinces (Rahman, 1997). However, numerous regional languages are spoken throughout country (Begum, 2022). Punjabi is the most spoken in Punjab province, and it has several dialects. Sindhi is spoken in Sindh province, while Pashto in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochi in Balochistan (David *et al.*, 2017). Different linguistic communities, such as Saraiki, Kashmiri, Brahui, also speak diverse languages in various provinces (Mansoor, 2004).

Different dialects enrich Pakistan's linguistic landscape within each language. Urdu which is a national language spoken across whole country, variations exist based on provincial influences, like Karachi, Lahori and Peshawari Urdu (Syed, 2019). Likewise, Punjabi has Majhi, Doabi, and Pothohari dialects. These dialects and variations complicate linguistic context in organizational dynamics. Resultantly, organizational environments foster linguistic profiling discrimination which has serious organizational consequences that may impact employee employment opportunities and careers.

Accent bias is frequent in linguistic profiling (Haidar and Fang, 2019) because it makes a selective judgment of people's speaking accent. For instance, English speakers with regional accents may struggle at work. English is often seen as a sign of education and competence in organizational settings (Zaidi and Zaki, 2017). Accent bias can keep people

away from applying for employment opportunities, limiting their professional growth (Mansoor, 2004).

Karachi was selected for this study for many reasons including its population and language diversity and people speak several languages there. The city's diverse cultures, races, and language variety make it a great place to research linguistic profiling. Researchers collected data from this city to document a wide range of experiences, thereby strengthening the study results. The rich linguistic tapestry within the city allowed researchers to examine how language biases affect people across linguistic communities by studying this linguistic context. This context makes findings more relevant and applicable to larger conversations on these vital problems.

Research design and approach

Qualitative exploratory design under the interpretive assumption was deemed appropriate for study (Smith, 1995). This approach was chosen to explore and understand linguistic profiling and career development (Horton *et al.*, 2004) and facilitated an in-depth, multi-faceted understanding of individuals who have experience with linguistic profiling in their careers (Yin, 2015). These methods allowed participants to explain how language-discriminations develop in various cultures and how people overcome them; examines how cultural and social factors affect language profiles, employee career progression, and self-perception; uncovers strategies participants employ to overcome linguistic biases and highlights the organizational role in perpetuating linguistic profiling. Hence, this study allows for a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between language and career development in Pakistani context.

The study involved conducting 19, semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with participants from the service sector during November and December 2022. All participants had lived experiences of linguistic profiling in their careers and were selected based on their

diverse language backgrounds working in Karachi. We applied purposive and snowball sampling to ensure representation across various language backgrounds and experiences of linguistic profiling discrimination. Language-based discrimination can take the shape of bias, preconceptions, or limited chances.

The participants' demographic data are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Participants characteristics

Participant characteristics		Frequency
Sex	Male	8
	Female	11
Age group	26-30	2
	31-35	9
	36-40	8
Languages	Urdu	6
	Sindhi	10
	Pashto	3
Levinson's Eras Model Career stage	Early 20s	2
	Early 30s	9
	40s	8
Organization/Sector	Customer service	6
	Academia	13

Instrument and procedure

The study used Cresswell and Poth (2011) semi-structured interviews to investigate 19 participants' experiences of linguistic profiling. A comprehensive Interview Protocol Refinement Framework was used to create the interview guide. Each interview provided vital

information and data was carefully evaluated to add and modify questions. The main question in the study examines how linguistic profiling affects individuals' career development. Therefore, studying diverse linguistic backgrounds in the workplace helps us to comprehend employee problems in these dynamics.

This study's interview guide contains questions that addressed language-related workplace discrimination and employee careers to understand perceptions, organizational practices, and career advancement:

- Can you describe occasions when your language or accent affected your abilities?
- How do you see presence of language-related biases or stereotypes in your workplace?
Have you ever faced discrimination because of your language or accent?
- In what ways has linguistic profiling affected your career growth or job prospects?
- How do you perceive role of language-related biases in development opportunities?
- Have you observed differences in how linguistic profiling affects individuals from different language backgrounds? If so, what are those differences and how do they manifest?
- How does linguistic profiling influence your self-perception, confidence, and career aspirations?
- Are organizational policies in place to address linguistic profiling and promote equal career opportunities for individuals from diverse language backgrounds?

Purposive sampling helps identify and choose information-rich contexts to maximize resource usage and allows researchers to target participants from diverse backgrounds, it is ideal for studying linguistic profiling in workplace dynamics (Soomro, 2023). Purposive sampling ensured that participants had firsthand experience and possessed knowledge of biases. These participants delved deep into language biases, exploring their effects and

implications for career development. Moreover, snowball sampling (participant-driven sampling) was used to collect data from participants to find future volunteers (Heckathorn, 2011). By using networks of participants who have experienced linguistic profiling, researchers tapped into participants' unique perspectives.

The study used Braun and Clarke (2015) thematic method. It includes finding, identification, and in-depth studying of specific themes. This method helped identify themes present in the collected data (Terry *et al.*, 2017), so once a theme developed, we asked further probing questions to gain a better understanding of its subtleties. Eventually, some sub-themes became visible, although they were not always entirely new. The initial interviews lasted 25–35 minutes. We took notes and recorded audio, it allowed us to capture both verbal responses of participants and our observations of non-verbal cues, contributing to a comprehensive dataset.

During thematic analysis, one must ensure that answers are aligned with the study's objectives without bias (Terry *et al.*, 2017). In other words, what participants are experiencing and telling must be recorded without researchers' own emotions and feelings. So, anyone who reads the data can decide for themselves if this is something they can apply to their context. By employing a thematic approach, we aimed to highlight the precise patterns and themes within the data, we obtained a better understanding of the effects of linguistic profiling on career development in Pakistani setting.

Findings and discussion

Theme 1: Language-Based Biases and Stereotyping

Participants addressed how language profiling influences career outcomes. Data exploration revealed that linguistic profiling creates stereotypes and assumptions based on accents. Participants said organizational members judged and treated them differently due to

their accents and dialects. Their job talents were misjudged and led to inaccurate assessments of their skills and competence at workplaces.

Verbatim extracts from participants, by language, gender, and age offer viewpoints and discuss linguistic profiling, accents, and biases. They also show an increased response to language bias and emphasize the need for language policies in diverse workplaces. Participants also emphasized adverse effects of organizational inactivity in addressing linguistic biases and the need for proactive measures to ensure equal career opportunities for those with different language origins.

Sindhi, male, 29: "I have a Sindhi accent being a Sindhi, and I've experienced people frequently making judgments about my abilities. They feel I'm not as capable as others since my English accent differs. It's irritating because I know I'm capable, but these preconceptions limit my professional opportunities."

Sindhi, female, 36: "I come from a distinct background, and my accent reflects the fact that I've been in circumstances where people assumed I lack skills. They also assume that I don't understand nuances of communication in workplace. It's a constant battle to prove myself and break free from these stereotypes."

Urdu, male, 34: "I speak English and have moderate fluency, but it's not my first language. Higher ups think I'm bad when I stutter and halt. At times, when I stumble on certain words and hesitate, co-workers judge I'm not as competent. My credibility immediately questioned in these occasions and it is disturbing to me. It's disheartening to battle these stereotypes constantly."

Pashto, male, 31: "Regional dialect-speaking employee often confront bias. Their instant characterization as uninformed is unjust. I say my language should not hinder my employment chances. Since I speak Pashto, management immediately labeled me

uneducated, which is not fair. Pashto speakers must not be evaluated on their language and must not limit their career opportunities."

These outcomes revealed that linguistic profiling affects employees having linguistic use issues. Participants reported being assessed and treated differently due to their accents. Their competence was unfairly assessed, impeding their careers. Participants shared occasions where their language was used to judge their intellect. Participants with dialects that deviate from the norm are generally stereotyped as less capable (Halteren, 2004).

Findings revealed that language biases affected workplace dynamics beyond individual judgments. Participants stated that language biases underestimated their contributions, limiting development chances. These biases silenced people, affecting their work performance. Findings emphasize the need to address workplace language-based discrimination. Accordingly, organizations can foster an inclusive culture that supports linguistic diversity (Mauranen and Jenkins, 2019). Training and workshops on these biases and language awareness can help employees and leaders identify and overcome their deficiencies, resulting in fairer assessments and equal growth opportunities for all linguistic groups.

Theme 2: Intersectionality and Compounded Discrimination

Participants expressed experiences of linguistic profiling discrimination. Due to linguistic profiling, race and ethnicity, participants from underrepresented areas suffered compounding biases. Marginalized participants faced compounded biases due to intersections of linguistic profiling creating barriers to professional growth. Language use and related bias affected participants' discriminatory experiences, causing challenges to career progress. So, intersectionality exacerbated linguistic profiling, thereby limiting possibilities, and increasing inequality for some workers.

Sindhi, female, 38: "I am Sindhi speaking, being assessed for my language use create prejudice and adds a layer of discrimination. It's just about how I speak and whether I conform to certain linguistic expectations. The company cares [about]my speech and language, but not my competence or skills."

Sindhi, female, 33: "The combination of linguistic profiling has tested me frequently, while gender discrimination has constantly challenged me. As a woman, I must speak in a feminine manner and be expected to use language that aligns with feminine norms according to classical society. Still, if I assert myself, I'm often seen as aggressive, and perceived as pushy if I talk firmly."

Sindhi, male, 37: " As a queer person of colour, the intersections of language profiling and race have significantly caused my professional development. Some linguistic features connected with my identification are regarded with even greater bias and judgment. It feels like I'm fighting numerous prejudices."

Urdu, male, 33: "My accent has always made me feel odd and it gives the impression that I am an outsider. Linguistic and racial discrimination have restricted my progress and career growth."

The findings showed how race and ethnicity interacted with language profiling to produce complicated biases and create web of stereotypes (Mauranen and Jenkins, 2019). Participants described that language use often led to scrutiny and unfavorable preconceptions of racial and ethnic minorities. Participants from these marginalized groups faced negative assumptions based on their language use. The combination of language biases created employment obstacles and extra workplace complexities. They claimed limited advancement for promotions and negative treatment. Biases' intersectionality created multilayer discrimination based on each employee's intersecting identities, marginalizing them, and hindering their success.

Theme 3: Career Advancement and Opportunities

According to participants, linguistic profiling greatly impacts job prospects and career advancement. Due to language biases, they mentioned being passed over for their promotions, new roles and assignments, and leadership positions. Moreover, many participants felt isolated from professional networks and possibilities, limiting their careers and access to vital positions. Participants shared linguistic profiling influences professional progress and prospects and held them back from career advancement, key positions, and workplace equality.

Sindhi, female, 35: "I have seen colleagues with 'native' accents being given more career opportunities. For instance, leadership and high-profile initiatives have gone to them. My accent constantly gets me ignored, despite my language abilities. I'm discouraged by its professional impact, and it is frustrating."

Sindhi, female, 37: "I've observed that those who speak English fluently are considered competent. Speaking fluently without accents is sometimes deemed incapable. I feel disadvantaged because English is not my first language, despite my skills and credentials. Various opportunities are blocked by my gender and language and holding me back from them."

Pashto, female, 34, Pashto: " My speaking and accent has kept me from organizational networks. I have encountered instances where I have been excluded from professional networks due to how I speak. It's disappointing since these networks provide career advancement. Being evaluated by my language rather than my skills and experience demoralizes me and limits my career."

Urdu, female 39: "Linguistic prejudices greatly affect promotions and leadership. It's disappointing to see those with the 'correct' linguistic accents being privileged over

others with balanced abilities and experiences. It maintains inequality and hinders decision-making."

Participants felt alienated from professional networks and initiatives, particularly career growth opportunities (Isphording, 2014). The exclusion occurred because of preconceptions and stereotypes linking language usage to competence and leadership skills (Itani *et al.*, 2015). Thus, linguistically diverse individuals had restricted access to prominent positions that may boost their careers.

Language norm users have better professional chances (Hatoss *et al.*, 2012), and fluent speakers reported fewer professional barriers. The benefits of linguistic uniformity and the weaknesses of those whose accent differs from standard one was revealed in this study. Language profiling affected career opportunities beyond participant experiences, and its implications go beyond workplace diversity and inclusion. The literature emphasizes the importance of diversity and a diverse workforce and participants stressed the importance of diverse language/viewpoints that bring innovation and creativity in workplace settings (Mauranen and Jenkins, 2019).

Theme 4: Organizational Policies and Practices

The study shows how organizational rules and procedures perpetuate linguistic profiling and discrimination. Here, verbatim excerpts reflect participants' views on organizational language profiling policies and practices. Participants emphasize the importance of uniform regulations and diversity training that aim to achieve an inclusive workplace. They liked organizations that promoted cultural understanding, language variety, and addressing discrimination. Participants also emphasize negative effects of organizational inactivity in addressing linguistic biases and the need for efforts to create equitable career opportunities for diverse employees.

Sindhi, female, 35: "I liked our company's simple language policy that promote diversity and language diversity. It gave workers a place to speak without language-based judgement."

Urdu, female, 39: "Diversity training enhanced my knowledge about diverse language differences. It taught me about linguistic stereotypes and how to be inclusive. Our organization's commitment to these concerns and cultural knowledge is admirable."

Urdu, male, 33: "Language profiling victims benefit from employee resource groups, and the resource group support those who are the victims of discrimination. Organizations can help us connect, seek guidance, and build community."

Pashto, female, 37: "Inclusive language policy have helped me at work. Organizational culture and environment respect everyone's language. Being part of a diverse, anti-discrimination workplace is pleasant."

Sindhi, male, 37: "I've witnessed how lack of assistance fosters language prejudices and biases. It demotivates individuals when language is not recognized. Organizations must have inclusive and equitable employee practises."

Findings showed that organizational practices affect workplace biases. Participants emphasized the importance of inclusive language policy, diversity training, and cultural knowledge in developing an inclusive environment (Itani *et al.*, 2015). Diversity training programs that raise awareness of language biases and their effects on careers were also stressed. These trainings teach employees and leaders about linguistic diversity and expand their diverse language knowledge. Moreover, cultural understanding and sensitivity can help organizations promote linguistic variety and combat discrimination (Hatoss *et al.*, 2012).

Participants stressed the significance of support systems and services for linguistic profiling victims, emphasizing mentoring programs, staff resource groups, and language help efforts for exchanging experiences in dealing with biases. These groups enable members to

guide people for professional advancement and build belonging. De Klerk and Bosch (1995) indicated that organizations must be proactive to counteract language profiling. Inclusive policies, diversity training, and support structures may make workplaces fairer and more inclusive.

Theoretical implications

Findings enhances CD and Levinson's eras theory by investigating Pakistani employees and categorizing the data collected from participants into distinct groups based on their career stages, providing this information for each response. Findings explored the complex interplay between linguistic profiling, discrimination, and its impact on employee career development (Qamar *et al.*, 2023). Findings revealed four themes (a) language-based biases and stereotyping (b) intersectionality and compounded discrimination (c) career development and growth opportunities (d) organizational policies and practices.

Using Super and Jordaan (1973) CD theory showed how factors related to linguistic profiling in heterogeneous work dynamics of Pakistan affect employee careers. The framework is particularly relevant when assessing linguistic biases and discrimination on employee careers. Given Pakistan's diverse landscape, research has shown that linguistic profiling, race, ethnicity, and gender-related discriminations are interconnected. Findings revealed, language is a major hurdle (Zaidi and Zaki, 2017), creating challenges for employees in Karachi. CD theory provided valuable insights into the obstacles hindering participants in their career stages, expanding our comprehension of complex dynamics within service sectors.

While Levinson's theory (1986) suggested that individuals go through various periods of stability and transition cycles throughout their lives. Each cycle entails creating life objectives and techniques to achieve them. Accordingly, findings expanded on knowledge of transitions and demands directing early career establishment and long-term career results

despite various problems, challenges, and transitions in life (Smart and Peterson, 1994). The study found that factors such as language, accents, race and ethnicity strongly influence career outcomes (Maass *et al.* 1989). These theoretical contributions provide a critical perspective to examine complex variables that cause race, ethnicity, and gender discrimination in diverse culture of Pakistani workplaces. The research has advanced our knowledge of service sector employees' challenges by confronting language biases, setting the path for future research and initiatives to promote inclusion and equality in service sector.

Practical implications and limitations

The study has practical consequences for organizations and individuals, particularly within context of Pakistan (Qamar *et al.*, 2023), where language profiling is common. To address this, organizations can prioritize diversity, enhance awareness among employees, and provide required training to employees and leaders to educate them about negative effects of language profiling. These initiatives should focus on fostering a more inclusive workplace environment (Ngezahayo, 2022). Diversity awareness, linguistic bias training, and focused awareness campaigns can help employees detect challenges, creating a more inclusive environment.

Continuous communication stressing appreciation for diverse languages and fostering effective intercultural and multilingual communication can empower employees to negotiate linguistic biases. Effective intercultural communication and cultural sensitivity reduce workplace issues, benefiting both employees and supervisors at various levels in organizations. Communication through newsletters, intranet, diversity and inclusion committees, can be used to convey the importance of inclusion, creating an organizational culture that values diverse cultures.

Findings suggest that organizations take proactive steps to evaluate and revise their employment policies (Robbs, 1991). By respecting and equally treating diverse abilities,

organizations can develop inclusive recruitment processes. It is crucial for organizations to create and execute policies globally that support diverse speakers and promote linguistic diversity. We recommend that organizations establish language support programs aimed at enhancing employee language skills (Cox Jr, 1991). Moreover, fostering intercultural and multilingual communication, and respecting different languages, may help employees overcome linguistic biases, contributing to a workplace culture that values diversity.

Findings highlights the significance of support programs for employees. Support programs provide support and opportunities, and help employees overcome biases and thrive (Zentella, 2014; Qamar *et al.*, 2023). Pairing employees who have faced similar experiences may give vital assistance, and career development insights, leading to positive outcomes at workplaces.

Limitations of the Study

Utilizing a qualitative methodology limited the study's generalizability to Pakistan's diverse cultural, contextual, and linguistic factors (Lawson and Fisher, 2011). The experiences of 19 Sindhi, Urdu, and Pashto speakers may not entirely mirror those of other language speakers. Additionally, study acknowledges a linguistic bias in data collection and analysis, primarily focusing on Sindhi and Urdu. This limitation may impact inclusivity of findings, underlining need for future research to incorporate diverse language and use a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to better understand links between linguistic profiling and career development. Moreover, to expand our analysis, future research could provide additional exploration into how linguistic profiling influences career development across Levinson's eras model. Our study's themes highlighted the impact of linguistic profiling on career development at different career stages, spanning early adulthood to late adulthood.

Conclusion

This research explores the impact of language profiling on workplace discrimination. Our data exploration revealed significant themes along with other impacts of linguistic profiling bias on employees. The findings demonstrate occurrence of linguistic discrimination in diverse workplaces. Following data exploration, four themes emerged. The first theme relates to employees experiencing discrimination concerning language use, highlighting influences of language choice on employees. The second theme delves into intersections of linguistic profiling with marginalized groups, increasing experience of discrimination. The third theme underscores the substantial influence of bias on career progression. The fourth theme emphasizes the importance of organizational policies aimed at preventing language discrimination, promoting career growth, and fostering inclusive workplaces.

This study contributes to career development and Levinson's Eras theory on linguistic profiling discrimination, and its impacts on career development in Pakistan's diverse work environment. Drawing on Super and Jordaan's (1973) CD theory, study reveals how linguistic profiling affects employees' careers. Levinson's theory (1986) illuminates challenges individuals face in their careers, emphasizing language role, accents, race, ethnicity, etc. Overall, the study expands our understanding of linguistic profiling discrimination and offers insights for future initiatives promoting inclusion and equality in workplaces.

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