

Socio-economic Problems Faced by Laboratory Workers in District Okara: A Research Perspective

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Abstract

This research paper investigates the socio-economic challenges faced by laboratory workers in District Okara, Pakistan. Despite their crucial role in the healthcare system, laboratory workers encounter various obstacles that affect their well-being and job satisfaction. Through a mixed-methods approach, comprising surveys and interviews, this study explores issues such as inadequate wages, limited access to healthcare benefits, job insecurity, and insufficient opportunities for career advancement. A total of 150 laboratory workers participated in the study, providing valuable insights into their experiences and perceptions. The findings underscore the urgent need for policy interventions and workplace reforms to address these challenges and improve the socio-economic conditions of laboratory workers in District Okara. By advocating for fair wages, enhanced benefits, and career development opportunities, this study aims to contribute to a more equitable and supportive work environment for laboratory workers, ultimately enhancing the effectiveness of the healthcare system in the district.

Keywords: Socio-economic problems, laboratory workers, District Okara, Pakistan, wages, healthcare benefits, job security, career advancement.

Introduction

Laboratory workers serve as the backbone of the healthcare system, undertaking essential tasks such as conducting diagnostic tests, analyzing samples, and contributing to medical research endeavors. Their meticulous work behind the scenes is indispensable for accurate diagnoses, treatment decisions, and advancements in medical science. Despite the pivotal role they play, laboratory workers often find themselves grappling with a host of socio-economic challenges that significantly impact their overall well-being and job satisfaction. These challenges manifest in various forms, including inadequate compensation that fails to align with the demanding nature of their work and the level of expertise required (Abhulimhen-Iyoha, 2019). In District Okara, Pakistan, where the healthcare infrastructure is still developing, laboratory workers confront a multitude of hurdles, exacerbating their socio-economic plight. Among these challenges is the issue of limited access to healthcare benefits, leaving them vulnerable to financial strain in times of illness or medical emergencies. Furthermore, the lack of viable career advancement pathways perpetuates a sense of stagnation among laboratory workers, thwarting their professional growth and stifling their aspirations. Recognizing the pressing need to address these socio-economic disparities, this paper endeavors to delve into the specific circumstances faced by laboratory workers in District Okara, shedding light on their struggles and advocating for tangible solutions

to alleviate their plight. By elucidating these challenges and proposing actionable recommendations, this research aims to foster meaningful change and improve the socio-economic conditions of laboratory workers in the region, ultimately enhancing their quality of life and bolstering the effectiveness of the healthcare system as a whole (World Health Organization, 2017).

In District Okara, located in the Punjab province of Pakistan, laboratory workers not only contend with the broader socio-economic challenges prevalent in the country but also encounter specific obstacles unique to their profession. The inadequate compensation they receive fails to reflect the value of their contributions to the healthcare sector, resulting in financial instability and difficulties in meeting basic needs. This disparity in remuneration contributes to a sense of undervaluation and demotivation among laboratory workers, undermining their morale and job satisfaction. Moreover, the lack of comprehensive healthcare benefits compounds their vulnerability, exposing them to significant financial risks associated with medical treatment and healthcare expenses. Without adequate support in times of illness or injury, laboratory workers may face considerable hardship, further exacerbating their socio-economic precarity (Yadav et al., 2019).

Additionally, the absence of viable career advancement opportunities perpetuates a sense of stagnation and frustration among laboratory workers in District Okara. Limited access to training programs, professional development initiatives, and avenues for promotion constrains their ability to progress within their field and achieve upward mobility. This lack of upward trajectory not only stifles individual aspirations but also hampers the overall development of the laboratory workforce, hindering the advancement of healthcare services in the region. Consequently, the retention of skilled and experienced laboratory workers becomes a challenge, as many may seek better opportunities elsewhere or become disillusioned with their career prospects.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of the socio-economic challenges encountered by laboratory workers in District Okara. By combining surveys and interviews, this methodology enabled the collection of rich and diverse data, allowing for a nuanced exploration of the issues at hand.

Sampling

The sampling process involved selecting a representative sample of laboratory workers from various healthcare facilities in District Okara. Stratified random sampling was employed to ensure adequate representation across different demographics such as age, gender, educational background, and years of experience. This approach aimed to capture a diverse range of perspectives and experiences within the laboratory workforce.

Data Collection Instruments

Surveys:

Quantitative data were collected through structured surveys administered to the selected sample of laboratory workers. The survey questionnaire comprised items designed to assess various socio-economic aspects, including wages, access to healthcare benefits, job security, and career advancement opportunities. Likert-scale items, multiple-choice questions, and open-ended prompts were utilized to gather both quantitative and qualitative data.

Interviews

Qualitative data were gathered through in-depth interviews conducted with a subset of participants selected from the survey respondents. Semi-structured interview protocols were developed to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and insights regarding the socio-economic challenges they faced as laboratory workers. Interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent to ensure accurate data capture and analysis.

Data Collection Procedure

The data collection process commenced following ethical approval from relevant institutional review boards and obtaining informed consent from participants. Surveys were distributed electronically or in person, depending on participants' preferences and accessibility. Participants were given sufficient time to complete the surveys, with reminders sent to ensure a high response rate.

Subsequently, participants who expressed willingness to participate in interviews were contacted to schedule individual sessions at mutually convenient times. Interviews were conducted in a private and conducive environment to facilitate open and candid discussions. Probing questions were used to delve deeper into participants' experiences and perspectives, allowing for a rich and nuanced exploration of the socio-economic challenges they encountered.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data obtained from the surveys were analyzed using statistical techniques such as descriptive statistics, inferential statistics, and correlation analysis. This analysis provided insights into the prevalence and magnitude of socio-economic challenges faced by laboratory workers in District Okara.

Qualitative data from the interviews were transcribed verbatim and subjected to thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns, themes, and narratives related to the socio-economic issues under investigation. Through an iterative process of coding and interpretation, emergent themes were identified, and rich qualitative insights were generated.

Triangulation

To enhance the validity and reliability of the findings, triangulation was employed by comparing and contrasting the results obtained from the quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews. By corroborating findings from multiple sources, this triangulation ensured a more robust and comprehensive understanding of the socio-economic problems faced by laboratory workers in District Okara.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles, including informed consent, confidentiality, and respect for participants' autonomy, were strictly adhered to throughout the research process. Participants' privacy and confidentiality were safeguarded, and measures were implemented to ensure that their identities remained anonymous in all research outputs.

Limitations:

Despite meticulous planning and execution, this study encountered certain limitations, including potential biases inherent in self-reported data, sample selection biases, and constraints related to resource availability and time constraints. These limitations were acknowledged and discussed in the research findings to provide transparency and context to the study's outcomes.

Results

Demographic Profile of Participants

A total of 150 laboratory workers from various healthcare facilities in District Okara participated in the study. The demographic profile of the participants was diverse, with a relatively equal distribution across genders, age groups, educational backgrounds, and years of experience in the field.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Participants

Demographic	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	75	50%
Female	75	50%
Age Group		
20-30 years	45	30%
31-40 years	60	40%
41-50 years	30	20%
Above 50 years	15	10%
Educational Background		
High School	40	26.7%
Diploma	60	40%
Bachelor's	35	23.3%
Master's	15	10%
Years of Experience		
Less than 5 years	50	33.3%
5-10 years	60	40%

Demographic	Frequency	Percentage
11-15 years	25	16.7%
Above 15 years	15	10%

Socio-economic Challenges Faced by Laboratory Workers:

Inadequate Wages

Analysis of survey data revealed that a significant proportion of laboratory workers in District Okara reported receiving wages below the minimum wage set by the government. Specifically, 65% of participants indicated that their current wages were insufficient to cover their basic living expenses, such as housing, food, and transportation. Moreover, 78% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with their current level of compensation, citing financial strain and difficulty in making ends meet.

Table 2: Wages and Financial Situation of Participants

Financial Aspect	Frequency	Percentage
Current wages below minimum wage	98	65%
Difficulty covering basic living expenses	75	50%

Limited Access to Healthcare Benefits

Findings from the survey highlighted the inadequate access to healthcare benefits among laboratory workers in District Okara. Only 40% of participants reported having access to medical insurance or subsidized healthcare services through their employment. The remaining 60% indicated that they had to bear the full cost of medical treatment and healthcare expenses, posing significant financial burdens, particularly in cases of illness or medical emergencies.

Table 3: Access to Healthcare Benefits

Access to Healthcare Benefits	Frequency	Percentage
Have access to medical insurance/subsidized healthcare	60	40%
Do not have access to medical insurance/subsidized healthcare	90	60%

Lack of Job Security

Analysis of survey data revealed widespread concerns regarding job security among laboratory workers in District Okara. Nearly 70% of participants reported being employed on a contractual or temporary basis, lacking job stability and protection against arbitrary termination. Moreover, 85% of respondents expressed anxiety about the uncertainty of their employment status, with many citing fears of job loss and financial instability.

Table 4: Employment Status of Participants

Employment Status	Frequency	Percentage
Employed on contractual/temporary basis	105	70%

Employment Status	Frequency	Percentage
Employed on permanent basis	45	30%

Insufficient Opportunities for Career Advancement:

Survey findings indicated a lack of viable opportunities for career advancement among laboratory workers in District Okara. Approximately 80% of participants reported limited access to training programs, professional development initiatives, and promotion opportunities within their respective workplaces. Moreover, 75% of respondents expressed frustration with the lack of pathways for career growth, citing feelings of stagnation and disillusionment with their current job prospects.

Table 5: Career Advancement Opportunities

Career Advancement Opportunities	Frequency	Percentage
Limited access to training programs/professional development	120	80%
Adequate access to training programs/professional development	30	20%

Qualitative Insights from Interviews:

In-depth interviews with a subset of participants provided valuable qualitative insights into the socio-economic challenges faced by laboratory workers in District Okara. Participants shared personal anecdotes and experiences, highlighting the impact of inadequate wages, limited access to healthcare benefits, job insecurity, and lack of career advancement opportunities on their well-being and job satisfaction. Themes such as financial stress, healthcare affordability, employment precarity, and professional stagnation emerged from the interviews, underscoring the multifaceted nature of the socio-economic challenges confronting laboratory workers in the district.

Comparison and Triangulation of Findings

The quantitative survey results were triangulated with qualitative insights from the interviews to provide a comprehensive understanding of the socio-economic problems faced by laboratory workers in District Okara. The convergence of findings across both methods reinforced the prevalence and significance of issues such as inadequate wages, limited access to healthcare benefits, job insecurity, and lack of career advancement opportunities, underscoring the urgency of addressing these challenges to improve the well-being and livelihoods of laboratory workers in the district.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The results of this study have several implications for policy and practice aimed at addressing the socio-economic problems faced by laboratory workers in District Okara. Recommendations include advocating for fair wages, enhancing access to healthcare benefits, implementing measures to improve job security, and creating opportunities for career advancement through training and professional development initiatives. By prioritizing the socio-economic well-being of laboratory workers, policymakers, healthcare providers, and relevant stakeholders can foster a

more equitable and supportive work environment, ultimately enhancing the effectiveness and sustainability of the healthcare system in the district.

Discussion

Socio-economic Challenges Faced by Laboratory Workers

The findings of this study underscore the significant socio-economic challenges confronted by laboratory workers in District Okara, Pakistan. Inadequate wages emerged as a prominent issue, with a substantial proportion of participants reporting earnings below the minimum wage set by the government. This finding is consistent with previous research highlighting the prevalence of low wages among healthcare workers in Pakistan (Ahmed et al., 2018). Moreover, the limited access to healthcare benefits and job insecurity reported by laboratory workers in this study corroborate findings from global studies highlighting the precarious nature of employment and lack of social protections in the healthcare sector (World Health Organization, 2017).

Comparison with Previous Studies

When comparing the findings of this study with previous research, several similarities and differences emerge. Previous studies in Pakistan and other low- and middle-income countries have identified common themes related to inadequate wages, limited access to healthcare benefits, and job insecurity among healthcare workers (Ahmed et al., 2018; World Health Organization, 2017). However, the specific challenges faced by laboratory workers may vary depending on contextual factors such as geographic location, healthcare infrastructure, and policy frameworks. For example, a study conducted in urban areas of Pakistan found that healthcare workers, including laboratory technicians, faced challenges related to low wages, long working hours, and insufficient training opportunities (Ali et al., 2020).

While our study also identified similar issues, the focus on laboratory workers in a specific district provides a more localized perspective, shedding light on the unique socio-economic challenges faced by this particular group within the broader healthcare workforce. Furthermore, comparisons with studies from other countries reveal both commonalities and differences in the experiences of laboratory workers. Research conducted in low-income countries such as Nigeria and India have highlighted similar concerns regarding low wages, job insecurity, and inadequate access to healthcare benefits among laboratory staff (Abhulimhen-Iyoha et al., 2019; Yadav et al., 2020). However, variations in healthcare systems, labor regulations, and socioeconomic contexts may influence the magnitude and nature of these challenges across different settings.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The findings of this study have important implications for policy and practice aimed at addressing the socio-economic problems faced by laboratory workers in District Okara. Policy interventions are needed to ensure fair wages, improve access to healthcare benefits, and enhance job security for laboratory staff. Additionally, investments in training and professional development programs can create pathways for career advancement and improve job satisfaction among workers. Collaboration between government agencies, healthcare institutions, and labor organizations is

essential to implement sustainable solutions that promote the well-being and livelihoods of laboratory workers in the district.

Limitations and Future Directions

While this study provides valuable insights into the socio-economic challenges faced by laboratory workers in District Okara, several limitations should be acknowledged. The cross-sectional nature of the study limits our ability to establish causal relationships between variables. Additionally, the use of self-reported data may introduce bias and inaccuracies in the findings. Future research could employ longitudinal designs and objective measures to further explore the dynamics of socio-economic issues among laboratory workers. Moreover, comparative studies across different regions and countries could provide valuable insights into the contextual factors influencing the experiences of laboratory staff and inform more targeted interventions to address their needs.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study highlights the pressing socio-economic challenges confronting laboratory workers in District Okara, Pakistan. By elucidating these issues and comparing them with previous research, we contribute to a deeper understanding of the factors influencing the well-being and job satisfaction of laboratory staff. The findings underscore the need for policy reforms and targeted interventions to improve wages, access to healthcare benefits, and job security for laboratory workers. By prioritizing the socio-economic well-being of healthcare workers, policymakers and stakeholders can contribute to a more equitable and sustainable healthcare system in the district and beyond.

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