

FROM SILENCE TO STRESS: ASSESSING FEAR OF DISCLOSURE IN HIGH-PRESSURE SALES ENVIRONMENTS

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Abstract

High-pressure sales environments are often associated with intense performance demands, occupational stigma, and psychological stress, yet the phenomenon of fear of disclosure among sales representatives remains underexplored. Sales representatives may experience apprehension about revealing their occupational identity or job-related difficulties due to anticipated social judgment and stigmatization, which can negatively affect their psychological well-being. The present study aimed to examine the underlying factor structure of fear of disclosure among sales representatives, to establish the construct validity, reliability, and internal consistency of the Fear of Disclosure Scale for Sales Representatives, and to investigate variations in fear of disclosure across gender, age, and educational groups. Using a cross-sectional research design, data were collected from 340 sales representatives in Pakistan. Confirmatory Factor Analysis was conducted using AMOS 20.0, while reliability analyses, descriptive statistics, and independent sample t-tests were performed using SPSS 26.0. The findings supported a two-factor structure—Fear of Social Disclosure and Public Stigmatization, and Internalized Occupational Stigma and Self-Devaluation—with satisfactory model fit indices and high internal consistency. Significant differences were found across gender, age, and education, with females reporting higher levels of fear of disclosure. The study concludes that fear of disclosure is a multidimensional and socially embedded construct, highlighting the need for culturally sensitive assessment tools and organizational interventions to promote psychological safety in sales environments.

Keywords: *Confirmatory Factor Analysis, Fear of Disclosure, High-Pressure Work Environments, Occupational Stigma, Sales Representatives*

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1. Introduction

Work-places of high performance pressure and hard target achievement and constant performance scrutiny have become common within the modern day economies. High-pressure sales environments are characterized within these settings with competitive nature, use of commission as incentives, job insecurity and continuous interpersonal interaction. Working under such circumstances, the sales representatives are daily supposed to be persuasive, emotionally stable, and professional in attitude regardless of personal or workplace stress factors. Despite the fact that considerable studies have been conducted to reveal the impact of stress, burnout, and emotional labour in sales professions, little emphasis has been put on investigating the psychological process of fear of disclosure which is the fear in respect to letting people know about occupational position, job related situations/experiences, or emotional difficulties in the sales compared to others. This silence, despite most of the time being socially condoned, could make a pivotal difference between an occupational stress and undesirable psychological consequences.

Fear of disclosure is the displeasure or fear of a person sharing personal, professional or emotional information because they are projected to cause negative outcomes like stigma, judgement, rejection and they may lose social status. Disclosure in organisational settings is not an individual preference but a socially controlled phenomenon depending on the relationship of power, the organisational culture and the societal beliefs on some occupations (Chaudoir and Fisher, 2010). Sales work (especially door-to-door and field sales) is often looked down upon as unstable, low, or morally dubious, in societies with collectivism, occupational prestige has always been strongly associated with identity and social value (Ashforth and Kreiner, 2014). As a result, sales representatives might develop increased fear of revealing their occupation or job-related distress, which results in the psychological concealment and the internalised stigma.

Fear of disclosure is theorized on the basis of stigma theory and social identity. In the conceptualisation of stigma, Goffman (1963) proposed the definition of stigma as a label that discredits a person to the society and thus force them to strategically conceal information about themselves. Further developments of the idea took place in the further studies by others who added conceivable stigmatized identities to the concept, according to which, individuals choose whether or not they will present or conceal the elements of their identity, depending on the perceived risks and benefits (Quinn and Earnshaw, 2011). Especially, occupational stigma has been found to have an effect on self-concept, emotional well-being and socialization (Ashforth, Kreiner, Clark, and Fugate, 2007). Fear of disclosure may be heightened in sales setting where employees are not only judged by organisational targets but also judged by the eyes of the society.

Sales environments characterized by the pressure of high performance, surveillance, and insecure employment make such dynamics highly pressing in a competitive way. Empirical studies always demonstrate that this kind of environment can be linked to the high level of stress, emotional depletion, and mental tension (Dormann and Zapf, 2004; Schaufeli, Leiter, and Maslach, 2009). Sales people are also in emotional labour - inhibiting their emotions to meet organisational display norms and hiding any feelings of anger or insecurity or discontent (Hochschild, 1983). This emotional repression may cause internalised occupational stigma, self-devaluation and persistent stress when supported by fear of disclosure. But the current literature has focused on these constructs in a way that is more or less separate hence has failed to understand the processes by which fear of disclosure is a very specific and concurrent psychological phenomenon in sales professions.

Mental health, identity and organisational outcomes have been among the major areas that have been examined in disclosure in the workplace. The studies have shown that proper disclosure may support the social support, authenticity, and well-being, and in many cases concealment is related to anxiety, depression and poor job satisfaction (Pachankis, 2007; Ragins, 2008). However, disclosure is not always a good thing in that in some jobs or hostile settings such disclosure can lead to discrimination or even rejection by others (Clair, Beatty, and MacLean, 2005). To sales representatives, the choices of disclosure are also complicated by the societal discourses about sales work as undeserving or even immoral, which support the fear and silence. This highlights the need to have context-specific instruments in the evaluation of fear of disclosure instead of using some generalised measures of stress or stigma.

Although the fear of disclosure is a subject which is applicable to occupational psychology, there is a marked absence of empirically validated instruments to measure the same amongst the sales representatives, especially in non-Western cultures. Mental illness, sexual orientation, or persistent health conditions are some of the identities that have been tested in most of the previous studies of stigma and disclosure that have been carried out in the western context (Corrigan and Rao, 2012; Quinn and Earnshaw, 2013). These indicators might not sufficiently address the socio-cultural and work-related circumstances that are unique to salespeople in the third world, where labour precarity, patriarchy and education power structures are powerful influences of work experiences. Consequently, it is timely and important to develop and verify a culturally-based scale that would measure fear of disclosure in sales reps.

The current research fills this void by looking at the issue of fear of disclosure in the pressurized sales setting by developing and testing the Fear of Disclosure Scale of Sales Representatives. The scale is based on qualitative interviewing and the available literature because the scale conceptualises fear of disclosure as multidimensional, that

includes fear of social disclosure and being stigmatised by the community or internalised occupational stigma and self-devaluation. These dimensions represent external issues regarding the judgment of society and inner mental processes in which dissuasive images related to occupation are internalized into self-concept. The research attempts to determine the construct validity and internal consistency of the scale by adopting rigorous psychometric procedures which are confirmatory factor analysis and reliability testing.

The paper also examines the differences in demographics in fear of disclosure in terms of gender, age, and education. There is existing research indicating that women might be more susceptible to these forms of occupational stigma and emotional vulnerability in unstable occupation because of the expectations of the gendered role and unequal access to power (Ridgeway, 2011). On the same note, younger employees and employees of less educational level might endure more insecurity and social pressure and this can contribute to increasing fear of disclosure (Kelleberg, 2009). Researching into these disparities is crucial to gain the insight into the way in which the fear of disclosure is not evenly distributed among the social groups and informing specific interventions.

A and especially fitting scene to this inquiry is provided by the Pakistani setting. In Pakistan, professional identity is closely associated to family honour, social decency and long term constancy. Occupations that are considered temporary, low-status, or unworthy of social status are not socially valued, which forces people to hide their activity or feel afraid and anxious about de-secretization. The sales people, especially those who are doing door to door or in commission business are on the border between economic need and social exclusion. The cultural standards that emphasize respectability, gender roles, and educational level might also increase fear of disclosure and make this phenomenon salient and understudied in this setting.

The given research narrows down the amount of fear of disclosure in sales representatives and, therefore, leads to several academic strands. To begin with, it enhances occupational stress study by preempting disclosure-related anxiety as a specific psychological consequence in high stress working conditions. Second, it adds more to the theory of stigma because of its implementation in occupational identities that remain under numerous academic conversations. Third, it provides a psychometrically correct tool that can be used by the researcher, organisations and policy-makers to measure and respond to disclose fear in the sales environment. In conclusion, it is imperative to understand fear of disclosure not only to promote the well-being of employees but also to promote healthier organisational cultures promoting openness, dignity and promoting psychological safety.

There is also the implication of fear of disclosure as a major aspect of organisational functioning and staff performance. Occupational stress or emotional stress can be suppressed by sales representatives, which limits the opportunity to receive support and mentoring, as well as corrective interventions. Psychological concealment can

undermine the relationship among employees and supervisors, undermine cohesion within a team, and increase the intentions to leave (Ragins, Singh, and Cornwell, 2007). In any sales setting where organisational and individual performance are based on interpersonal communication, motivation and resilience, unresolved fear and internalised stigma may undermine individual efficacy and performance within a company. Therefore, fear of being disclosed is not only an issue of personal mental condition, but also the sustainability of organisations.

In addition to this, the interaction between fear of disclosure and demographic factors, such as gender, age, and education should be systematically investigated. Gendered expectations usually place women in disproportionate emotional and social pressure in the workplace, especially in positions serving the customers (Eagly and Wood, 2012). The female sales representatives can experience increased suspicion, moral, and safety-related issues, further aggravating their fear of revealing their job or work-related stress. Similarly, the younger sales representatives, that are generally in their initial precarious job phases, might experience heightened pressure to meet the perceived social demands of success making the sharing of work related challenges particularly intimidating. Education also influences occupational identification; people with higher education might perceive that their qualification cannot fit in the sales work and develop feelings of shame, doubt and invisibility.

Although this is the reality the fear of disclosure is rarely given any organisational policies and interventions. Much of the mental health programs at work are stress management, burnout prevention, or performance enhancement, often without considering the understated psychological adversity, which are the issues of stigma and secrecy (Chib et al., 2025). Without adequate and effective measures, fear of disclosure can be hard to detect, measure, and deal with. The need to create empirically sound tools that could involve the lived experiences of the sales representatives in their socio-cultural contexts highlights this gap.

The current research addresses this call by offering a culturally based analysis on the fear of disclosure among the sales representatives working in a high pressure setting. Through intensive psychometric callings, the study guarantees that Fear of Disclosure Scale is theoretically well informed and strong (Forbes & Roger, 1999). The multidimensional nature of fear of disclosure is supported through confirmatory factor analysis using which the scale is consistent and stable is verified through reliability analyses. Moreover, the research of demographic variation increases the explanatory capacity of the construct and provides one with the information about the vulnerable subgroups of sales labor force.

Theoretically, the study contributes to the stigma and disclosure lines of research because it pushes the study to the field of occupational identities, which remain largely marginal to scholarly investigation. It enlightens us about fear of disclosure as a specific psychological construct which connects occupational stigma, emotional labour and workplace stress (Seal et al., 2025). The high-pressure sales setting fear of disclosure puts the study in appropriate position to enhance the current models of occupational stress and identity management, especially in non-Western countries where social and economic binding contribute major roles.

In practice, this study has implications, both to organisations, human resource professionals and policymakers. A validated Fear of Disclosure Scale may be used both as an instrument of diagnosis to detect hidden psychological distress among the sales representatives and as an instrument of designing interventions to help in enhancing the psychological safety and dignity at work. Fear of disclosure and negative effects of the same can be reduced through training programmes that touch on occupational stigma, promote supportive communication and help normalise seeking help behaviours. On the macro level, the empowering fear of disclosure and utilising it can help to create a healthier work environment that is more about transparency, respect, and employee well-being (Delpino et al., 2023).

Fear of letting it out is an extremely important and little understood aspect of psychological experience in extreme pressure selling. The current research will help shed light on the secret lives of sales representatives by undertaking a systematic evaluation of its structure, reliability, and demographic differences. Conceptualizing the idea of fear of disclosure does not only enhance academic knowledge but also provides viable channels on the enhancement of the psychological and interpersonal status of selling. By posing this question, this study highlights the fact that silence in the workplace is not only the lack of voice, but most times is a reaction to fear, stigma and structural pressures that require actual scholarly and organisational sensitivity (Bowen & Blackmon, 2003).

1.1. Research Questions

- ☐ 1. How does the underlying factor structure of fear of disclosure among sales representatives, and does the Fear of Disclosure Scale demonstrate adequate construct validity in a high-pressure sales environment?
- ☐ 2. To what extent does the Fear of Disclosure Scale for Sales Representatives exhibit satisfactory reliability and internal consistency at the total scale and subscale levels?
- ☐ 3. How does fear of disclosure and its key dimensions vary among sales representatives across gender, age, and educational groups?

1.2. Research Objectives

- 1. To examine the underlying factor structure of fear of disclosure among sales representatives and to establish the construct validity of the Fear of Disclosure Scale in a high-pressure sales environment.
- 2. To assess the reliability and internal consistency of the Fear of Disclosure Scale for Sales Representatives at both the total scale and subscale levels.
- 3. To investigate differences in fear of disclosure and its key dimensions among sales representatives across gender, age, and educational groups

1.3. Method of Analysis

The data analysis for the present study was conducted in multiple stages to examine the factor structure, construct validity, reliability, and demographic differences related to fear of disclosure among sales representatives. Both **AMOS (version 20.0)** and **SPSS (version 26.0)** were used to perform the statistical analyses.

1.3.1. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was employed to validate the factor structure of the Fear of Disclosure Scale for Sales Representatives that had been previously established through Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). CFA was conducted using AMOS version 20.0 to test whether the proposed two-factor model—Fear of Social Disclosure and Public Stigmatization **and** Internalized Occupational Stigma and Self-Devaluation—adequately fit the observed data.

A total sample of 340 sales representatives was used for CFA, which met the recommended sample size requirements for structural equation modeling. The maximum likelihood estimation method was applied to estimate model parameters. Model fit was evaluated using multiple goodness-of-fit indices, including the Chi-square statistic (χ^2), Chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio (χ^2/df), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI), Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI), **and** Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA).

The following criteria were used to assess model fit: CFI, TLI, and AGFI values greater than .90 were considered indicative of good fit, while RMSEA values less than .05 indicated excellent model fit. Item factor loadings of .35 or above were considered acceptable. During model refinement, modification indices were examined, and one item was removed due to high error covariance, resulting in an improved and more parsimonious final model.

1.3.2. Reliability and Internal Consistency Analysis

The reliability and internal consistency of the Fear of Disclosure Scale, **Cronbach’s alpha coefficients** were computed for the total scale and its subscales using **SPSS version 26.0**. Alpha values of .70 and above were considered acceptable indicators of internal consistency.

Cronbach's alpha, **item–total correlations** were calculated to evaluate the contribution of each item to its respective subscale. Items demonstrating satisfactory item–total correlation coefficients supported the internal consistency and homogeneity of the scale. Pearson product–moment correlation coefficients were also computed to examine the relationships between the subscales and the total scale score.

1.3.3. Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics, **including** means, standard deviations, and score ranges, were calculated for the total scale and subscales to understand the overall level of fear of disclosure among sales representatives. These statistics provided an overview of participants' responses and facilitated interpretation of group differences.

1.3.4. Inferential Statistical Analysis

To examine differences in fear of disclosure across demographic variables, **independent sample t-tests** were conducted. Gender-based comparisons were performed to assess differences between male and female sales representatives on the total scale and its sub-dimensions. Similarly, age-based comparisons were conducted between younger and middle-aged sales representatives, and education-based comparisons were carried out between participants with schooling-level and college-level education.

For each comparison, **t-values**, **p-values**, and **effect sizes (Cohen's d)** were reported to determine the statistical significance and magnitude of differences. Cohen's d values were interpreted to assess the practical significance of demographic differences in fear of disclosure

The analytical strategy combined structural equation modeling, reliability testing, descriptive analysis, **and** inferential statistics to comprehensively address the research questions. This multi-step approach ensured that the Fear of Disclosure Scale for Sales Representatives was psychometrically sound and that meaningful demographic variations in fear of disclosure were systematically examined. Analysis

3.4. Phase IV: Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Internal Consistency of Fear of Disclosure Scale for Sale Representative

It was aimed to confirm the factor structure of the indigenous scale of Fear of Disclosure Scale for Sale Representatives in the context of Pakistan. So, the final items of the scale were analyzed by using Amos 20.0 version for confirmatory factor analysis. To find out the reliability and internal consistency of the scale, Cronbach alpha, items scale total correlation and items sub scales correlations were calculated by using SPSS 26 version.

3.4.1. Sample

For the confirmatory factor analysis $N= 340$ sale representatives were recruited and above mention inclusion and exclusion criteria were followed.

3.4.2. Instrument

3.4.2.1. Fear of Disclosure Scale-Sale Representatives

Fear of Disclosure Scale- Sale Representative developed in the perspective of Pakistan, and based on qualitative interviews and literature. It consists of 37 items, which are well defined and retrieved during exploratory factor analysis. It measures Fear of Social Disclosure and Public Stigmatization (1 to 26) and Internalized Occupational Stigma and Self-Devaluation (27 to 37). 5 points Likert format was used for rating (1= *strongly disagree*, 2= *disagree*, 3=*neutral*, 4= *agree* and 5= *strongly agree*).

3.4.2.2. Procedure

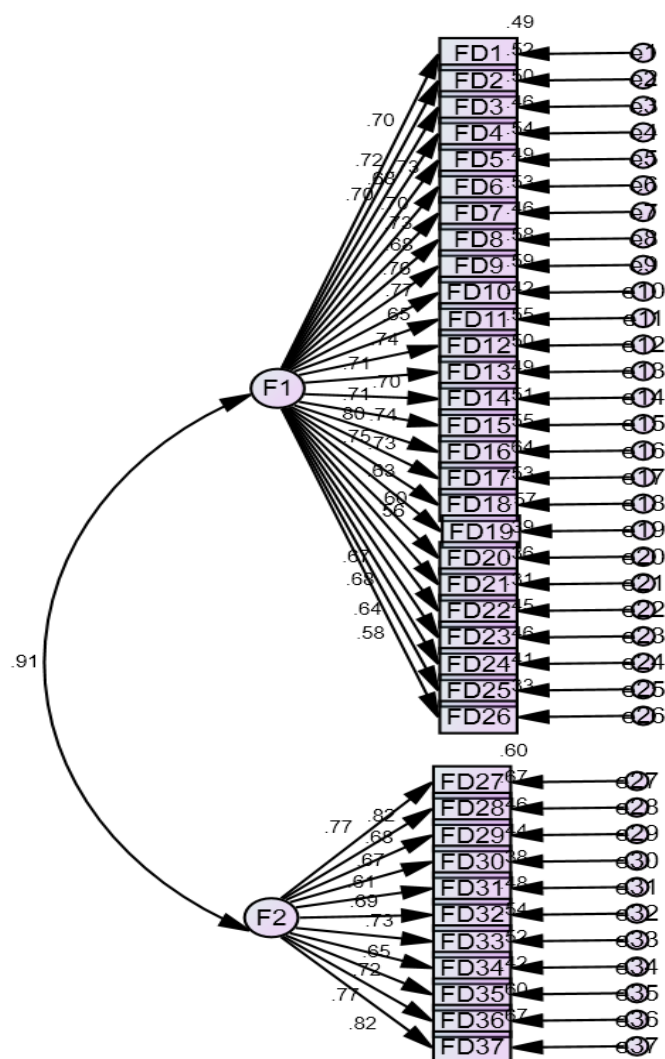
Prior to administration of the scale, total 340 sale representatives (170 male and 170 females) were contacted in person through different companies of Faisalabad where sale representatives were go to door to door. only 340 sale representatives agreed to complete the scale after that, their verbal consent was obtained, and time was fixed when they were available for administrating the scale. After that, consent form was signed and the sale representatives were briefed about the purpose of the study and assured that their responses would be kept confidential and they were not supposed to mention their names on the questionnaire. There was no time limit to fill the questionnaire and it approximately took 15 to 25 minutes to read and respond the items of scale. Further, they were told that there was no right or wrong answers. The data were analyzed by using Amos 20.0 version.

3.4.3. Confirmatory Factor Analysis

In order to confirm the factor structure of the scale, the confirmatory factory analysis was run by using AMOS version 20.0. McDonald and Ringo (2002) reported different indices and criteria for the analysis that was used to describe the best model fit including: comparative fit index (CFI), Adjusted goodness of fit (AGFI), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and Tucker–Lewis index (TLI). Further, Bentler (1990) and Browne and Cudeck (1993) given criteria was used for the interpretation of the indices root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA < .05). Adjusted goodness of the fit index (AGFI) greater >.90 (Joreskog & Sorborn, 1989), Tucker–Lewis index (TLI) >.90 and Comparative fit index (CFI)>.90 (Bentler, 1990) were used.

Figure 3

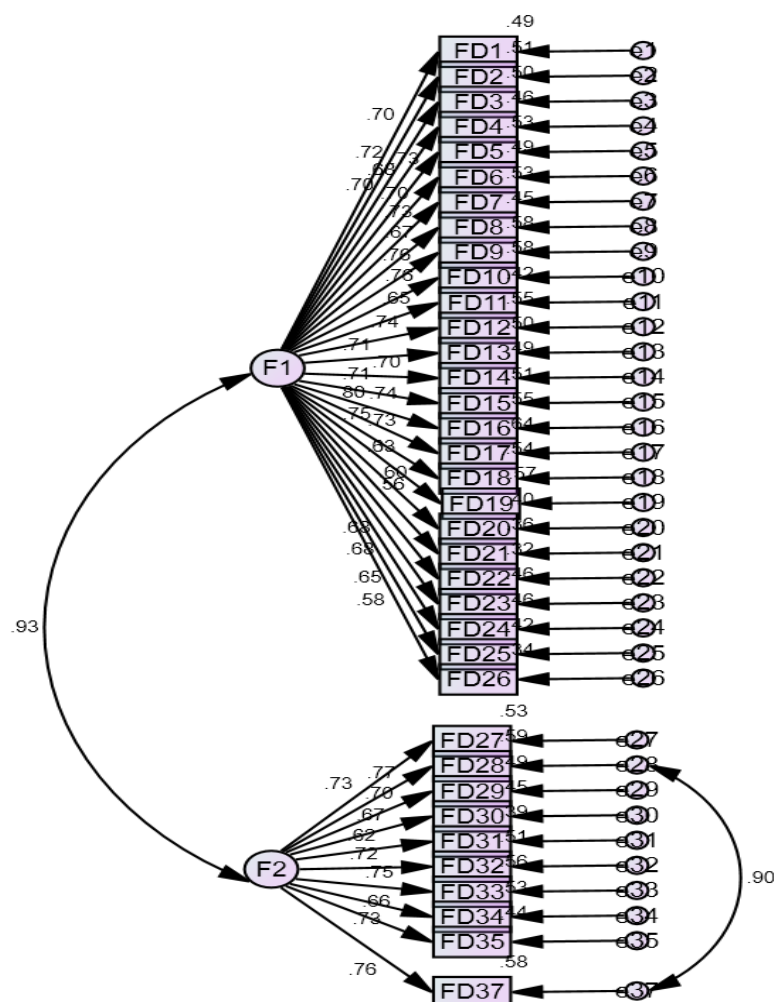
Initial Model Testing of Fear of Disclosure Scale for Sale Representatives



Note. Confirmatory factor analysis of the initial two factors structure model of indigenous constructed Fear of Disclosure Scale for Sale Representatives. Factor 1 = Fear of Social Disclosure and Public Stigmatization, Factor 2= Internalized Occupational Stigma and Self-Devaluation

Figure 4

Final Model of Fear of Disclosure Scale for Representatives



Note. Confirmatory factor analysis of the final, two factors structure model of indigenous constructed Fear of Disclosure Scale for Sale Representative, with good item loading on each factor, for testing fear among sale representatives. In factor 2 one item (36) were deleted due to the high modification indices value for making model fit indices.

Figure 3 is reporting the initial structure of two factors of scale and Figure 4 reports the final findings for two factors structure of Fear of Disclosure Scale for Sale Representatives. Results support the distinctiveness of sub scales and factor loadings of items are above .40.

Table 5

The Factor Loading of Confirmatory Factor Analysis for Fear of Disclosure Scale for Sale Representatives (N=340)

Old item Nos.	New/final Nos.	item	Factors I Fear of Social Disclosure	II Internalized Occupational Stigma
1	1		.70	
2	2		.72	
3	3		.78	
4	4		.68	
5	5		.73	
6	6		.70	
7	7		.70	
8	8		.67	
9	9		.76	
10	10		.76	
11	11		.65	
12	12		.74	
13	13		.71	
14	14		.70	
15	15		.71	
16	16		.80	
17	17		.74	
18	18		.75	
19	19		.73	
20	20		.62	
21	21		.69	
22	22		.56	
23	23		.68	
24	24		.68	
25	25		.65	
26	26		.58	
27	27			.77
28	28			.73
29	29			.76
30	30			.67
31	31			.62
32	32			.72

33	33	.75
34	34	.66
35	35	.73
37	36	.76

Note. Old items are the items numbers after EFA and the new items are the items retained after CFA. Total one items have been deleted after CFA. So, the remaining 36 items are the retained. We assign them new numbers, so that items become more understandable for further analysis.

Table 6

Model Fit Indices of CFA for Fear of Disclosure Scale for Sale Representative (N=340)

Models	X ²	Df	X ² /df	P	GFI	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
Initial Model	512.43	492	2.25	.000	.91		.87	.05
Final Model	385.48	286	2.07	.000	.94		.94	.03

Table 5, 6 and Figure 3, 4 represent the findings of factor loading and model fit indices of CFA for Fear of Disclosure Scale for Sale Representatives. The initial criteria for the item loading is $>.35$, the model obtained through EFA was examined in CFA, where 1 item (36) were deleted due to high modification indices and overall factor structure showed good model fit. The final obtained model consists of 36 items which reveals a good model fit (chi-square = 385.4 ($df=286$); $p < .001$; chi-square/ $df= 2.07$; RMSEA =.03; GFI =.94; CFI = .94; TLI = .93). Generally, a good model fit requires a non-significant chi-square; however, when dealing with a large data set, the value of chi-square is mostly significant. In such cases, Hatcher and Barends (1996) suggests that a model that has a value less than 3, when the value of chi-square is divided by the degrees of freedom, is a good fit. So, it is 2.07 which comes under the acceptable range. Further, RMSEA should be below .05, which is .03 it showing a good fit model and in recommended range.

3.4.4. Reliability Analysis

In this step, internal consistency of the final 21 items scale obtained after CFA was calculated.

Table 7

Means, Standard Deviations, Alpha Reliabilities and Correlation Matrix of Total and Subscales of Fear of Disclosure Scale for Sale Representatives(N=340).

Variables	Rang		<i>a</i>
	Potential	Actual	

<i>D</i>							
1.FOS						26-110	26-130
D	6	---		7.38	2.4		87
2.IOS						10-45	10-50
	0	90**	----	3.49	.57		89
3.Tota						36-160	36-180
l Scale	6	92**	86**	---	0.88	0.1	91

Note. FOSD= Fear of Social Disclosure, IOS= Internalized Occupational Stigma.
**p<.01.

Table 7 represents the Cronbach alpha of the subscale of the scale ranges from .87 to .91. Further, the Pearson's product moment coefficient of correlation was run and it shows a significant positive relationship between the subscales of Fear of Disclosure Scale for Sale Representatives ($r = .90^{**}$, $r = .92^{**}$, $p < .01$) and the total scale ($r = .86^{**}$, $p < .01$).

Average scores on sub scales and total scale indicate that sale representatives undergo through high level of Fear of disclosure about their job.

Table 8

Item-total Correlations for Three Subscales of Fear of Disclosure Scale for Sale Representatives (N=340)

Item no's		<i>r</i>
Factor 1	1	.69
	2	.71
	3	.70
	4	.68
	5	.72
	6	.70
	7	.72
	8	.66
	9	.74
	10	.72
	11	.62
	12	.71
	13	.68
	14	.67
	15	.69
	16	.71
	17	.77

18		.71
19		.73
20		.61
21		.58
22		.55
23		.65
24		.66
25		.62
26		.57
Factor 2	27	.75
28		.69
29		.64
30		.66
31		.61
32		.66
33		.70
34		.69
35		.62
36		.74

Table 8 shows good item total correlations between all the items of two subscales of Fear of Disclosure Scale for Sale Representatives, Factor 1 item total correlation range from .58 to .71, and Factor 2 item total correlation range from .54 to .74 It supports the consistency of the scale.

Table 9

Gender Differences on Total and Subscales of Fear of Disclosure Scale for Sale Representatives (N=340)

	Male (n=170)		Female (n=170)		t(170)		Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD		p	
Total Scale	71.31	6.92	110.4	31.7	-15.69	.000	.68
FOSD	51.55	4.59	83.21	22.07	-18.30	.000	.52
IOS	19.75	3.18	27.23	10.44	-8.92	.000	.51

Note. FOSD= Fear of Social Disclosure, IOS= Internalized Occupational Stigma

***p<.001.

Table 9 shows the results of Independent sample t- test analysis. Female score significantly higher on all sub scales and total scale of Fear of Disclosure Scale for Sale Representatives (Fear of Social Disclosure ($M(SD)= 83.21(22.07)$, $t=-15.69$, $p<.001$; Internalized Occupational Stigma ($M(SD)= 27.23(10.44)$, $t= -8.92$, $p<.001$ and total scale of FODS-SR ($M(SD)= 110.4(31.7)$, $t= -15.69$, $p<.001$) as compared to male sale representatives. So results show that females experience higher fear of disclosure as compared to male. The values of Cohen's- d ranging from .51-.68 indicate that gender has significant impact on fear of disclosure among sale representatives.

Table 10

Age Difference on Total and Subscales of Fear of Disclosure Scale for Sale Representatives (N=340)

	Young aged (n=179)	Middle aged (n=161)				
	M	M	SD	$t(340)$	p	Cohen's d
	SD					
Total Scale	31.70		28.31	1.32	.18	.16
	2.93	8.60				
FOSD	23.54		21.20	.96	.33	.03
	8.49	6.15				
IOS	9.05		7.89	2.14	.03	.23
	4.43	2.45				

Note. FOSD= Fear of Social Disclosure, IOS= Internalized Occupational. $p^{**}<.01$.

Table 10 shows the result of independent t-test analysis. Results indicate that there are significant difference between younger aged group sale representatives and middle aged on Fear of Social Disclosure, Internalized Occupational Stigma and on total score of Scale. However, value of Cohen's d (.23) indicates that impact of age of sale representative on their level of fear of disclosure is small.

Table 11

Mean Differences on Total Scale and Subscales of Fear of Disclosure Scale for Sale Representatives in terms of Education Groups (N=340)

	Schooling (n=82)		Colleg (n=203)		<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>t</i>	
Total Scale	93.20	30.52	27.21	2.80	.03
FOSD	69.33	22.75	19.72	3.18	.01
IOS	23.86	8.68	8.03	1.54	.12

Note. FOSD= Fear of Social Disclosure, IOS= Internalized Occupational. *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

Result of independent t-test analysis in table 11, indicates that only total scale score and fear of social disclosure is significantly show the differences among the two groups with reference to education on two subscales of Fear of Disclosure Scale for Sale Representatives.

4. Analytical Discussion

The inherent analytical stage not only provides a critical evaluation of the psychometric qualities of Fear of Disclosure Scale among Sales Representatives (FODS-SR) but also renders valuable information regarding the operationalization of the disclosure anxiety in high pressure sales situation in Pakistan. The discussion has incorporated confirmatory factor analysis, reliability test and demographic comparisons, thus, interpreting the findings based on the purpose of the study and the general literature on occupational stigma, disclosure, and work stress.

The two factor structure of disclosure anxiety among the sales representative suggested and tested in the confirmatory factor analysis well supports the theory, including Fear of Social Disclosure and Public Stigmatization (FOSD) and Internalized Occupational Stigma and Self-Devaluation (IOS). The original model, which was based on preliminary exploratory studies, had a satisfactory fit but thus the process of refinement, by dropping a single item, which had high modification index, led to a substantially better final model. Final specifications passed exemplary fit indices (CFI =.94, TLI =.93, GFI =.94, RMSEA =.03, /df =2.07), and all the indices fall under the acceptable thresholds of acceptable model fit.

The following results verify that disclosure anxiety is a multidimensional construct, and a combination of externally directed fears concerning social judgment and stigma and internally directed mechanisms, including self-devalue and internalized occupational stigma. The uniqueness of the two factors in combination with strong factor loading (all above .40) shows the fact that the experience of fear of disclosure cannot be turned into a single undifferentiated phenomenon. Rather, it is an active relationship between what society thinks of sales work, and how people feel about it on the inside. This observation is in line with the theoretical views about stigma and disclosure which focus on how expectations of external response and internalized negative beliefs are central elements of concealment stress.

The credibility of FODS-SR is also based on the reliability analysis. Cronbach alpha coefficients of the total (.91) and subscales (.87 FOSD and .89 IOS) are above the normal psychometric coefficient values, which demonstrates a high level of internal consistency. The item-total correlations of both factors are within the acceptable to strong levels and this indicates that each item makes a significant contribution to the individual subscale. The high positive correlations among the subscales and the total scale once again adds weight to the fact that despite conceptual differences, FOSD and IOS are directly interrelated items that are part of a larger disclosures fear construct. This relation is theoretically significant because people who are afraid of being socially judged are also prone to internalize negative job evaluation and therefore bolster self-depreciation and emotional distress.

The results obtained on overall reliability indicate that FODS-SR is a psychometrically sound tool that can be used in research and practice. Notably, it can gain greater relevance and sensitivity to local occupational reality due to the nature of its formation in Pakistani socio-cultural environment, which provides a much-needed solution to the current absence of disclosure and stigma measures, which are largely designed in Western settings.

Descriptive statistics indicate a rather high level of mean scores of both subscales and the scale on the whole that fear of disclosure is the experience that is salient and widespread among sales representatives. Such observation leads to the assumption that the exigencies of high-pressure sales employment go beyond performance standards and include significant psychological stress factors that have to do with the processes of social devaluation and stigmatizing labeling. The higher rates of fear of disclosure prove the assumption that salesmen often use silence and concealment as stressors that protect against the direct social approval but at the same time, lead to the stress and emotional tension in the long run.

The presence of fear of disclosure confirms the need to investigate occupational stress outside the traditional measures like workload of burnout. Fear of exposure is a more intricate but equally heavy burden of psychological stress, based on the control of identity and social assessment, and not exclusively on task requirements.

Some of the most vivid outcomes of the research are made related to gender-based comparisons. The levels of fear of disclosure were found to be significantly higher among the female sales representatives in the subscales and the overall scale compared to their male counterparts, with medium and large levels of effect. These findings indicate that gender has an enormous effect on the modeling of disclosure-related fears in sales settings.

This tendency may be explained within the frames of the wider socio-cultural environment where women who work in customer facing high stress position, and commission-based sales jobs face an increase in backlash, scorn, and the susceptibility of their safety. Women are under increased pressure to hide their work or emotional troubles in cultures where gender norms strictly govern the behavior of the public and the occupational propriety. The increased rates of social disclosure fear and internalized stigma of female sales representatives suggest that the gendered nature of relations and expectations of the individual in the sales profession exacerbates the psychological pressure of sales work.

By extension, the findings underscore the urgency to adopt gender sensitive organizational policies and interventions which can mitigate the gender specific issues that women in sales positions experience especially in those contexts where occupational stigma collide with prevailing founded gender norms.

The age comparisons showed statistically significant differences in some of the fear of disclosure dimensions, especially internalized occupational stigma but the effect sizes were rather low. This designation raises the argument that, as much as disclosure anxiety is also affected by age, the effect is relatively less associated with age compared to gender.

The younger salespeople will be exposed to greater fears of being exposed because of the instability of their careers, amount of social pressure to achieve success and the inability to know their occupational identity. Conversely, the middle-aged salespeople might have learnt coping skills or older salespeople might have grown more comfortable with their work in old age. The insignificance of the effect sizes also confirms that fear of disclosure cuts across age groups, even though it reinforces its structural nature as a phenomenon that is embedded, not limited to a particular stage of life.

4.1. Educational Differences in Fear of Disclosure

Educational comparisons revealed significant differences in overall fear of disclosure and fear of social disclosure, with sales representatives having lower educational

attainment reporting higher levels of fear. This finding highlights the role of **educational status as a marker of social value and occupational legitimacy**.

Individuals with lower education may experience greater vulnerability to stigma and social judgment, making them more likely to fear disclosure of their occupation. Conversely, those with higher education may possess greater social capital or communication resources that buffer against overt stigma, although internal conflicts about occupational mismatch may still exist. The absence of significant differences on internalized occupational stigma suggests that self-devaluation may be widespread across educational groups, reflecting the broader societal devaluation of sales work.

4.2. Integrative Interpretation

Taken together, the findings demonstrate that fear of disclosure among sales representatives is **multidimensional, reliable, and socially patterned**. The validated two-factor structure captures both the external and internal dimensions of disclosure-related fear, while demographic analyses reveal how this fear is shaped by gender, age, and education. The results underscore that fear of disclosure is not merely an individual psychological issue but a reflection of broader social hierarchies, occupational stigma, and structural inequalities embedded within high-pressure sales environments.

5. Conclusion

The current research was focused on investigating fear of disclosure among sales representatives who work in high-stress sales settings, which is a psychological phenomenon that has been hard to notice despite equal depth on the impact that this has on the well-being of the employees and how it affects the functioning of a company. The research used to fill an important gap in the research topic by relying on stigma theory, disclosure processes and the literature on occupational stress, by conceptualizing fear of disclosure as a multi dimensional construct and by empirically validating a culturally based measuring instrument in the Pakistani context. The combination of serious psychometric analysis with demographic comparisons provides an all-encompassing knowledge of the correlation of silence, stigma, and stress in sales jobs.

One of the main contributions of the study is that the underlying factor structure of fear of disclosure is confirmed. The confirmatory factor analysis revealed two factor models, namely, Fear of Social Disclosure and Public Stigmatization; Internalized Occupational Stigma and Self-Devaluation. This framework highlights how fear of disclosure works both externally and internally. On the one hand, salespersons dread to be subjected to adverse social experiences and condemnation, respect loss should they be exposed to their work life challenges. Conversely, the constant exposure to the social devaluation process makes people internalize these negative images and as a result, the individual becomes self-doubting, loses self-esteem, and endures emotional pain. This two-dimensional structure is confirmed, proving that the fear of disclosure is not merely a

unique and scanty-looking issue at heart, but rather a complicated psychological process informed by social conditions and individual sense-making.

Construct validity of the Fear of Disclosure Scale among Sales Representatives was also distilled into an acceptable model fit index as established in confirmatory factor analysis. Further development of the model that incorporated dropping of one item with a large loadings of the modification index led to a parsimonious and theoretically consistent scale with strong factor loadings. These results testify that the scale successively reflects the experience of sales representatives and is appropriate in the measurement of fear of disclosure in stressful high-sales settings. Notably, the effective validation of this scale in a non-Western setting deals with the long-standing issues in occupational psychology on the excessive use of Western-based instruments that might not necessarily indicate the reality of socio-cultural situations in the developing countries.

The reliability analysis was an extra proof of the scale strength. The presence of high Cronbach alpha coefficients on the subscales, as well as the total scale, showed a high internal consistency and good item-total correlation analyses proved that the individual items were meaningfully related to their corresponding dimensions. The exceptionally significant positive relationships between sub scales and the overall scale further indicate that fear of social disclosure as well as internalized occupational stigma is a closely related concept and yet distinct level of the same construct. All these findings support the idea that the Fear of Disclosure Scale among Sales Representatives is a psychometrically valid tool that can be effectively utilized in the future research and applied practice.

In addition to the scale validation, the study results provide an insight into the frequency and location of fear of disclosure among sales representatives. Descriptive statistics showed that both subscales as well as the overall scale showed relatively high mean scores which suggests that fear of disclosure constitutes a widespread and important experience in high-pressure sales work. This observation supports the claim that the conditions that sales representatives have to work with are rather conducive to silence, rather than transparency, especially in situations where sales occupation is stigmatized socially or seen to be unstable. These silences can serve as a coping strategy at one level, and at another, enhance psychological stress and isolation.

The analysis of the demographic disparity brought valuable information about the unequally distributed experience of fear of disclosure between the social groups. Gender-based analysis showed that female sales representatives exhibited a substantial more fear of disclosure on the subscales and overall scale, in relationship to their male colleagues. This is consistent with more general literature about gendered occupational experiences, which indicates that women in such customer-facing and vulnerable jobs as workers can be viewed as subject to the increased scrutiny, moral judgment, and vulnerability. In cultures where gender is a major influence on perceptions of decency and security, female

representatives of the sales team might feel even more compelled to hide the fact about their job or emotional hardships, meaning that the fear of the latter is even greater.

Comparisons between the ages showed some statistically significant differences in some dimensions of fear of disclosure but the effect sizes were relatively small. This is an indication that even though age is relevant in the formulation of fears related to disclosures, it might not have that significant influence as compared to other variables like gender or education. Younger sales representatives can be able to be frightened with the disclosure because they have uncertainty in their career and they also reach social expectation of achievement, but on the other hand middle aged people could develop adaptive strategies with a passage of time. However, even minor age changes emphasize the role of the focus on a career stage in the analysis of psychological experiences in sales work.

The difference in education also created images of social construction of fear of disclosure. Sales reps with lower levels of education exhibited very high ranking of fear of social disclosure and general fear of disclosure than the sales reps with higher education levels. The research result indicates the contribution of educational status in the occupational identity and perceived social value. The less educated individuals might feel even more insecure and socially vulnerable hence being more prone to stigma and judgement. On the other hand, the more educated might withdraw into internal struggle when the sales work seems to be incompatible with their education, but this strain was not such a significant issue in the current data.

Collectively, these demographic trends are used to emphasize that the fear of disclosure is not only a psychological characteristic persistently within an individual but are socially structured experience subject to gender norms, educational hierarchies, and structural inequalities. The findings administer a case to consider specialized interventions in order to consider these variations as opposed to using a one-size-fits all approach to the well-being of employees.

Theoretically, the paper is a step toward the insight of occupational stigma and disclosure because it forwards the fear of disclosure as a particular construct that lies at the conjuncture of stigmatization, emotional labour, and stress at work. It is the expansion of older models because it shows that the disclosure-related fears are not exclusive to identities most commonly examined, including mental illness or sexual orientation, but also heavily applicable to work-based identities that are not socially prestigious. The investigation presents a challenge to assumptions regarding experience of stigma and silence to which the experiences of sales representatives deserve academic attention.

The results have critical implications on the organizations, managerial actors, and policy architects. The Fear of Disclosure Scale is a strong diagnostic tool that can be used to identify latent psychological distress in sales representatives. Companies that adopt a high-pressure sales milieu can use this tool to assess the climate at the workplace, determine

whether there is or is not occupational stigma, and find interventions that aim to reduce fear and increase psychological safety. The fear of disclosure and the stress thereof can be effectively addressed through the training programs institutionalising the transparent communication, interrogating the destructive stereotypes related towards the sales work, and the supervisory practices that support and encourage the same.

On the larger scale, the research highlights the moral responsibility of organisations to identify and mitigate the unspoken plight of the salespeople. The fear of disclosure is not to be interpreted as a weakness of the individual, but as a response to the pressure of the system and depreciation in society. It is necessary to create conditions under which the employees feel respected, valued, and safe when explaining their experiences to maintain the levels of performance and well-being.

To sum up, the given exploration proves that the fear of disclosure among the sales representatives is a multidimensional, dependable, and social construct that has far-reaching consequences in relation to the psychological well-being and the organisational effectiveness. The study clarifies the existence of an occupational distress that is often hidden behind silence by confirming a culturally sensitive measurement scale and by exposing significant differences in demographics. This process of overcoming fear of disclosure is beyond the individual level, and further contribution to more inclusive, humane, and psychologically safe work environments in high-pressure sales are made.

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