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WORKPLACE GENDER EQUALITY AND LEADERSHIP SUPPORT AS PREDICTORS OF WOMEN'S CAREER ADVANCEMENT: THE JOB SATISFACTION AS MEDIATOR

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
<p>Workplace Gender Equality, Leadership Support, Job Satisfaction, Women's Career Advancement</p>	<p>This study examines the impact of workplace gender equality and leadership support on women's career advancement, with a particular focus on mediating role of job satisfaction. Grounded in Social Cognitive Career Theory & Social Exchange Theory, research investigates how organizational and leadership factors influence women's professional growth. Quantitative research design was adopted, data were collected from women employees working in various organizational settings. The findings reveal that workplace gender equality has a significant positive effect on women's career advancement by ensuring fair access to opportunities and reducing structural barriers. Similarly, the leadership support was found to play a role in enhancing career progression by providing mentorship, encouragement, and developmental opportunities. The results further indicate that job satisfaction significantly mediates the relationship amid workplace gender equality, leadership support, and career advancement, highlighting standing of employees' psychological experiences. Practically, findings suggest that organizations should implement inclusive policies and supportive leadership practices to enhance job satisfaction and promote women's advancement. Overall, the study underscores the importance of the equitable as well as supportive working environments for sustainable career development.</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <p style="text-align: right; color: purple;">2026 Gomal University Journal of Research</p>
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INTRODUCTION

The workplace gender equality has become a key issue of interest in both gender studies and business research across the globe due to growing awareness by businesses on its connection with sustainable development and performance. Although there is significant improvement, women remain systemically disadvantaged to their career opportunities such as lack of access to leadership positions, unequal remuneration & perilous stereotype of gender. Organizational

obstacles, including glass ceiling, prejudiced promotion, also limit upward mobility of women, although they might have similar qualifications and experience (Tabasum, Akhtar, Gull, Umar & Akhtar, 2025). Recent researches also emphasize that women tend to have fewer managerial supports, sponsorship, career development opportunities than men and these factors directly influence goals and progression of career. Leadership support has been very instrumental in filling such gaps because over inclusive leadership practices & fair organizational policies good working environments be achieved (Asfahani, Eskandarany, Dahlan, Ullah, Khan & Naheed, 2024).

In addition, job satisfaction has been a focus of scholarly research as one of the psychological processes in which workplace conditions are associated with career outcomes, where studies indicated that discrimination and lack of support leads to lower levels of job satisfaction and, therefore, poor career advancement (Mohammad, Abdlekhair, Bindawas, Attico, Khairalseed & Hossny, 2025). The problem of gender equality in the workplace within the Pakistani setting is entrenched within the socio-cultural practices, organization, and institutional frameworks that tend to sustain gender imbalances. The contribution of women to the working force has been growing over years; but still, there is disproportionate under-representation of women in the position of leadership and in the decision-making processes. The age-old principles of gender as well as expectations concerning family duties, along with the biases in the working environment, still restrict women in career growth and opportunity (Saleem & Mateou, 2025). In this drive, the empirical research conducted in Pakistan reveals that gender discrimination & unfavorable organizational climate adversely affect job satisfaction & professional growth of women.

Additionally, these issues are also made worse by lack of leadership support, poor work-life balance policies, and isolated networking opportunities. In this situation, the job satisfaction would be a significant mediator, since a supportive leadership and fair workplace practices can boost the engagement of women, their motivation, and future promotion opportunities. The dynamics related to gender equality and empowerment of women on the changing business environment in Pakistan can only be understood by formulating policies and organizational strategies that support these changes (Tara & Hong, 2024). Even though the concept of gender equality at workplaces is spreading globally, a huge disparity is still evident between policies and practice, especially in terms of career advancement of women. Gender-inclusive policies are officially stipulated in many organizations but still, implicit bias, lack of equal access to leadership assistance, and a paucity of mentorship still place women at a disadvantage in the workplace (Asfahani, Eskandarany & Dahlan, 2025). This lack of connection leads to decreased rate of promotion, the lack of women in top management, and the reduced career advancement opportunities.

Although previous studies have focused on the direct impact of equality and leadership in the workplace, little has been done regarding the mechanism by which two factors have an impact on career growth. Specifically, intervening effect of job satisfaction has not been well studied, and the gap in knowledge about how the experiences at the workplace can be transformed into actual career outcomes in the women is still rife (Sunaryo, Rahardian, Risgiyanti, Suyono, &

Ekowati, 2024). This issue is also compounded by strong socio-cultural values and structural barriers that limit the professional movement and development of women in Pakistan. Some of the issues faced by women include gender-related discrimination, unsupportive leadership, and insufficient opportunities to play decision-making roles and balancing between work and family matters. Such obstacles do not only impede career advancement but also have adverse job satisfaction, which results in decreased motivation, engagement, and retention (Jawahar & Hemmasi, 2006). Nevertheless, no thorough empirical investigation exists which incorporates gender equality in workplace, workplace support of leaders and job satisfaction in Pakistani business environments (Alruwaili, Alzahrani, Almater, Aldibas, Anazi, Albanyan & Alyami, 2025).

This issue should be addressed both because it is theoretically and practically important to identify the factors, which can guide the organizational policy, improve the participation of women in the workforce and promote the development of the economy and the social justice in general (Asfahani, Eskandarany & Dahlan, 2025). Theoretically, the literature has measured and discussed the gender equality in workplace, gender leadership support, and advancement of the career of women as independent or as having direct connections. Nevertheless, there is a paucity of incorporating these variables in one extensive construct, especially in explanation of how organizational practices are interrelated with career outcomes (Liu, Shen & Gao, 2020). In this connection, though some studies agree on the significance of the psychological factors, the mediating effect of the job satisfaction has not been adequately theorized and experimentally examined on gender equality and leadership support concurrently in diverse situations (Tara & Hong, 2024). Also, most of the available research is based on the western settings, which might not be sufficient to describe the socio-cultural issues affecting career of women in developing nations.

This leaves a theoretical gap in putting into perspective combination of organizational support & equality programs with individual-level experiences, including job satisfaction, to influence career advancement in various cultural backgrounds (Gajić, Petrović, Radovanović, Vuković, Dimitrovski & Yakovenko, 2021). In the pragmatic perspective, companies tend to introduce gender equality policies and leadership development programs without necessarily knowing working potential to enhance gender advancement of women in their career. Evidence-based strategies are not provided to back up the idea on how the leadership support can positively contribute towards job satisfaction & consequently, career progression amid women (Terpstra, Treviño, Yaman, Froese, Ralston, Bozionelos, Tjemkes, Darder & Li, 2025). This disparity is even stronger in situations such as Pakistan because there is little localized research that would inform organizational practice and policy-making. Most organizations do not have a formal mentorship program, inclusive leadership development, and favorable working environments that accommodate women. Consequently, the interventions can be non-effective due to being symbolic.

The practical gap that needs to be addressed is critical to designing the specific organizational policies and leadership practices that can not only enhance gender equality but make women

more satisfied at their jobs and thus build sustainable careers (Isiaka, Shodiya, & Busari, 2025). The study is very crucial academically and practically in general, especially in gender studies and business management. On the academic level, it adds to body of knowledge that already exists on subject matter by combining the workplace gender equality, leadership support, and career advancement of women into a single framework, as it also incorporates job satisfaction as a mediating variable. In this way, the research will go beyond the conventional direct-effect models and will give a in-depth insight into the psychological mechanisms that drive career advancement. They are especially applicable to the Pakistani context where they can be used as the source of reforming the organization and institute policy interventions that foster gender equity, enhance workforce involvement, and lead towards the overall economic and societal development.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the impacts of workplace gender equality on women's career advancement.
2. To analyze the effects of leadership support towards the women's career advancements.
3. To investigate the mediating role of job satisfaction in relationship between workplace gender equality, leadership support, and women's career advancement.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Workplace Gender Equality & Women's Career Advancement

Gender equality in workplace means that there are equal opportunities to be employed, receive remuneration, training, promotion, and other decisions that are based on gender. This variable in the literature is closely correlated with the promotion of women in their careers as inequality is commonly perpetuated by discriminatory appraisals, avoidance of powerful networks, and lack of promotion ladders. A new systematic study of gender imbalance in workplace indicates that inequality is still prevalent in areas of compensation, leadership measured, work-family judgments, and employee turnover, which determines the long-term mobility of the women in companies (Ibrahim et al., 2025). This relationship is well explained by social role theory which holds the view that societies ascribe communal roles to women and agentic ones to men and hence leadership and higher authority are more a male attribute and thus something women are not supposed to be. Consequently, even well-qualified women can be doubted with respect to their expertise or their ambition. The studies on obstacles to women in workplaces indicate that gender stereotypes remain in way of reaching leadership roles, which supports notion that equality at work is not merely an issue of fairness but shaping factor of career (Aldabagh et al., 2026).

Career development approach further substantiates this point of view as the Social Cognitive Career Theory reveals that career development is partly reliant on ability and partly contingent on contextual matters of support and hindrances of self-efficacy, expectations of outcome and career aspirations (Hashmi, Arshad & Ibrahim, 2023). The women who work in organizations where promotion stipulations are clear, opportunities are merit-based & discrimination issues are aggressively addressed tend to think that they can and should be promoted. On contrary,

they are unequal systems undermine trust and limit ambitions even before formal promotion is received. In a recent study of women development in managerial context, explicit reference is made to social cognitive career theory to demonstrate that development of women depends on themes that repeat like barriers to development, supports & identity-related expectations in organization.

Empirical studies on the progression of women in the management position also discover that organizational structure, mentoring systems and developmental support are key determinants that influence the movement to senior job positions. Practically, the research has some useful implications to the organization, policy makers, and human resource practitioners. It bargains evidence-based solutions that could inform creation of effective workplace policies, leadership practices, and gender-inclusive strategies that would contribute to the further improvement of female career advancement. In this connection, the study informs organizations on how to provide conducive environments that promote motivation, retention and professional growth by female employees by putting emphasis upon leadership support and job satisfaction. The evidence of job promotion opportunities of women in South Asia has also been reported to have been lower than that of men, meaning that both the women advantageous experience and qualification can be subdued by the unequal workplace systems (Machorro & Trujillo-Reyes, 2025).

Leadership Support & Women's Career Advancement

The significant predictor of career growth in women is leadership support since the choices that determine career development such as visibility, mentoring, developmental assignments, sponsorship, and access to strategic projects are in control of supervisors and top leaders. The literature is becoming more supportive of view of supportive leadership as something beyond interpersonal benevolence; it is an institutional resource which is decisive of in which talent is identified and in which career is climbed. The Social Exchange Theory is particularly handy in this case because it suggests that employees will be motivated to be positive in case leaders offer them trust, support, and resources that they appreciate. In case of women, this support can offset the exclusionary norms by indicating legitimacy, belonging and career possibilities (Patel & Singh, 2026). The arguments supporting gender equity lead by leaders suggest that leaders are critical in creating an environment that promotes promotion of women especially when they advocate against bias and support the idea of an equitable development in diverse contexts.

The research on career progression of women also indicates that mentorship, development of leadership and support on career is linked to better results of progress. Therefore, leadership support is not peripheral; it usually defines whether formal equality policies are translated into actual promotion and career progression (Ibrahim et al., 2025). Organizational Support Theory can also be used to explain the interest of support of leadership in regard to progress. Due to the fact that, in most cases, supervisors will be viewed as, agents of organization, their actions say whether women are truly appreciated or just tokens. When women see genuine support by leaders, they will tend to view organization as invested in development and thus commitment,

interest, and persistence in challenging career paths may be enhanced. Combined, the previous studies on the perceived organizational support of women development found that the failure to support the rise of women is linked to poor retention outcomes, showed that the support is focal point as organizational intent is decoded into daily career opportunity, and, thus, making it an important antecedent of women in relation to upward mobility in businesses (Gudei et al., 2025).

Job Satisfaction as a Mediator

This mediating solution by job satisfaction can be explained in the light of Two-Factor Theory of Herzberg and other related motivational theories which argue that when employees get to perform meaningful work, recognition, fairness, growth and enabling conditions the outcome is satisfaction (Ibrahim et al., 2025). In terms of gender equality in the workplace environment, women tend to feel satisfied when they feel that systems of promotion are fair, promotion prospects are realistic and that they are treated with dignity in the workplace. This is important since job satisfaction is not merely an emotional condition, but also influences commitment, perseverance, performance, and desire to invest in long-term career within company (Arshad, 2023). The results of research on the perceived gender equality indicate that the job satisfaction of women is associated with their evaluation of the promotion opportunities and gender equity in top of the organizations. The existence of more cross-national research on the gender-job-satisfaction paradox that also suggests that gendered workplace conditions influence the way women rate their occupations is further supported by the findings of gender-job-satisfaction paradox.

Along this line, gender equality can have an implication on career mobility of women through enhanced job satisfaction, which consequently enhances desire to stay, compete and develop in organizational hierarchies (Ranasinghe et al., 2026). The same mediating logic is relevant in the case of leadership support. The social exchange theory implies that employees will form more positive attitudes by offering positive feedback, encouraging and inclusion, and developing chances to their leaders. Empirical research always links strong leader-member relationships and organizational perceived support to an increase in job satisfaction. It has been revealed that leader-member exchange is positively related to job satisfaction, other studies have proven that organization support enhances satisfaction and other related types of employee welfare. The evidence indicates same pattern in Pakistan: organizational support and perceived work environment have been established to have an impact on job satisfaction among employees working in healthcare organizations, and more recent studies on Pakistani nurses indicate that the nexus between transformational leadership and job satisfaction is positive (Shouman et al., 2026).

Theoretical Framework

The present research is based on the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) that gives a very broad explanation of the interaction between personal, behavioral, and environmental factors in the process of determining career outcomes of individuals. SCCT proposes that workplace contextual supports and barriers define career advancement not only on the basis of skills or

qualification but also largely. Gender equality and leadership support in the workplace are as the environmental factors, which are critical in the context of this study, and they influence the self-efficacy, the expectations of outcomes, and career aspiration of women (Azizov, 2026). In case women feel fairly treated and offered equal opportunities and supportive leadership, they will have more confidence in potentials and seek advanced jobs. In contrast, sex discrimination and unsupportive environment can lower the motivation and career ambitions. The option of job satisfaction as a mediating variable, because positive experience of being in the workplace increases extent of psychological engagement and strengthens behavioral patterns related to profession, will eventually lead to the promotion of women into a higher position (Wang et al., 2022).

Moreover, the Social Exchange Theory (SET) has offered a powerful theoretical basis to the comprehension of contribution of leadership support and job satisfaction in an organizational context. According to this theory, employee-organization relationships are founded on mutual exchange, i.e. when leaders treat employees positively, they will have positive attitudes and behavior towards their loyal organizations. Leadership support is also a resource in this study that provides an indication of recognition, trust and value to the women employees within an organization (Ibrahim et al., 2025). Women respond by giving job satisfaction, commitment, and engagement when their leaders offer mentorship, encouragement, and level opportunities. This good exchange relationship makes them more willing to put more efforts in their careers and stay in the organization, thus making it more likely to be promoted (Riad et al., 2025). Consequently, the mediating aspect of the social exchange theory can be used to explain the relationship between job satisfaction and better career outcomes among women in respect to the supportive leadership as well as the ability to engage in more equitable practices in the workplace.

Research Hypotheses

- H1: Workplace gender equality has significant effect upon the women's career advancements.
- H2: The leadership support has a significant positive effect on women's career advancements.
- H3: Job satisfaction mediates amid workplace gender equality & women career advancement.
- H4: Job satisfaction mediates between leadership support and women's career advancements.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design in this study is quantitative, which is aimed at investigating the existence of relationships between gender equality in the workplace, leadership support, job satisfaction, and career development of women. The cross-sectional method is chosen, whereby data is gathered at one point in time of respondents who are employed in the corporate organizations. The research philosophy is based on positivist research philosophy; this focuses on objective measurement, statistical analysis, and testing of hypothesis. This method is suitable since the research is intended to establish already known connections between variables and extrapolate the results to a wider population. It uses the deductive approach in which theories developed are social cognitive career theory and social exchange theory, that are then tested empirically. In this connection, this design provides a systematic and organized study of model proposed

whereby it is possible to identify the cause relationship amongst the research variables in the particular context and lead to credible, generalizable findings in business and gender studies environment.

The target population of the study was composed of women working in the organizations of the corporate sector in the major metropolitan cities in Pakistan, i.e. Lahore, Karachi as well as Islamabad. The reason behind the choice of these cities is that they are highly concentrated with corporate firms and have a wide workforce. The sample size is 450 female employees to account adequate representation and statistical power to analyze the data for extracting the desired information. The non-probability purposive sampling method was used, according to which the study is specifically designed and will target women with the pertinent professional experience in a corporate environment. This approach enables the researcher to obtain data of respondents who are the most appropriate to answer research objectives. The sample has been taken to cover different industries, levels, and functional areas of the organization to be able to come up with different experiences that are associated with gender equality, leader support, and career development, thus contributing to the strength and the generalizability of the study results.

The structured questionnaire obtains data by using a pretested scale that is based on the scale used in the existing literature. The scale has several items assessing gender equality at work, leadership support, job satisfaction, and women career progressions. To represent perceptions and attitudes of the respondents, a Likert scale of five points is employed. To minimize the response rates, the questionnaire is administered both online and physically to ensure that the questionnaire reaches maximum response rates in the sampled cities. A pilot study was done before the actual data collection in order to ascertain the clarity, reliability and validity of the instrument. The gathered information was examined with the help of SmartPLS (Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling) that is appropriate to test the complicated models with more than one variable and mediating items. The method permits the measurement models (reliability and validity) and structural model (hypothesis testing) to be assessed at the same time.

Table 1
Reliability Analysis

	CA	RHO_A	CR	AVE
Job Satisfaction	0.825979	0.829717	0.864015	0.5046841
Leadership Support	0.788046	0.805863	0.84719	0.5086015
Women's Career Advancement	0.872742	0.912133	0.900684	0.5689554
Workplace Gender Equality	0.877744	0.887195	0.901846	0.5044414

The statistics on reliability and validity show that all four constructs have good measurement quality. The Alpha values obtained are between 0.79 and 0.88 which are higher than the usual value of 0.70 implying the presence of good internal consistency of all constructs. On the same note, all values of rho A & Composite Reliability are over 0.80, which again is good indication of a strong reliability. The convergent validity is also supported because the values of Average

Variance Extracted (AVE) of all constructs are greater than minimum acceptable value of 0.50. Specifically, women career advancement and workplace gender equality are the most reliable and valid in terms of metrics, whereas job satisfaction and leadership support is satisfactory. All of findings suggest that the measurement model is good and shows sufficient convergent validity.

Table 2
Validity Analysis (HTMT)

	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]
Job Satisfaction [1]				
Leadership Support [2]	0.415792			
Women’s Career Advancement [3]	0.768226	0.452705		
Workplace Gender Equality [4]	0.396462	0.464099	0.39888	

The results of the HTMT (Heterotrait-Monotrait) ratio show that, discriminant validity is quite high with all constructs in the model. All the values of HTMT are lower than the recommended value of 0.85 (and even the weaker 0.90) indicating that, empirically, the constructs differ. The maximum value of HTMT is between job satisfaction and women career advancement (0.768) considered as acceptable since it shows moderate but not serious relationship. The correlations of other relationships, including leadership support and workplace gender equality (0.464), Job Satisfaction and workplace gender equality (0.396), are also relatively low, which once again proves a clear separation of constructs. All in all, these results prove that model has sufficient discriminant validity, i.e. the constructs measure various concepts but there is no significant overlap.

Figure 1
Measurement Model

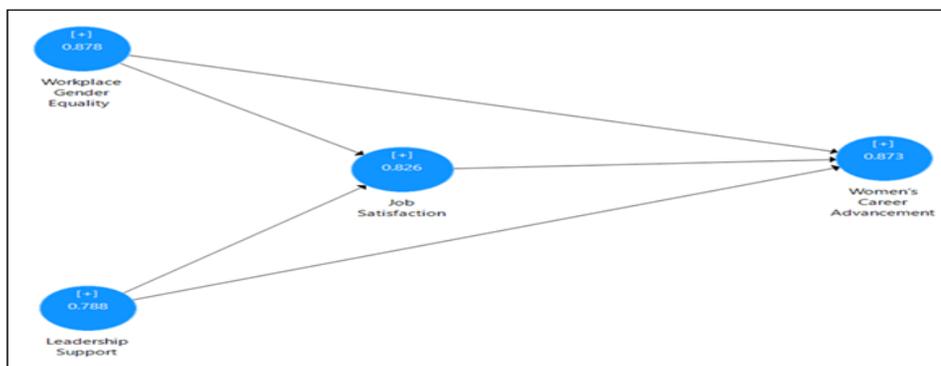


Table 3
Direct Effect

	OS	SM	SD	STDEV	PV
Job Satisfaction -> WCD	0.617083	0.615765	0.014927	41.33899	0
Leadership Support -> Job Satisfaction	0.242529	0.237351	0.045067	5.381497	0.00031

Leadership Support -> WCD	0.176916	0.179819	0.029241	6.050344	0.000124
WGE -> Job Satisfaction	0.253632	0.259868	0.050819	4.990908	0.000545
Workplace Gender Equality -> WCD	0.146425	0.148497	0.025114	5.830383	0.000166

The outcomes of structural equation model show that all direct relationships are positive and significant. Women are most affected by Job Satisfaction declining their Career Advancement ($b = 0.617, p < 0.001$) which makes it a critical predictor. Leadership Support has a significant positive impact on Job Satisfaction ($b = 0.243, p < 0.001$) and Women career Advancement ($b = 0.177, p < 0.001$) and effect is direct and indirect. On the same note, Workplace Gender Equality has positive relationship with job satisfaction ($b = 0.254, p < 0.001$), as well as women career advancement ($b = 0.146, p < 0.001$). Thus, the T-statistics are high (all bigger than 1.96) and the p-values are very low, which indicates more strong statistical significance of all these paths. Altogether, these results indicate that Leadership Support and Workplace Gender Equality are significant factors in improving Job Satisfaction that underlies Women career Advancement in turn, confirming the relationships between these factors proposed in the model in the current study.

Figure 2
Structural Equational Model

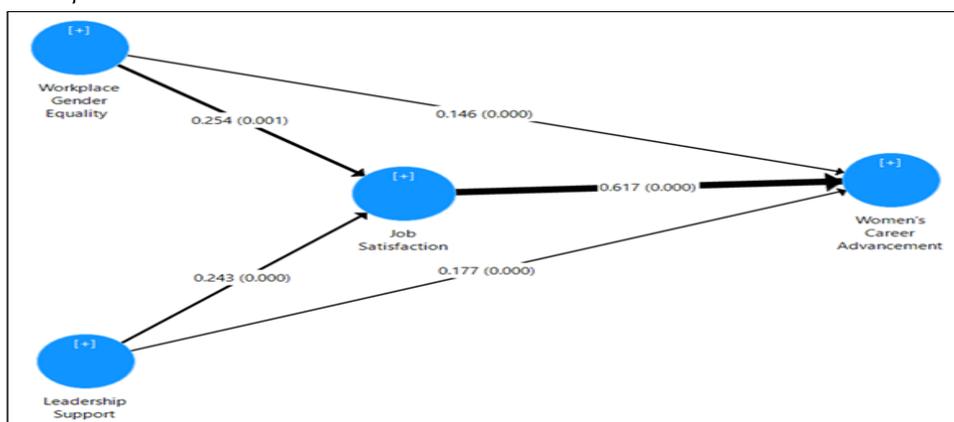


Table 4
Mediation Analysis

	OS	SM	SD	STDEV	PV
Leadership Support -> Job Satisfaction -> Women's Career Advancement	0.14966	0.145942	0.027145	5.513412	0.000257
Workplace Gender Equality -> Job Satisfaction -> WCA	0.156512	0.160172	0.032455	4.822366	0.0007

The analysis of the mediation results reveals that Job Satisfaction is an important mediator between two leadership support & workplace gender equality and women career advancement. To be more precise, the positive and significant correlation between Leadership Support and

Women Career Advancement via Job Satisfaction is directly positive ($b = 0.150$, $p < 0.001$) and is supported by the high T-statistic (5.51). On the same note, the same is also reflected in THE workplace gender equality, which indirectly influences women career advancement through job satisfaction ($b = 0.157$, $p < 0.001$; $T = 4.82$). Having the two indirect effects being statistically significant and positive, this implies that job satisfaction is key process by which organization factors positively contribute to career advancement of women. These results, in conjunction with the rather high direct impacts, suggest that Leadership Support and Workplace Gender Equality mediate Women career advancement both directly and indirectly through the Job Satisfaction.

DISCUSSION

These results of the research gave solid evidence to the first hypothesis, proving that gender equity at the workplace positively affects the career development of women significantly. The findings are consistent with the current literature, which states that unbalanced organizational designs, unjust promotional policies, and stereotypical views remain some of the factors that limit the growth of women in organization. It has been found that women are under-promoted and have fewer opportunities to advance because of the systemic inequalities, which add to the effect of the glass ceiling. The women continue to have fewer career support and opportunities to rise even with the same level of commitments as men, as reported in the world (Roth, 2017). The current results hence confirm that women have increased chances to advance their careers when organizations are just in their recruitment, promotion, and development practice. This serves theoretical assumptions that workplace structures are equal and that this directly positively increases career trajectories. The findings suggest that gender equality does not only have structural consequences, but has a psychological and behavioral impact on professional life of women.

Women feel that career development is possible when they are given equal opportunities by organizations, enhances determination and involvement in their professions. Previous studies indicate, gender discrimination and unequal assessment procedures do not give women room to assume leadership positions despite having equal qualifications. Conversely, when gender disparities are actively minimized in organizations, enabling environment is created in which women can compete equally and prove competencies. These insights can be applied to present study and its results indicate that equality leads to confidence, aspiration, and perseverance in women employees (Huang et al., 2026). It can be concluded that hypothesis gender equality at the workplace has a positive impact on career progress of women is both empirically valid and theoretically justified in organizational and gender studies perspectives. The results are also well justified by second hypothesis that suggested a positive correlation between leadership support and career growth of women. Leadership support is important aspect in determining access to chances including mentoring, sponsorship and career growth that is fundamental in advancing.

It has been empirically indicated that women who find support at the top through supervisors have increased job satisfaction and better career progression outcomes (Silva et al., 2025). In addition, occurrence of women in top leaderships has been reported to have a positive effect on

ambitions and progress of other women within organizations. The present research confirms that encouraging, recognizing, treating women fairly are such supportive leadership behaviors that have direct impact on growth of women in their professions. This explains why leadership is an essential organizational process in terms of converting equality policies into reality career outcomes. Further, the results underline the fact that leadership support can serve as structural and relational resource, improves career growth of the women. By being active in promoting inclusion and offering development opportunities, leaders will lower barriers related to gender bias & exclusion to informal networks. Research has revealed that women are not represented in leadership pipelines enough because they are not sponsored & progress is not determined by organization.

These current findings support this claim by indicating that leadership support has the ability to offset these structural shortcomings. Leaders who support women are supportive, which helps them gain critical career opportunities through trust, confidence & visibility. Hence, the theory about support that leaders provide to women and their career progression is confirmed, and the critical importance of the leaders in setting fair career opportunities in organizations is underlined (Huang et al., 2026)). The mediating analysis shows that job satisfaction is very important in the relationship between gender equality at workplace and leadership assistance to women and their career development. The results indicate that women have a higher level of job satisfaction in case they do not feel unfairly treated and their leadership is supportive, and this aspect further leads to motivation, commitment, and engagement in own professions. This relationship is supported by prior studies which show that positive work environment and supervisor support have strong association with increased job satisfaction among women employees.

Also, the job satisfaction has been found to be one of the factors that influence the employment decisions, involvement, and career decisions of women in long term (Folkerts & Bräuer, 2026). This research finding endorses the fact that job satisfaction is not only an outcome variable but vital mechanism where organizational practices determine career advancement. Moreover, the mediating nature of the job satisfaction emphasizes psychological experiences in determining career outcomes. Although inequality and leadership are structural factors that create chances, it is the perception and contentment of individual that is of the determinant to the utilization of opportunities created. The results align with studies that show that good working conditions improve well-being of employees, levels of engagement and performance, which eventually leads to career success (Mayliza & Rino, 2026). Jobs satisfaction in this study enhances the relationships between organizational support and growth in that women are more willing to stay in organization & seek growth opportunities. In this way, mediation hypothesis is proved that job satisfaction is the key connection between the working conditions and women career advancement.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, this paper furnishes extensive data that gender equality and leadership support in the workplace are most important factors that predetermine the career progress of a woman,

and job satisfaction serves as a mediating variable. The results indicate that not only do women get opportunities when there are fair organizational practices and supportive leadership but also their psychological engagement and motivation to progress are increased. In this drive, combination of structural and psychological insights in the research provides a comprehensive view of the impact of the workplace conditions on the career outcomes. The implications of the results are that, on one hand, they support the theory as well as practice by identifying the interdependence of equality, leadership, and satisfaction in the development of women in their professions.

This supports the importance of organizations going beyond the symbolic gender policies and implementing effective strategies which will combat the systemic barriers and experiences of employees. It highlights key implications on the organizations and policymakers, especially in developing settings like Pakistan. Engaging in gender equality promotion and fortifying the support systems of the leadership can greatly impact on the increase of women involvement in leadership and decision making. Also, higher retention, productivity, and career advancement of women can be achieved by enhancing job satisfaction via inclusive policies, treating women fairly, and providing them with conducive environments. Further studies can be conducted to develop on findings by incorporating more mediating and moderating factors which include organizational culture or work-life balance. The study highlights the idea that gender equality in workplace is not question of equity but a strategic requirement in success & sustainability of organization.

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