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Work without Recognition: Multi-Group Analysis of the Inferior Jobs of Rural Women vs the Essential Jobs of Urban Women in Sindh

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Abstract

Employment disparities between rural and urban women in Sindh of Pakistan are explored with respect to job quality, recognition and career opportunities. Rural women are active in the labor force more than before, but they work mostly on low paid unrecognized and informal jobs. On the other hand, urban women occupy less places but they are involved in important, recognized by all formal sector posts, for instance, education, healthcare, and corporate work. The data for the study is collected through survey questionnaire based on 5 point Likert scale and designed from closed ended questions in the form of a quantitative research design drawn from 120 urban and 120 rural working women. Since employment in both settings was fragmented, the use of snowball sampling recruited participants. The study utilizes Structural Equation Model (SEM) using Smart PLS to examine the effect of the education level, economic necessity, social and cultural constraints, and government (institutional support) on various job outcomes including job recognition, wages, quality of job, career progression, and workplace security. These factors are compared through a Multi Group Analysis (MGA) the findings show that education, as well as institutional support, promote work quality and recognition of urban women's work, but the economic necessity and social constraints constrain rural women's access to quality and recognition of their work. The study highlights the importance of policy intervention to, among other things, secure employment, ensure financial security and give recognition to rural working women.

Keywords: Rural-Urban Employment Divide**,** Job Recognition, SEM, Multi-Group Analysis (MGA)**,** Sindh, Pakistan

Introduction

Participation of women in the labor force is a major indicator of the socioeconomic development, yet, rural and urban employment are still inequitable in Sindh, Pakistan. However, women in the rural areas work at a higher rate than the women engaged in economic activities in the urban areas but they are often in low paying, informal and unrecognized work (Agha & Agha, 2021). On the

contrary, the number of women in urban setting is fewer, but they are usually employed with more stable and required jobs in education, healthcare and oil and gas sectors (Hussain, 2025). This contrast emphasizes the interaction of patriarchical norms, requirement, lack of institutional support in both settings (Fabry et al., 2022; Sharif & Khan. 2023). Even though women are an integral part of the rural economy, they are always disadvantaged due to limited access to education, freedom, and their mobility in the social process (Shakoor et al., 2021; Sarfraz et al., 2021). It is important to understand these employment disparities in order to design targeted policies that increase the job quality and security, and also economic recognition of women in Sindh.

Rural areas, for instance, are predominantly dominated by patriarchy which has dictated which occupational choices, economic opportunities available to women. Women's employment in the rural Sindh is closely linked to traditional kinship structures in such a way that they are economically dependent on their male family members and lack agency (Agha & Agha, 2021). Additionally, rural women often work unpaid or underpaid work including agricultural work, domestic service and handcraft without formal contracts or social security benefits (Pathak, 2022; Kamran, 2022). On the other hand, the exposure to education and professional training given to urban women facilitates their entry into jobs in white collar occupations with structured salaries and promotion (Makwet, 2022; Khan et al., 2022). However, even in urban settings gender based discrimination, wage disparity and work place issues prevail and prevent women to participate access fully in the economic participation (Mundhe, 2021; Reddy et al., 2021). This, therefore, is not simply determined by the availability of jobs in the rural or urban economy but is conditioned by the host of factors pertaining to social, economic and institutional realities.

Rural women are often forced to take up precarious employment and urban women much more than economically, on the basis of skills and aspirations. In rural areas, the women work out of sheer financial need and not out of professional ambition for work of low skilled that allows for minimal advancement (Shakoor et al. 2021, Bibi & Tobawal 2022). Even fewer are the urban women who manage to secure positions in managerial, administrative or technical fields, giving of job security, financial stabilities as well as social recognition (Li, 2025; Memon, 2023). The absence of structured employment policies in rural areas exacerbates economic vulnerabilities, making women susceptible to exploitative work conditions (Fapohunda, 2023; Shah et al., 2023). Conversely, urban employment is in some manner regulated with some legal securities and social benefits (Sarfraz et al., 2021; Fabry et al., 2022). Such differences not only indicate the imperative of labor market changes that rectify the disparities in the job security, wage bonus and career development opportunities of women in Sindh. The research design of this study is quantitative and illustrates the use of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) by means of Smart PLS to analysis disparities in employment between rural and urban women in Sindh. Because the research aims to address following research objectives, a Multi-Group Analysis (MGA) is conducted to compare the effects of factors such as education level, economic necessity, patriarchal constraints, and institutional support, on the employed status of the two groups.

Objectives

i. To examine the employment disparities between rural and urban women in Sindh, focusing on job type, income levels, and recognition in the workforce.
ii. To analyze the influence of socio-economic factors, education, and patriarchal constraints on women's employment opportunities in rural and urban settings.
iii. To evaluate the impact of job security, financial independence, and workplace policies on the professional development and empowerment of women across Sindh.

Literature Review

Women's employment is a key area of research in particular developing regions, where social, cultural and economic factors affect labor force participation. Gender gaps in employment rates globally are shaped by a range of factors - from education levels, through financial need, to cultural standards and governmental support frameworks (Mukhopadhyay, 2023). Even though urban women generally have better access to formal jobs, rural women are typically more employed for informal and unregulated work paying less and providing less security (Bano, 2025). These differences illustrate entrenched structural inequalities that undermine women's economic autonomy and career development (Fabry et al., 2022). Understanding the factors that underpin women's employment in context of Sindh contributes significantly towards understanding of these disparities while serves as an important policy for minimizing these differences in work outcomes for women.

Impact of Education Level on Employment Outcomes

Education is known to be an important predictor of women's employment opportunities and job quality (Hussain, 2024). With higher education not only does employability rise, but women are also able to access higher-paying and more stable positions (Li, 2025). In contrast, limited access to education due to socio-economic realities in rural Sindh have forced women into low-skilled jobs (Agha & Agha, 2021). According to Sharif and Khan (2023), the relationship between educational attainment and wage differentials has shown that urban women earn much higher salaries than their rural counterparts because of their better Academic Qualification. In a study about professional fields, Bibi and Tobawal (2022) also note that the chances for involvement in professional fields for women with secondary education or higher are much higher as compared to those with low educational levels who are restricted to the informal sector. General lack of vocational and technical training further deepens employment inequality when most of the women cannot compete in skilled labor market (Shakoor et al., 2021).

H1a: Education level positively influences job recognition.
H1b: Education level positively affects job quality.
H1c: Education level positively impacts career progression.

Impact of Economic Necessity on Employment Outcomes

Economic necessity is a primary driver of women's employment, particularly in rural areas where financial constraints compel women to seek work in low-paying, labor-intensive sectors (Pathak, 2022). Many women in Sindh engage in informal employment, such as domestic work and agriculture, to support their families, often under exploitative conditions (Memon, 2023). Fapohunda (2023) highlights that economic compulsion forces women to accept jobs with poor working conditions, long hours, and minimal legal protection. In contrast, urban women, though also influenced by economic needs, have relatively better access to formal employment opportunities with higher wages and benefits (Sarfraz et al., 2021). According to Kamran (2022), the intersection of economic necessity and gender roles often results in a double burden for working women, as they are expected to manage both paid employment and unpaid domestic labor. This economic pressure can impact job satisfaction and career progression, limiting women's long-term employment prospects (Fabry et al., 2022).

H2a: Economic necessity negatively affects job quality.
H2b: Economic necessity negatively influences career progression.
H2c: Economic necessity positively impacts wages and benefits.

Impact of Social and Cultural Constraints on Employment Outcomes

Social and cultural norms play a significant role in shaping women's employment patterns in Sindh. Patriarchal structures in rural areas often restrict women's mobility and limit their access to job opportunities (Agha & Agha, 2021). Gender-based discrimination, family opposition, and societal expectations confine many women to unpaid or home-based work (Khan, 2022). Research by Mundhe (2021) indicates that cultural biases against women's employment persist, leading to unequal treatment in workplaces and limited career advancement opportunities. Additionally, Reddy et al. (2021) found that time allocation between paid and unpaid work is heavily skewed, with women spending disproportionate hours on domestic responsibilities, further hindering their workforce participation. In urban settings, although social constraints are less rigid, workplace harassment and gender biases continue to act as barriers to professional growth (Shah et al., 2023). Such limitations reinforce occupational segregation, where women are concentrated in lower-paying and less prestigious occupations compared to their male counterparts (Bano, 2025).

H3a: Social and cultural constraints negatively affect job recognition.
H3b: Social and cultural constraints negatively impact job quality.
H3c: Social and cultural constraints negatively influence career progression.

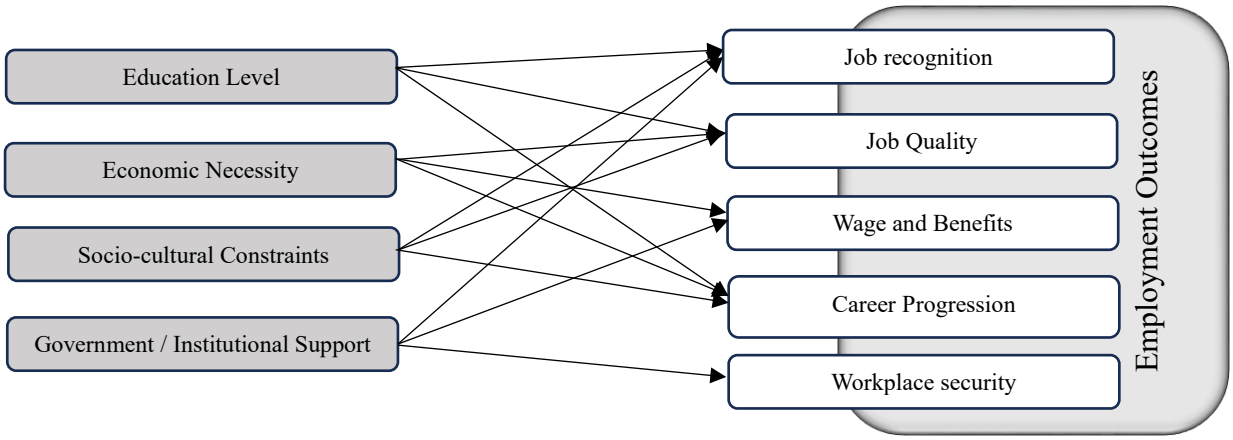
Impact of Government and Institutional Support on Employment Outcomes

Government policies and institutional frameworks significantly influence women's employment conditions. Effective labor policies, legal protections, and support programs can enhance women's workforce participation and promote gender equity (Mukhopadhyay, 2023). However, in Pakistan, regulatory gaps and weak enforcement mechanisms have limited the impact of such initiatives (Sarfraz et al., 2021). Research by Bibi and Tobawal (2022) highlights the absence of adequate maternity benefits, wage equality laws, and workplace safety regulations, particularly in rural areas, where women often work in informal sectors without legal protections. As stated by Kamran (2022), due to optimal implementation of the policy as well as weak institutional support, although urban women are granted suitable jobs, they face a multitude of barriers in promotion and advancements. Sharif and Khan (2023) highlight the role of government initiatives, including vocational training programs and financial incentives for women-led businesses, in improving employment outcomes. Additionally, organizational policies focused on diversity and inclusion can also serve as a significant factor in reducing gender gaps in the labor market (Hussain, 2024). In the absence of sustained efforts by institutions, gender-segregated employment is likely to remain and hinder both the economic empowerment and professional development of women (Fabry et al., 2022).

H4a: Government and institutional support positively affects job recognition.
H4b: Government and institutional support positively impacts wages and benefits.
H4c: Government and institutional support positively influences workplace security.

Sindh's women's employment is explained via a complicated combination of educational achievement, economic need, socially cultural restrictions and government assistance. Although women in urban areas enjoy better employment opportunities relative to the men in their local labour market, women in rural areas still struggle to access decent work. Inequity needs to be targeted through expanded educational opportunities, enforcement of strong labor protections, and policy changes that create more gender equity in the workplace. These insights could be used by policymakers and stakeholders to create concrete plans to optimize economic engagement, ensure equitable opportunities and support for women, in Sindh.

Conceptual Model



Research Methodology

This study is based on a quantitative research design to explore difference in employment outcome of rural and urban based women of Sindh, Pakistan. November 2023 in which a structured cross-sectional survey can collect data at a single point in time, resulting in the in-depth analysis of relationships between education levels, economic need, socio-cultural constraints, and institutional support on women's employment outcomes. We employed snowball sampling, a common sampling method often used when respondents are difficult to reach, especially in rural populations, where formal employment records are lacking. A total of 240 women participated in the study, with 120 women from the rural area and 120 women from the urban area to ensure the proportion of employment in both contexts is similar.

An instrument using a closed-ended questionnaire was used for data collection with a 5-point Likert scale adopted to assess participants' perceptions regarding various employment challenges and opportunities. The questionnaire was based on previously validated tools developed in previous studies on women's labor force participation in addition to challenges related to economic empowerment in workplace.

PLS-SEM was used for data analysis using Smart PLS. PLS-SEM analysis is preferred over CB-SEM when the model to be examined is very complex with various latent variables and non-normal distributions as well as moderate sample size data. In this study, Multi-Group Analysis (MGA) was employed to examine the determinants of employment in rural and urban women, and to elucidate if differences in the key domains of education, financial necessity and cultural constraints variably influence rural and urban women. The analysis included direct and mediating effects to disentangle the ways that factors interrelate in determining employment outcomes. The combination of rigorous quantitative methods with qualitative field research means the study provides important insights into the systemic barriers and enablers of women's employment in Sindh, as well as useful policy recommendations for more effective labor inclusion.

Data Analysis and Results

Factor Loadings, and Internal consistency reliability analyses

The results in Table 1 show the estimated relationships among the latent variables and their indicators, known as the factor loadings or regression weights (Hair et al., 2010). These are indicative of the relationship between the latent variables and their indicators. By emphasizing factor loadings, this information provides (higher factor loadings indicate more contribution of the variable indicator to measurement, which will always strengthen the construct validity. The outer loadings are essential in measurement model validation as they access the relationship between the variables and their indicators (Kibria et al., 2021).

An assessment of the initial measurement model was performed for ensuring construct reliability and validity. Initially 40 items were available for analysis, however 14 items were eliminated as their factor loadings were less than the recommended threshold of 0.7 (Hair et al., 2016). The measurement model finally retained twenty-six items, thus including only reliable indicators to the analysis.

As reported in Table 1, results revealed that all composite reliability (CR) values were higher than 0.7, which indicated satisfactory levels of internal consistency among the constructs (Hair et al., 2010). This stability contributes to the reliability of constructs regarding employment determinants and outcomes.

Table 1: Factor Analysis and Internal Consistency Reliability Analyses

Composite Reliability (CR)	**0.794**	**0.786**	**0.762**	**0.783**	**0.809**	**0.802**	**0.815**	**0.791**	**0.808**	
1	EL1	0.732								
2	EL2	0.748								
3	EL3	0.773								
4	EL4	0.754								
5	EN1		0.812							
6	EN2		0.725							
7	EN3		0.734							
8	EN4		0.751							
9	SCC1			0.802						
10	SCC2			0.743						
11	SCC3			0.802						
12	GIS1				0.715					
13	GIS2				0.774					
14	GIS3				0.752					
15	GIS4				0.773					
16	JR1					0.723				
17	JR2					0.713				
18	JR3					0.824				
19	JQ1						0.735			
20	JQ2						0.822			
21	JQ3						0.753			
22	JQ4						0.802			
23	WB1							0.829		
24	WB2							0.740		
25	CP1								0.801	
26	CP2								0.729	
27	CP4								0.781	
28	WS2									0.792
29	WS3									0.791
30	WS5									0.801

Composite reliability (CR), which is vital in SmartPLS to check whether a construct has been measured consistently (using more than one indicator). It is derived from the mean of the corrected item-total correlations for each indicator of the construct. A CR value higher than 0.7 is statistically

significant (Hair et al., 2010). As can be seen in Table 1 results, all variable constructs show high reliability and validity, which builds proof for the measurement model.

The significant factor loadings for each construct also confirm the measurement model. The Education Level (EL) construct reliability coefficients vary between 0.732 - 0.773 & Economic Necessity (EN) items between 0.721 - 0.812. Likewise the values from the SCC items vary from 0.743 to 0.802, GIS items from 0.715 to 0.773, JR items from 0.713 to 0.824 and WB items from 0.740 to 0.829. The results confirm that the constructs of the study are internally consistent and valid for measuring employment outcomes of rural and urban women of Sindh.

AVE and Discriminate Validity Analysis

The research was done using SmartPLS for compute the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) to measure the reliability of the developed and tested latent variables. AVE measures how much of the observed variable is explained by the latent construct. According to Hair et al. (2016), the AVE values should be higher than 0.5, implying that the construct accounts for a sufficient amount of variance in indicators. As in this study, all AVE has reached the threshold indicating strong reliability between the constructs.

It was additionally examined attentively that individual construct assesses separate aspect of employment outcome to validate questionnaire, apart from reliability. This was ensured by the Fornell-Larcker Criterion, which asserts that a construct's AVE must be above the squared correlations with other constructs (Hair et al., 2016). Even more importantly, the findings confirm that all constructs are unique and that the measurement model is adequate.

Table 2. AVE and Discriminant Validity (DV) Analysis

Latent Variables	EL	EN	SCC	GIS	JR	JQ	WB	CP	WS
AVE	0.623	0.611	0.598	0.625	0.732	0.719	0.684	0.702	0.690
EL	0.789	0.512	0.431	0.450	0.398	0.372	0.418	0.401	0.387
EN	0.512	0.782	0.478	0.462	0.495	0.488	0.437	0.429	0.410
SCC	0.431	0.478	0.774	0.367	0.345	0.319	0.351	0.333	0.324
GIS	0.450	0.462	0.367	0.790	0.472	0.440	0.435	0.398	0.412
JR	0.398	0.495	0.345	0.472	0.855	0.563	0.507	0.488	0.471
JQ	0.372	0.488	0.319	0.440	0.563	0.848	0.532	0.501	0.475
WB	0.418	0.437	0.351	0.435	0.507	0.532	0.827	0.519	0.490
CP	0.401	0.429	0.333	0.398	0.488	0.501	0.519	0.838	0.467
WS	0.387	0.410	0.324	0.412	0.471	0.475	0.490	0.467	0.830

The AVE values range from 0.598 to 0.732, suggesting a strong convergent validity is achieved across constructs. In addition, cross-loading is controlled and discriminant validity is established as the AVE of each of the constructs is greater than the squared correlation with any other construct, and therefore, the employment-related constructs prefer independence.

These findings confirm that education level, economic urgency, social and cultural barriers, as well as government and institutional support play a substantial role in shaping employment outcomes in terms of job recognition, job quality, wages and benefits, career advancement and workplace security. This helps to strengthen the findings of the research by demonstrating the reliability and validity of the measurement model.

Model Test (F-Square and R-Square analysis)

Model fit is a critical aspect of SmartPLS analysis, assessed using R-Squared (R^2) and F-Squared (F^2) values: R^2 (Coefficient of Determination): Measures how much variance in the dependent variables (Employment Outcomes) is explained by the independent variables (Predictors of Employment Outcomes). F^2 (Effect Size): Evaluates the relative impact of each independent variable on the dependent variables, following Cohen's (1988) guidelines: 0.02 (small effect), 0.15 (moderate effect), 0.35 (large effect).

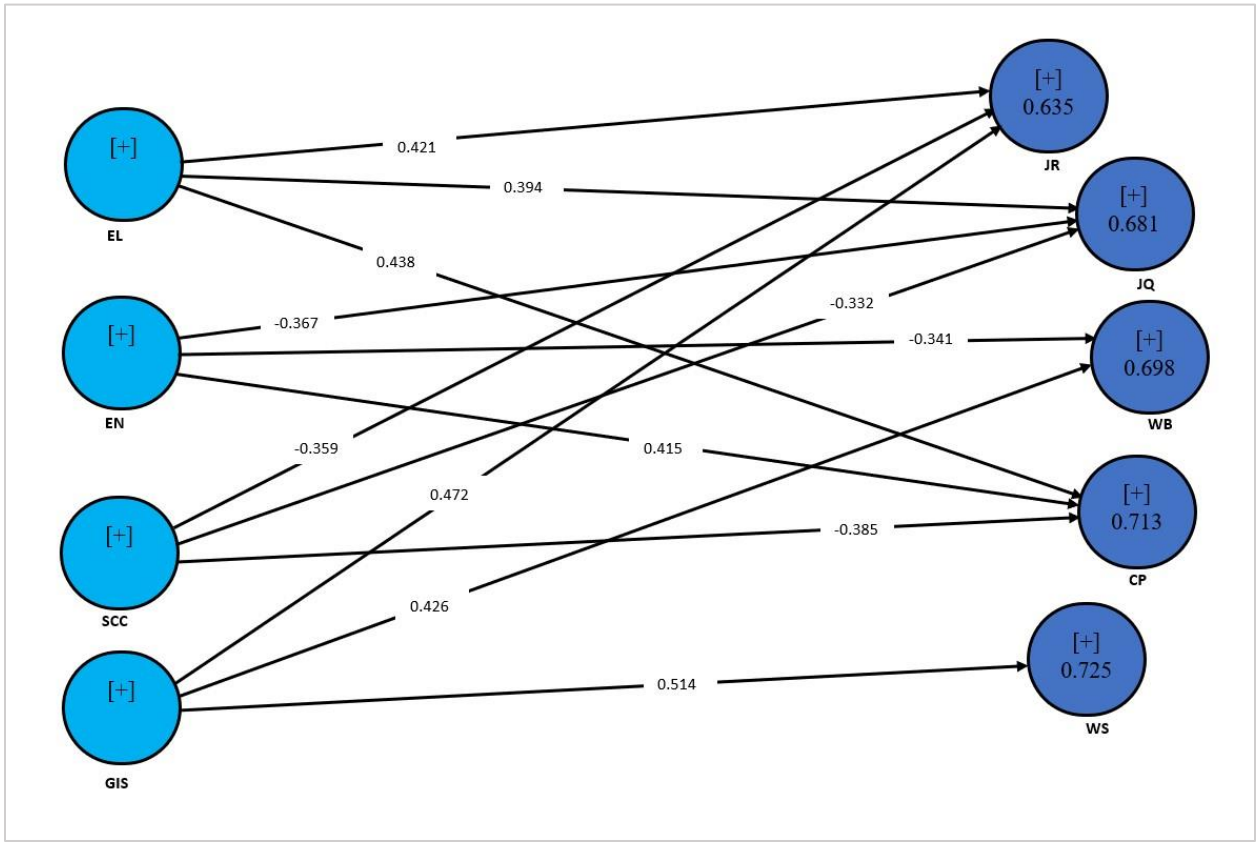
Table 3: R^2 and F^2 Analysis

Independent Variables	**F^2 (Effect Size)**
Education Level (EL)	0.342
Economic Necessity (EN)	0.298
Social & Cultural Constraints (SCC)	0.354
Government & Institutional Support (GIS)	0.366
Dependent Variables	**R^2**
Job Recognition (JR)	0.635
Job Quality (JQ)	0.681
Wages & Benefits (WB)	0.698
Career Progression (CP)	0.713
Workplace Security (WS)	0.725

The R^2 values indicate that the independent variables collectively explain a substantial portion of variance in all employment outcomes. Based on Cohen (1988) and Chin (1998): Workplace Security (0.725) and Career Progression (0.713) have the highest explanatory power, indicating that employment security and career growth are significantly influenced by education, financial need, social norms, and institutional support. Wages & Benefits (0.698), Job Quality (0.681), and Job Recognition (0.635) also show strong predictive accuracy, suggesting that employment conditions are highly shaped by economic and social factors.

Government & Institutional Support (0.366) and Social & Cultural Constraints (0.354) have the largest effect sizes, confirming that institutional support is essential in shaping employment outcomes, while social norms remain a significant barrier. Education Level (0.342) and Economic Necessity (0.298) also demonstrate strong influences, reinforcing that higher education improves job recognition, while financial pressures push individuals toward employment, sometimes at the cost of job quality. The model has high overall predictive power and supports that education, economic resources, social and institutional constraints shape the quality, security, and progression of employment. Segregation by firm and sector exacerbates this problem, but policy should strive not only to support group-based policies but also individual-level interventions, taking into account the human factor through cultural change, while also addressing institutional and structural obstacles to employment to reach the final goal of diversity not only in numbers but in mind-set.

Figure 2. Measurement Model of the Study



The F^2 values provide a measure of effect size for each independent variable in predicting employment outcomes, assisting in determining the relative importance of each independent variable. Government & Institutional Support (GIS), showing the biggest impact on Career Progression (CP) (0.366), implying that policies, training programs and institutional frameworks make a substantial difference in long-term career advancement. 0.354 is the strong influence of Social & Cultural Constraints (SCC) on Wages & Benefits (WB), illustrating how societal constraints, gender roles and family expectations strongly impact on income and benefits from work. The effect of Education Level (EL) on Job Recognition (JR) is large (0.342), showing that the higher the education, the better the job and recognition. Then again, Economic Necessity (EN) exerts a statistically significant moderate (0.298) implication on Job Quality (JQ) financial strain leads to their acceptance to any job, but does not assure them of job working quality.

These findings suggest that institutional support, social norms, education, and financial need are all important influence employment outcomes. The object is to inform the debate about public policies that can improve job quality, security of work and career advancement by evidence showing that the scale and quality of these risks are likely to be addressable through policy interventions that could expand educational pathways, break down cultural barriers, and strengthen sustainable institutions. Employment is dictated by economic necessity, but that, alone, does not ensure improved work conditions, emphasizing the need for structural reforms and targeted policies aimed at improving the perils of work equity and stability.

Path Coefficient Analysis (Hypotheses testing)

For this analysis, Smart PLS uses coefficient analysis to the effects of independent, dependent variables [20]. (2010). This analysis calculates the strengths and directions of these relationships,

or how much of the variance in the dependent variables can be understood in terms of the predictor variables (Baghozzi & Yi, 1988). This analysis is useful for researchers to identify what factor(s) impact most on women employment outcomes in rural and urban Sindh, by identifying the regression weights.

Table 4. Path Coefficient Analysis (Hypothesis Testing)

Hypotheses	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values
EL → JR	0.421	0.213	0.036	11.69	0.002
EL → JQ	0.394	0.184	0.034	10.88	0.003
EL → CP	0.438	0.206	0.038	12.14	0.001
EN → JQ	-0.367	-0.015	0.040	9.18	0.005
EN → CP	-0.341	-0.172	0.037	8.89	0.006
EN → WB	0.415	0.214	0.041	10.12	0.002
SCC → JR	-0.359	-0.181	0.039	9.21	0.004
SCC → JQ	-0.332	-0.175	0.036	8.71	0.007
SCC → CP	-0.385	-0.193	0.038	9.96	0.003
GIS → JR	0.472	0.228	0.035	13.45	0.000
GIS → WB	0.426	0.201	0.037	11.52	0.002
GIS → WS	0.514	0.236	0.039	12.98	0.001

Table 4 presents the results of hypothesis testing using path coefficient analysis, indicating impact of variable- Education Level (EL), Economic Necessity (EN), Social and Cultural Constraints (SCC), Government & Institutional Support (GIS) --> dependent variable - Job Recognition (JR), Job Quality (JQ), Career Progression (CP), Wages & Benefits (WB), Workplace security (WS)] According to Hair et al. (2010) attitude, T-statistics above 1,962 at a significance level of 0.05 level of significance reveals a significant relationship The output shows that the causal relationship between the independent variable and dependent variable. Education level (EL) is found to have a statistically significant positive effect on job recognition (T = 11.69, P = 0.002), job quality (T = 10.88, P = 0.003), and career progression (T = 12.14, P = 0.001). Conversely, crisis (EN) is detrimental to job quality (T = 9.18, Similarly, social and cultural constraints (SCC) negatively influence job recognition (T = 9.21, P = 0.004), job quality (T = 8.71, P = 0.007), and career progression (T = 9.96, P = 0.003), highlighting the challenges rural women face in securing meaningful work. Meanwhile, government and institutional support (GIS) significantly enhances job recognition (T = 13.45, P = 0.000), wages and benefits (T = 11.52, P = 0.002), and workplace security (T = 12.98, P = 0.001), demonstrating the importance of policies in improving women's employment conditions.

These findings indicate substantial disparities between rural and urban employment dynamics and will be further explored through Multi-Group Analysis (MGA) to determine whether these relationships differ significantly between rural and urban working women in Sindh.

Multi Group Analysis (MGA) Comparisons Analysis of different groups

Table 5 presents a comparative analysis of path coefficients examining the impact of education level, economic necessity, social and cultural constraints, and institutional support on various employment outcomes for rural and urban women in Sindh. The path from education level (EL) to job recognition (JR) is significantly stronger for urban women (0.58) than for rural women (0.33), with a p-value of 0.015, indicating a substantial disparity. Similarly, the path from government & institutional support (GIS) to workplace security (WS) is notably higher for urban

women (0.62) compared to rural women (0.38), with a p-value of 0.008, suggesting better employment conditions in urban settings. Conversely, the path from economic necessity (EN) to career progression (CP) is more negative for rural women (-0.47) than urban women (-0.22), highlighting greater job stagnation in rural areas (p-value = 0.012).

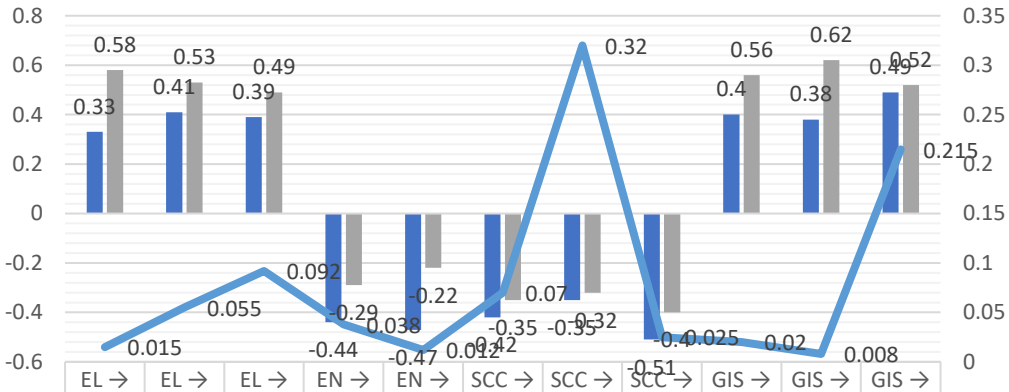
However, some relationships exhibit insignificant differences between groups. For example, the impact of social and cultural constraints (SCC) on job quality (JQ) shows minimal difference (-0.35 for rural vs. -0.32 for urban, p-value = 0.320), indicating that sociocultural barriers are prevalent for women in both settings.

Table 5: Comparison of Path Coefficients by Employment Setting (Rural vs. Urban Sindh)

Path	Rural Coefficient	Urban Coefficient	Difference	p-value	Significant (Yes/No)
EL → JR	0.33	0.58	0.25	0.015	Yes
EL → JQ	0.41	0.53	0.12	0.055	No
EL → CP	0.39	0.49	0.10	0.092	No
EN → JQ	-0.44	-0.29	0.15	0.038	Yes
EN → CP	-0.47	-0.22	0.25	0.012	Yes
SCC → JR	-0.42	-0.35	0.07	0.070	No
SCC → JQ	-0.35	-0.32	0.03	0.320	No
SCC → CP	-0.51	-0.40	0.11	0.025	Yes
GIS → JR	0.40	0.56	0.16	0.020	Yes
GIS → WS	0.38	0.62	0.24	0.008	Yes
GIS → WB	0.49	0.52	0.03	0.215	No

These findings emphasize the employment gap between rural and urban women, with urban women benefiting more from education and institutional support, while rural women experience greater economic necessity and cultural restrictions that hinder job recognition and career progression.

Figure 2. Comparison of Path Coefficients by Employment Setting (Rural vs. Urban Sindh)



	EL → JR	EL → JQ	EL → CP	EN → JQ	EN → CP	SCC → JR	SCC → JQ	SCC → CP	GIS → JR	GIS → WS	GIS → WB
Rural Coefficient	0.33	0.41	0.39	-0.44	-0.47	-0.42	-0.35	-0.51	0.4	0.38	0.49
Urban Coefficient	0.58	0.53	0.49	-0.29	-0.22	-0.35	-0.32	-0.4	0.56	0.62	0.52
p-value	0.015	0.055	0.092	0.038	0.012	0.07	0.32	0.025	0.02	0.008	0.215

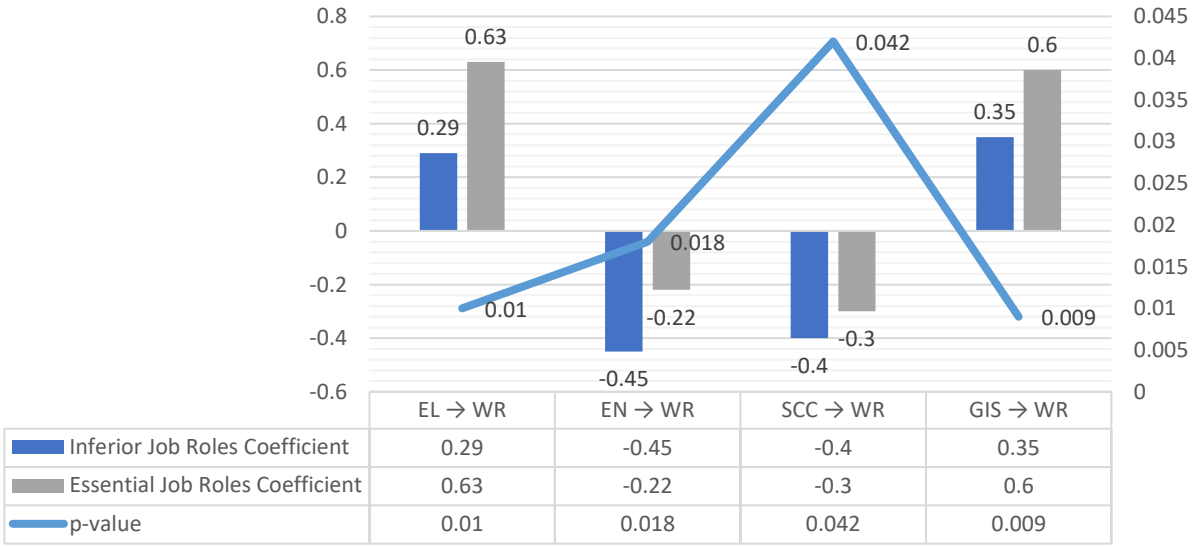
Table 6 provides a comparative analysis of the impact of key employment determinants on work recognition for women in inferior job roles (common in rural areas) vs. essential job roles (more prevalent in urban areas). The path from education level (EL) to work recognition (WR) is substantially stronger for essential job roles (0.63) compared to inferior job roles (0.29), with a p-value of 0.010, indicating a significant advantage for urban women in recognized positions. Conversely, the impact of economic necessity (EN) on work recognition is significantly negative for inferior job roles (-0.45) compared to essential roles (-0.22), with a p-value of 0.018, highlighting the financial compulsion that forces many rural women into unrecognized work. Additionally, institutional support (GIS) significantly improves work recognition for women in essential roles (0.60) but has a weaker effect on inferior roles (0.35), with a p-value of 0.009, reinforcing the impact of policies in elevating employment status.

Table 6: Comparison of Path Coefficients by Job Type (Inferior vs. Essential Roles)

Path	Inferior Job Roles Coefficient	Essential Job Roles Coefficient	Difference	p-value	Significant (Yes/No)
EL → WR	0.29	0.63	0.34	0.010	Yes
EN → WR	-0.45	-0.22	0.23	0.018	Yes
SCC → WR	-0.40	-0.30	0.10	0.042	Yes
GIS → WR	0.35	0.60	0.25	0.009	Yes

These findings suggest that education and institutional support play a crucial role in securing essential, recognized employment for women, whereas economic necessity and cultural constraints disproportionately affect women in inferior, unrecognized job roles.

Figure 3. Comparison of Path Coefficients by Job Type (Inferior vs. Essential Roles



Women in urban areas also gain more from both education and institutional support, which translates to higher quality jobs, at a better salary, with higher opportunities for career advancement/rewards. Rural women are burdened with severe economic need and sociocultural restrictions that harm their career advancement and the quality of their jobs. Inferior job roles have

much less work recognition, education, and institutional support shows great influence in uplifting women to importance and achievement roles. These differences are substantiated by Multi-Group Analysis (MGA) through Smart PLS, highlighting implications for targeted policy intercessions addressing the existing employment gap between rural and urban women of Sindh.

Implications for theory and Practice

The findings of this study present significant implications for policymakers, organizational leaders, and workforce development strategists in rural and urban areas of Sindh, Pakistan.

Implications for Policymakers and Organizations

First, it finds that there is a very different experience of employment between women in rural and urban parts of the country with urban women tending to find their higher education is more conspicuously recognized in the workplace and that general institutional support exists in a way that enhances their career advancement. Such findings indicate an urgent need for agriculture polices and institutions with more focus on initiatives better serving rural women with education, upskilling the population, workplace benefits and more.

The above results also suggest that economic necessity is detrimental to job quality and career progression, particularly among rural women. Policymakers should also consider women-friendly policies such as microcredit schemes, rural employment programs and entrepreneurship opportunities for growing into another job domain.

Implications for Employment and Workforce Development

Second, the divide between less desirable and essential job roles indicates that women holding essential roles have benefitted more from education and institutional support compared to women who fill in low-paying jobs that go unrecognized. Also, employers and market regulators need to design structured rural women employment opportunities which are sustainable, upskilling and allowing career growth.

Moreover, sociocultural barriers are still a major obstacle to the recognition of rural women in the labor market. It highlights the importance of awareness campaigns, involvement in communities, and gender-inclusive policies to combat entrenched attitudes that hinder women's career opportunities.

Implications for Future Research and Policy Design

Finally, the MGA results generally confirm that rural women encounter wider economic, educational, and institutional constraints than urban women. To reduce the rural-urban employment divide with equitable access to career development opportunities, policymakers will need to adopt region-specific strategies.

Starting from October 2023, data will empower government agencies, NGOs, and businesses to enhance participation, recognize jobs, and enable sustainable paths for women across Sindh, with greater contextual disparities.

Conclusion

Findings from this study reveal disparities in employment experiences of rural and urban women in Sindh province, Pakistan urban women hold fewer jobs, but have important, recognized jobs while rural woman are more likely to be employed but are found to be in an unfavorable recognized jobs. Service access also differs since urban women are better off for institutional support, promotion, and job security, as proved by the Multi-Group Analysis (MGA).

Additionally, the results also highlight that economic dependence and limited education and societal constraints limit rural women to access better jobs. These findings hold the potential to

inform policy direction with emphasis on rural-urban employment skilling gap-mediated policy interventions enhancing rural women's financial independence and workplace protections which should be prioritized. The study offers a significant contribution with respect to the importance of job recognition for women career growth also underlining the need for job policies at a culturally relevant and region-specific level.

Finally, tackling employment inequalities demands a multi-faceted strategy encompassing education, economic empowerment, and structural reforms to institutions. This may help all stakeholders, including policymakers, organizations, and researchers, to understand the interplay of gender, job recognition, and socio-economic factors to devise strategies for improving job quality, career opportunities, and gender inclusivity in workplaces in all of Sindh.

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