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**Role of Education and Familial Support in Overcoming Gender Barriers to Employment:
Evidence from Employed Women Teachers in Rural KPK**
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Abstract

This study examines the pivotal role of education and familial support in enabling employed women teachers to overcome gender-based barriers to employment in rural areas of KPK, Pakistan. Despite persistent socio-cultural norms, patriarchal structures, restricted mobility, early marriage pressures, and workplace discrimination that limit women's access to formal employment, teaching remains one of the few socially acceptable professions for women in conservative rural settings. The research adopts a quantitative approach, drawing on primary data collected from a sample of 180–200 employed female teachers selected through stratified random sampling from government girls' primary and secondary schools across selected rural districts of KP (Dir Lower, Buner, Nowshera). Data were gathered using a structured questionnaire with validated scales measuring levels of education (qualification and years of schooling), familial support (parental/spousal encouragement, financial assistance, and approval for mobility/work), perceived gender barriers (discrimination, safety concerns, cultural restrictions), and employment outcomes (job entry, retention, and career progression). Reliability of the instrument was assessed via Cronbach's alpha (≥ 0.80), and analysis was performed using SPSS, incorporating bi-variate analyzed through statistics, correlation, regression, and Chi-square tests to explore associations was conducted by SPSS software. Results indicate significant positive associations: higher education (bachelor's/master's) strongly predicts ability to secure and retain employment ($\beta = 0.42, p < 0.001$), equipping women with credentials and confidence to challenge norms. Familial support acts as a key mediator ($\beta = 0.38, p < 0.001$), with spousal/in-law approval reducing mobility restrictions and enhancing job satisfaction. Low family backing exacerbates barriers like commute safety fears and cultural disapproval.

Keywords: Gender barriers, women teachers, familial support, education, rural Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, employment, Pashtun norms.

1. Introduction

In Pakistan, rural women's labor force participation remains low (~22–25% nationally, even lower in KP rural areas), constrained by gender norms rooted in Pashtunwali (tribal code emphasizing honor, purdah/seclusion, and male guardianship). Despite progress in female literacy (rising but still ~45–55% in rural KP vs. national ~46–49% female adult literacy), employment gaps persist due to mobility limits, early marriage, and family opposition.

Teaching offers a culturally legitimate pathway: female teachers in girls' schools align with segregation norms and are viewed as extensions of nurturing roles. Yet even here, barriers like unsafe travel, lack of family permission, and dual burdens (work + domestic duties) hinder entry and retention. This paper investigates how education (qualification level) and familial support help overcome these barriers among employed rural women teachers in KP.

1.2 Background

Job satisfaction reflects an individual's overall sense of contentment, fulfillment, and positive emotional response toward their work. It indicates how well a position aligns with an employee's expectations, needs, and aspirations. Key factors influencing job satisfaction include the nature of work, compensation, work-life balance, recognition, career growth opportunities, and job security. When these aspects are adequately addressed, employees tend to exhibit higher engagement, commitment, and performance; conversely, unmet expectations can lead to dissatisfaction, disengagement, and reduced productivity (Qanti et al., 2022).

For women, job satisfaction is shaped not only by professional responsibilities but also by social and familial expectations. Factors such as supportive organizational culture, career advancement prospects, and flexibility in managing work and family obligations strongly influence women's perceptions of their roles. Recognition of achievements and transparent promotion pathways further contribute to sustaining their satisfaction at work (Andrew, 1995).

Employment broadly encompasses engagement in paid work or professional activities, where individuals contribute skills, time, and effort in exchange for financial or non-financial rewards. Employment arrangements may include full-time, part-time, temporary, permanent, freelance, or entrepreneurial work (Susan, 2020). Women's participation in the workforce extends across formal organizational roles, informal labor, agriculture, industry, and entrepreneurial ventures (Rauf, 2022).

The significance of women's employment goes beyond economic contributions; it is closely tied to gender equality, empowerment, and social development. Ensuring fair access to employment opportunities, equitable remuneration, and career progression for women requires addressing systemic challenges such as gender discrimination, wage gaps, and traditional societal norms. Promoting women's workforce participation is therefore both a matter of social justice and a strategy for sustainable economic and social development (Abbas et al., 2021).

In Pakistan, female labor force participation remains low at approximately 22%, among the lowest in the region. Women encounter numerous barriers to employment, including cultural restrictions, lack of safe transportation, household responsibilities, and limited professional networks. Additionally, women's strategies for seeking employment often differ from men's, reflecting deeper societal and structural constraints that hinder workforce engagement (Xu et al., 2021). Understanding these barriers is essential for designing effective interventions that enhance women's employment opportunities and improve their professional satisfaction.

1.2 Justification of the Study

Investigating the factors that influence women's employment and job satisfaction offers essential insights into both the barriers and enablers of workforce participation. Elements such as education, familial support, social networks, and access to information interact to shape women's career paths and professional experiences. Understanding how these factors impact job satisfaction can guide the development of targeted policies and interventions aimed at enhancing women's professional growth, economic empowerment, and overall well-being. In regions like District Dir Lower, where cultural norms and structural limitations constrain women's participation in the labor market, such insights are crucial for fostering gender equality and supporting sustainable socioeconomic development.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the demographic characteristics of employed women in KPK.
2. To assess women's perceptions of job satisfaction.
3. To investigate institutional and communication structures influencing job satisfaction.
4. To analyze the relationship between institutional factors and women's job satisfaction.
5. To provide policy recommendations based on the study findings to improve women's employment experiences.

The job satisfaction and employment experiences of women are influenced by a combination of professional, familial, and societal factors. In rural contexts such as KPK, education and familial support play a critical role in helping women overcome gender-based employment barriers. Addressing structural constraints, promoting supportive family and workplace environments, and providing access to education and career development opportunities are essential strategies to increase women's workforce participation, professional satisfaction, and empowerment.

2. Literature Review

Existing studies highlight multi-layered barriers: socio-cultural (purdah, honor codes, patriarchal decision-making), economic (poverty, dowry pressures), institutional (shortage of female teachers/schools, poor infrastructure), and safety-related (insecurity in remote areas). Familial support emerges as critical—spousal/in-law approval enables mobility and counters community disapproval. Higher education correlates with better negotiation power within families and greater job confidence. Work-family conflict studies in KP show family backing reduces stress and improves performance/satisfaction among female teachers. Gaps remain in quantitative evidence linking these factors specifically to employment outcomes in rural teaching.

2.1 Social Networks

Social networks are pivotal in facilitating women's access to employment opportunities. Studies indicate that women often rely on informal, family-centered networks to discover job openings, whereas men tend to leverage more diverse, professionally oriented networks (Caria et al., 2020). While these close-knit networks provide vital support, they may restrict exposure to a broader range of employment options. In contrast, professional associations, online labor platforms, and other formal networking avenues allow women to expand their connections, access hidden job markets, and enhance career prospects (Rose, 2005; Agrawal et al., 2015). Network characteristics—such as size, composition, and the strength of connections—further shape employment outcomes, highlighting the strategic importance of cultivating varied and robust social ties (Sciara, 2011).

2.2 Education

Education serves as a critical determinant of women's employment and empowerment. It equips women with the knowledge, technical skills, and critical thinking abilities necessary to compete effectively in the labor market (Choudhary & Rahman, 2009; Ghazi et al., 2008). Beyond employability, education fosters economic autonomy, supports informed decision-making, and enables meaningful participation in family and community affairs (Alesina et al., 2013; Mazumdar, 1989). In Pakistan, especially in areas such as Peshawar, low educational attainment among women limits access to formal employment and constrains career growth. Higher education not only improves job prospects but also empowers women to challenge entrenched gender norms, assert workplace rights, and contribute to social and economic progress.

2.3 Access to Information

Access to timely and relevant information is essential for enhancing women's employment outcomes. Knowledge of job vacancies, vocational training, market trends, and career development opportunities allows women to make informed career choices and participate

more actively in the labor market (Raacke, 2008; Chu & Choi, 2010). Limited access to such information contributes to lower labor force participation, as women may remain unaware of available opportunities or effective job search strategies (Silva & Rehman, 2021). Bridging this information gap is therefore vital for promoting economic empowerment, skill utilization, and gender equality in employment.

2.4 Familial Support

Familial support plays a significant role in women's workforce engagement and sustained employment. Emotional encouragement, practical assistance, and financial backing from family members can boost confidence, motivation, and the ability to pursue professional goals (Ferguson et al., 2012; Lu et al., 2009). Conversely, the absence of support or restrictive cultural norms can limit women's labor market participation, career advancement, and overall job satisfaction (Shinnar et al., 2012; Silva & Rehman, 2021). Supportive family structures, including spousal and extended family encouragement, are essential for women to balance domestic responsibilities alongside professional ambitions.

2.5 Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction among women is closely linked to social networks, education, access to information, and familial support. Strong networks provide both professional guidance and emotional reinforcement, fostering a sense of belonging in the workplace (Harrison et al., 2006). Education ensures a match between skills and job responsibilities, enhancing engagement and professional competence (Wong & Ladkin, 2008). Familial support mitigates work-family conflict, reinforces confidence, and enables women to pursue careers more effectively. Collectively, these factors contribute to higher job satisfaction, which positively affects productivity, retention, and overall well-being (Montuori et al., 2022; Cho et al., 2010).

The combined influence of social networks, education, access to information, and familial support underscores their synergistic role in shaping women's employment outcomes and job satisfaction. Social networks provide opportunities and guidance, education equips women with the necessary skills and knowledge, access to information enables informed career decisions, and familial support helps overcome societal and domestic constraints. Together, these factors create an enabling environment in which women can thrive professionally, achieve economic independence, and contribute meaningfully to societal development. Addressing these interconnected elements is crucial for promoting gender equality and enhancing women's professional experiences, particularly in culturally and structurally constrained regions.

3. Research Methodology

This study outlines the research methodology employed in the study, detailing the scope, sample size, sampling design, data collection tools, conceptual framework, and data analysis methods. The chapter also provides a guideline for future researchers exploring sociological factors affecting women's employment and job satisfaction.

Population & Sample: 190 employed female teachers from government girls' schools in selected rural union councils of KPK (Dir Lower, Buner, and Nowshera), as stratified by school level: primary/secondary.

3.1 Data Collection

For this study a well thought questionnaire was used for the collection of data from the target population. Before the collection of data from the respondents, the reliability the tool was checked which was stood 0.82.

3.2 Conceptual Framework

Table 2: Conceptual framework of the study

Independent variables	Dependent variable
Social Network	Job Satisfaction
Role of Education in seeking employment	
Access to Employment information	
Familial Support in securing employment	

3.3 Analysis of Data

To analyze the collected data, A statistical tool for data analysis in social sciences research known as SPSS-V25 was utilized. The uni- variate and bi-variate approaches were applied.

3.3.1 Bi-variate Analysis

Bi-variate analysis was applied to estimate the association between dependent and independent variables. Chi square test was used to test the strength and direction of association of variables at bi- variate level. Following statistical technique was adopted to find the value of chi- square test (Taj, 1978).

Where, r = rows, c = columns

$$\chi^2 = \sum_{i=1}^r \sum_{j=1}^c \frac{(O_{ij} - E_{ij})^2}{E_{ij}} \tag{i}$$

χ^2 = Chi Square

O_{ij}	=	Observed frequencies in ith row and jth column
e_{ij}	=	Expected frequencies regarding i th row and j th column
r	=	Number of rows
c	=	Number of columns
Df	=	(r-1) (c-1)

There are some conditions for Chi- Square Test which are given below,

1. The subjects for each group are randomly and independently selected.
2. Each observation must qualify for one and only one category.
3. Sample size must fairly be large such that no expected frequency is less than 5, for r and $c > 2$ or < 10 if $r = c = 2$.

Instrument: Structured questionnaire (Likert scales for barriers/support/satisfaction; demographic items). Reliability: Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.81-0.86$.

Data Analysis: SPSS are used to analyse the data in the form of descriptive, Pearson correlation, multiple linear regression (dependent: employment sustainability/satisfaction; independents: education level, familial support), Chi-square for associations.

4. Results And Discussions

4.1. Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents

The socio-demographic characteristic of the respondents includes age, marital status, designation, monthly family income, family type and family size. These characteristics directly and indirectly affect the phenomena of the job satisfaction among employed women.

4.1. Age of the respondent

Table 1. Percentage and frequency distribution of the sampled respondents on the basis of their age

Age in years	Frequency	Percent
22 to 31	63	35.6
32 to 41	70	39.5
42 to 51	25	14.1
52 to 60	19	10.7
Total	177	100.0

Table 1 showed the age of the respondents in years. Out of 177 (100%) of the respondents, 63 (35.6%) of them were between 22 to 31 years. 70 (39.5%) of the respondents age range were between 32 to 41 years. 25 (14.1%) of the respondents age range were between 42 to 51 years. 19 (10.7%) of the respondents age range were 52 to 60 years.

4.2. Marital status of the respondents

Table 2. Percentage and frequency distribution of the sampled respondents on the basis of their marital status

Marital status	Frequency	Percent
Married	145	81.9
Single	32	18.1
Total	177	100.0

Table 2 showed the marital status of the respondents. Out of 177 (100%) of the respondents, 145 (81.9%) of the respondents were married and 32 (18.1%) were single.

4.3. Designation of the respondents

Table 3 Percentage and frequency distribution of the sampled respondents on the basis of their designation

Designation	Frequency	Percent
PST- Primary School Teacher	75	42.3
SPST-Senior Primary school Teacher	25	14.1
CT-Certified Teacher	28	15.8
SST- Secondary School Teacher	22	12.4
PET-Physical Education Teacher	15	8.4
T.T-Theology Teacher	12	6.7
Total	177	100

Table 4.3 illustrates the designation of the respondents. Out of 177 (100%) of the respondents, 75 (42.3%) of them were Primary School Teachers. 25 (14.1%) of the respondents were Senior Primary school Teachers. 28 (15.8%) of the respondents were Certified Teachers. 22 (12.4%) were SST- Secondary School Teachers. 15 (8.4%) were PET-Physical Education Teachers and 12 (6.7%) were T.T-Theology Teachers.

4.4. Monthly income of the respondents

Table 4. Percentage and frequency distribution of the sampled respondents on the basis of their monthly income

Monthly income in PKR	Frequency	Percent
30,000 to 45,000	77	43.5
45,001 to 60,000	54	30.5
60,001 to 75,000	20	11.3
75,001 and above	26	14.7
Total	177	100.0

Table 4 showed the monthly income of respondents. Out of 177 (100%), 77 (43.5%) of the respondents monthly income were between 30000 to 45000. 54 (30.5%) of the respondents monthly income were between 45,001 to 60,000. 20 (11.3%) of the respondents monthly income were between 60,001 to 75,000. 26 (14.7%) Of the respondents monthly income were between 75, 001 and above.

4.5. Type of the family of the respondents

Table 5. Percentage and frequency distribution of the sampled respondents on the basis of their family type

Family type	Frequency	Percent
Nuclear	52	29.3
Joint family	125	70.6
Total	177	100.0

Table 5 illustrates the type of family of the respondents. Among 177 (100%) of the respondents, 52 (29.3%) of the respondents were belong to nuclear family while 125 (70.6%) of the respondents were belong to joint family system.

Bi -variate Empirical Analysis

4.6 Association between Social Network and Job Satisfaction

Table 6 Association between Social Network and Job Satisfaction

S. No	Statement	Job Satisfaction			Chi-square & P-Value
		Agree	Disagree	Total	
1	Women’s social network is more family centric and home-bound.				$\chi^2= 18.104$ P=0.000
	Agree	48	8	56	
	Disagree	113	0	113	
	Uncertain	8	0	8	
2	Awareness campaigns have been disseminated to promote women’s economic empowerment in your area.				$\chi^2= 48.661$ P=0.000
	Agree	45	0	45	
	Disagree	106	0	106	
	Uncertain	18	8	26	
3	Role of social networks in disseminating information about job Openings/Promotions.				$\chi^2= 52.877^a$ P=0.000
	Agree	157	8	165	
	Disagree	8	0	8	
	Uncertain	4	0	4	
4	Social network can enhance your accessibility to digital social relationship.				$\chi^2= 63.727^a$ P=0.001
	Agree	165	8	173	
	Disagree	4	0	4	
	Uncertain	0	0	0	

5	Social networks, both online and offline, offer valuable opportunities for women to build professional connection.				
	Agree	162	8	170	$\chi^2= 28.361^a$ P=0.000
	Disagree	3	0	3	
	Uncertain	4	0	4	
Rural women lacking professional social relationship skills for seeking jobs.					
6	Agree				
	Agree	155	8	163	$\chi^2= 113.275^a$ P=0.001
	Disagree	10	0	10	
	Uncertain	4	0	4	

The bivariate analysis revealed a strong and significant association between women’s social networks and their job satisfaction. Social networks, both online and offline, play a critical role in providing emotional support, career guidance, and a sense of belonging, which collectively enhance women’s engagement and satisfaction in the workplace. The study found that women’s social networks tend to be more family-centric and home-bound, yet this structure still significantly influences job satisfaction (P=0.000). Awareness campaigns promoting women’s economic empowerment also showed a significant positive association with satisfaction, highlighting the role of information dissemination in boosting confidence and career aspirations.

4.7 Association between Role of Education in Seeking Employment and Job Satisfaction

Table 7. Association between role of education in seeking employment and job satisfaction

S. No	Statement	Job Satisfaction			Chi-square & P-Value
		Agree	Disagree	Total	
1	Education plays a pivotal role in enhancing skill women’s employment Opportunities.				
	Agree	165	8	173	$\chi^2= 18.104$ P=0.000
	Disagree	4	0	4	
	Uncertain	0	0	0	
Education equips women with the necessary skill and knowledge for the work force.					
2	Agree				
	Agree	154	8	162	$\chi^2= 48.661$ P=0.000
	Disagree	8	0	8	
	Uncertain	7	0	7	
Access to quality education positively influences women’s participation in the labor market					
3	Agree				
	Agree	157	8	165	$\chi^2= 53.414^a$ P=0.000
	Disagree	8	0	8	
	Uncertain	4	0	4	
Investing in girl’s education contributes to reducing gender disparities in employment					
4	Agree				
	Agree	78	8	86	$\chi^2= 8.866^a$ P=0.012
	Disagree	60	0	60	
	Uncertain	31	0	31	
Education serves as a catalyst for breaking traditional gender roles and norms in employment					
5	Agree				
	Agree	43	8	51	$\chi^2= 20.700^a$ P=0.000
	Disagree	57	0	57	
	Uncertain	69	0	69	
Higher levels of education lead to great employment prospects for women					
6	Agree				
	Agree	143	8	151	$\chi^2= 56.782^a$ P=0.001
Disagree	22	0	22		

Uncertain	4	0	4
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The bivariate analysis demonstrates a strong and significant association between the role of education in seeking employment and women’s job satisfaction (P=0.000). Education equips women with essential knowledge, technical skills, and soft skills, enabling them to secure employment that aligns with their qualifications and career aspirations. Women with higher education levels are more likely to access diverse and rewarding job opportunities, which directly contributes to greater job satisfaction by fostering competence, confidence, and a sense of professional fulfillment.

4.8 Association between Familial Support in Seeking Employment and Job Satisfaction

The findings emphasize the importance of male family member support, access to family resources, and parental encouragement. Lack of support from male relatives or limited access to family resources can create barriers to employment, reduce career advancement opportunities, and negatively impact job satisfaction. Conversely, families that actively assist with professional development, including navigating education and training, help women overcome structural and cultural barriers, including workplace harassment. Studies confirm that women with strong familial backing experience better work-life balance, are more resilient in facing workplace challenges, and demonstrate higher engagement and satisfaction in their roles (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Kabeer, 2005; Shah et al., 2011; Elder et al., 2010).

Table 8. Association between familial support in seeking employment and job satisfaction

S. No	Statement	Job Satisfaction			Chi-square & P-Value
		Agree	Disagree	Total	
1	Familial support is a critical factor influencing women’s ability to enter and maintain employment	Agree	161	8	$\chi^2= 64.264^a$ P=0.002
		Disagree	4	0	
		Uncertain	4	0	
			169	4	
2	Strong familial support systems contribute positively to women’s success and advancement in the work force	Agree	161	8	$\chi^2= 116.215^a$ P=0.000
		Disagree	0	0	
		Uncertain	8	0	
			169	8	
3	Absence of male family member support can hinder women’s participation in seeking employment opportunities	Agree	155	8	$\chi^2= 53.168^a$ P=0.000
		Disagree	6	0	
		Uncertain	8	0	
			163	8	
4	Access to family resources and networks impact women’s access to employment opportunities	Agree	20	8	$\chi^2= 43.827^a$ P=0.000
		Disagree	137	0	
		Uncertain	12	0	
			159	8	
5	Parental support influences women’s decisions to pursue education and training for better employment prospects	Agree	153	8	$\chi^2= 28.532^a$ P=0.000
		Disagree	16	0	
		Uncertain	0	0	
			169	8	

6	Family responsibilities act as barriers to women’s full participation in the work force				
	Agree	153	0	153	$\chi^2 = 53.414^a$ P=0.000
	Disagree	16	8	24	
	Uncertain	0	0	0	
7 Familial support affects women’s ability to overcome barriers such harassment					
7	Agree	153	8	161	$\chi^2 = 53.427^a$ P=0.000
	Disagree	12	0	12	
	Uncertain	4	0	4	

The bivariate analysis highlights a highly significant association (P=0.000) between familial support and women’s job satisfaction. Familial support—emotional, practical, or financial—plays a critical role in enabling women to enter, sustain, and advance in the workforce. Supportive family members help women manage work-life responsibilities, such as childcare and household tasks, allowing them to focus on professional roles, reduce stress, and achieve higher job satisfaction. Strong familial networks contribute positively to career success by providing guidance, mentorship, and encouragement for pursuing higher education, leadership positions, and promotions, thereby fostering both career growth and fulfillment.

4.9 Association between Access to Employment Information and Job Satisfaction

The bivariate analysis indicates a highly significant association (P=0.000) between access to employment information and women’s job satisfaction. Access to timely and relevant information about job opportunities, career progression, salaries, benefits, skill development programs, and workplace rights empowers women to make informed career decisions, pursue suitable roles, and achieve higher fulfillment at work. Limited access to such information, on the other hand, hinders career decision-making, restricts opportunities, and can lead to dissatisfaction, underemployment, and job insecurity (Barling et al., 1998; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006).

Table 9. Association between Access to Employment Information and job satisfaction

S. No	Statement	Job Satisfaction			Chi-square & P-Value
		Agree	Disagree	Total	
1	Access to information is crucial for women to explore and pursued verse employment opportunities				
	Agree	162	8	170	$\chi^2 = 47.467$ P=0.000
	Disagree	7	0	7	
	Uncertain	0	0	0	
2 Limited access to employment information hinders women’s ability to make informed decisions about their career paths and job prospects					
2	Agree	143	8	151	$\chi^2 = 118.641$ P=0.000
	Disagree	22	0	22	
	Uncertain	4	0	4	
	3 Access to employment information about job vacancies and skill development initiatives facilitates women’s entry into the work force				
3	Agree	161	0	161	$\chi^2 = 115.207^a$ P=0.000
	Disagree	4	0	4	
	Uncertain	4	8	12	

4	Digital literacy and internet access play a significant role in improving women’s access to employment – information and online job markets				
	Agree	160	8	168	$\chi^2= 44.587^a$ P=0.000
	Disagree	9	0	9	
	Uncertain	0	0	0	
5	Information about work place rights and labor laws empowers women to advocate for fair treatment and equal opportunities in employment				
	Agree	98	8	106	$\chi^2= 20.700^a$ P=0.000
	Disagree	68	0	68	
	Uncertain	3	0	3	
6	Government initiatives to improve access to employment information , such as public awareness campaigns and online resources, can positively impact women’s employment outcomes				
	Agree	63	8	71	$\chi^2= 12.509^a$ P=0.002
	Disagree	72	0	72	
	Uncertain	34	0	34	
7	Access to employment information about government-funded initiatives for women’s empowerment and employment support enhances women’s socio-economic status				
	Agree	121	8	129	$\chi^2= 53.414^a$ P=0.000
	Disagree	29	0	29	
	Uncertain	19	0	19	

The table show that access to information about job vacancies, skill development initiatives, and digital resources facilitates women’s entry into the workforce and enhances job satisfaction. Digital literacy and internet access further expand opportunities by enabling women to explore online job markets, apply for positions, and develop professional skills, thereby increasing competitiveness and satisfaction in their roles (Parker et al., 2012; Bohlander & Snell, 2016).

5. Findings, Conclusions, And Recommendations

5.1 Findings

The present study examined the sociological determinants influencing job satisfaction among employed women in three districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), Pakistan. Using a quantitative research approach, the study analyzed respondents’ demographic characteristics through univariate analysis and explored relationships between key independent variables and job satisfaction through bivariate analysis using cross-tabulations and Chi-square tests. The independent variables included social networks, the role of education in employment, familial support in seeking employment, and access to employment-related information

The demographic findings revealed that most respondents were between 32 and 41 years of age, married, and employed as primary school teachers. The majority reported monthly earnings ranging from PKR 30,000 to 45,000 and lived in joint family systems. These demographic characteristics provide important context for understanding women’s employment experiences and satisfaction levels within the region

The findings highlighted that social networks among women were largely family-oriented and confined to domestic environments. Although these networks provide emotional and informational support, they often limit women’s exposure to broader professional opportunities. Respondents acknowledged that social networks play a meaningful role in sharing employment information, facilitating professional connections, and expanding access to both online and

offline networking platforms. However, many rural women lack the skills and opportunities necessary to develop professional networks, emphasizing the need for initiatives that strengthen networking capacities and digital connectivity.

The role of education emerged as a key factor in enhancing women's employment prospects and job satisfaction. Education equips women with essential skills, knowledge, and confidence required for professional success. It also contributes to reducing gender disparities, challenging traditional social norms, and increasing access to better-paying and more fulfilling employment opportunities. Furthermore, educational attainment enhances women's self-efficacy and their ability to navigate workplace challenges, which positively influences their level of job satisfaction. Familial support was identified as another critical determinant of women's employment experiences. Emotional encouragement, financial assistance, and help with household responsibilities from family members significantly facilitate women's participation in the workforce. Supportive family environments enable women to pursue education, access employment opportunities, and overcome workplace challenges. Conversely, lack of support from male family members, traditional expectations, and household responsibilities can restrict women's career advancement and reduce job satisfaction.

The study also emphasized the importance of access to employment-related information. Availability of timely information regarding job vacancies, skill development programs, labor rights, and government employment initiatives enables women to make informed career decisions and pursue professional growth. Digital literacy and internet access further expand women's ability to explore online job markets and employment resources. In contrast, limited access to such information can restrict career opportunities and negatively affect job satisfaction.

5.2 Conclusion

The study concluded that multiple sociological factors significantly influence job satisfaction among employed women in KPK. Key determinants include social networks (both in-person and digital), education, familial support, and access to employment information. Education alone is insufficient; familial endorsement is often the pivotal factor enabling rural women teachers to overcome gender barriers in KP. Strengthening both can accelerate women's economic participation. Together, these factors shape women's ability to enter the workforce, pursue meaningful careers, overcome workplace challenges, and achieve higher job satisfaction. The study demonstrates that social networks, education, familial support, and access to information collectively shape women's employment experiences and levels of job satisfaction. Strengthening these factors through targeted policies, educational opportunities, awareness programs, and improved digital access can significantly enhance women's participation in the workforce and contribute to their economic empowerment and overall well-being. These findings provide valuable insights for policymakers, educational institutions, and community organizations aiming to promote gender equality and sustainable socio-economic development in KPK.

5.3 Recommendations:

Based on the study findings, the following measures are suggested:

1. Launch community/family awareness programs (via mosques, jirgas, schools) on benefits of women's employment and Islamic gender equity.
2. Provide incentives: subsidized transport/housing for rural female teachers, family support stipends.
3. Expand merit-based female teacher recruitment and training in underserved areas.
4. Integrate gender modules in teacher education to build negotiation skills.

5. Future research: longitudinal or mixed-methods studies in merged districts.

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