The Impact of Gender Role Attitudes and Workplace Discrimination on Job Satisfaction among Women: The Mediating Role of Self-Esteem and the Moderating Effects of Work-Life Balance

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ABSTRACT

In the contemporary workforce, women continue to face entrenched gender-based barriers that hinder their job satisfaction and professional growth. Despite growing participation across sectors, traditional gender role attitudes and pervasive workplace discrimination remain significant obstacles. These societal and organizational biases not only challenge women's advancement but also adversely affect their self-esteem and capacity to maintain a balanced personal and professional life. The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of gender role attitudes and workplace discrimination on job satisfaction among women, incorporating self-esteem as a mediating variable and work-life balance as a moderating factor. Guided by Social Role Theory and Conservation of Resources Theory, the study aimed to uncover both the structural and psychological mechanisms affecting women's workplace experiences. A quantitative, cross-sectional survey was conducted among 301 professional women from public sectors in Pakistan, including education, healthcare, law enforcement, and social services. Standardized instruments were used to measure all variables via a 5-point Likert scale. Data were analyzed using SPSS and AMOS, with Hayes' PROCESS Macro employed for mediation and moderation analysis. The main results revealed that workplace discrimination significantly decreased self-esteem and job satisfaction, while egalitarian gender role attitudes indirectly

enhanced job satisfaction through higher self-esteem. Self-esteem fully mediated the relationship between gender role attitudes and job satisfaction, and partially mediated the relationship between workplace discrimination and job satisfaction. Additionally, work-life balance significantly moderated the link between self-esteem and job satisfaction amplifying job satisfaction for women reporting higher balance. The value and implications of this study lie in its integrated framework that combines societal attitudes, workplace conditions, and psychological resilience. The findings underscore the importance of inclusive policies, self-esteem enhancement programs, and flexible work arrangements in promoting gender equity, psychological well-being, and sustained job satisfaction for women in diverse professional settings.

Introduction

Women's involvement in employment has notably increased in the changing world of global employment. Although this has been made, the women remain to face the systematic barriers restraining their professional growth and general job contentment (Ferrari et al., 2022). These problems are usually based on established gender role attitudes and permeating workplace discrimination. Such societal and organizational biases do not only impact negatively on women career path but also negatively influences their psychological well-being and satisfaction in their professional roles (Mensah, 2021). Gender role attitudes, i.e. societal beliefs about what roles and behaviors are appropriate for men and women, have a Notify communications much impact on workplace dynamics. Traditional ideologies tend to relegate women unto subservient roles that doubt their ability to lead or to be competent in their fields of work. Such stereotyping is being realized through discriminative practices where women's opportunities for growth and recognition in their respective fields are restricted (Adom & Anambane, 2020). Discrimination at the workplace (including unfair remuneration, lack of opportunities for promotions, prejudiced assessment) enhances the violations against women. Such discriminating environments do not only reduce job satisfaction but also affect self-esteem of women, which is an essential determinant of their professional involvement and competence (Bryant, 2020). Besides, the fight to achieve a balanced work-life balance brings another headache. Women try to balance their professional demands with their societal expectation to care for children and tend to the home to get more stressed and decreased job satisfaction (Moore et al., 2019). It is critical to understanding how these factors interact, in order to establish inclusive workplaces that promote professional and personal well-being among women.

This research examines the complex interactions between women and their professional life, as such paying attention to the ways in which gender role attitudes and workplace discrimination, the key independent ones have an impact on job satisfaction, the main dependent variable. Gender role attitudes are operationally defined as people's perceptions on the expected roles and duties of men and women in the society (Çetin et al., 2023). Work place discrimination is when females experience or perceive bias, prejudice or unequal treatment from professional environments due to their gender identity (Tang & Xu, 2023). Based on socio-psychological perspective, the study further investigates mediating role of self-esteem, defined as women's overall assessment of their professional worth and

capability (Akniyet, 2022). Also, work-life balance is adopted as a moderator and it refers to an individual's capacity to balance activities among work and personal spheres (Kamboj, 2024). Through this model the researcher strives to explain how the ability to balance these spheres can cushion the effect of gender-based problems in the workplace on the job satisfaction of women. Job satisfaction here refers to a person's perception/appraisal of one's position both cognitively and emotionally regarding some job factors, such as duties, conditions, and satisfaction (Judge et al., 2020). Through an incorporation of these factors into a common theoretical structure, the study seeks to reveal the psychological and contextual factors that determine the well-being of women in their workplace. This holistic approach sheds light on how society norms, organizational practices as well as individual psychological resources converge to shape the experience of women in the workplaces. In the end, the results are expected to guide gender-sensitive workplace policies and interventions targeting to ensure equity, inclusion, and workforce well-being in professional setting (Gutiérrez & Castaño, 2020).

Although the existing literature invariably sought to explain individual effects of gender role attitudes and workplace discrimination on satisfaction of women's jobs, there is a lack of study about how self-esteem operates as a mediator and how the work-life balance moderates in this context. For example, studies have shown that there is the negative correlation between workplace discrimination and job satisfaction among women (Bader et al., 2018). Analogously, the studies suggest that the attitudes towards traditional gender roles may inhibit the progress and pleasure of women in the working field (Epstein, 2022). However, the processes by which these factors affect job satisfaction, especially the role that self-esteem plays, are not well grasped. Furthermore, although work-life balance has been found to be an important element in the well-being of employees, the moderating impact of work-life balance on the relationship between challenges at the workplace and job satisfaction in women needs further investigation. Closing this research gap is critical to the formulation of complete strategies to cater to women's professional satisfaction and psychological well-being.

The present study is driven by four integral objectives that are aimed at untangling the complex dynamics that characterize women's experiences within professional environments. First, it attempts to determine the influence of gender role attitudes on job satisfaction to reveal the effect of culturally conditioned mind-sets regarding gender roles behind women's perceptions and fulfillment in their workplace. Secondly, it aims to measure the impact of the discrimination at workplace like bias, inequitable opportunity, and discriminatory practices on the overall job satisfaction of women. Thirdly, the investigation provides the attempt to explore the mediation role of self-esteem, by identifying how internal psychological resilience or vulnerability may funnel the effect of discriminatory experience and attitude of the society upon job satisfaction. Finally, this study seeks to explore the moderating role of work-life balance examining whether woman's capability to balance between her professional and personal responsibilities either buffers or aggravates gender-based problems on her workplace satisfaction. Together, these goals aim at the creation of a better understanding of the structural and psychological factors affecting women's workplace well-being and development of targeted interventions leading to the achievement of equality, empowerment, and sustainable job satisfaction.

Although there has been progress in gender equality at workplaces, there are many issues that women still encounter and which hinder their job satisfaction and professional development. Traditional gender role attitude sustains stereotypes to doubt women's competencies that manifest discriminative practices to deny their blessings and attention. These experiences are likely to diminish self-esteem which is essential in a professional context of engagement and satisfaction. In addition, the challenges to balance work obligations against societal pressure to caregivers increase stress and compromises job satisfaction. Studies conducted have focused on these factors individually without making an integrated analysis whereby the interplay between gender role attitudes, the workplace discrimination, self-esteem and work-life balance was established and this has created a need for such an analysis. Comprehension of these relationships is vital in formulating comprehensive strategies that will promote the women's well-being and promotion in the workplace.

Theoretical Support and Hypothesis Development

The current study is based mostly on Social Role Theory (Eagly, 1987), Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory (Hobfoll, 1989), and their combination, which present a strong frame of reference for analyzing the many interrelations between gender role attitudes, workplace discrimination, self-esteem, work-life balance, and Social Role Theory assumes that societal expectations in regard to gender roles are deeply meted in historical divisions of labour which have in turn informed prescriptive norms of men and women in both public and private domains (Watts & Hodgson, 2019). These dictated roles form the basis of which people see themselves and others in different social settings such as work place. Whereas in many cultures, women are still expected to give priority to caregiving and domestic roles rather than career, there results in to an internalized beliefs conflicts with the organizational demands. Such internalized/imposed gender role attitudes may negatively affect women's job satisfaction, especially when women believe that they are being forced to take traditional roles or when women think that their professional contribution is not considered appropriately (Epstein, 2022). Such gender norms can be explained as an extension of workplace discrimination within organizational setups. It commonly manifests itself in the form of unjust opportunities, prejudiced appraisals, sexual harassments, and exclusion from leadership positions. Social Role Theory sheds some light on the ways in which gendered expectations tend to sustain discrimination, as well as on the reasons why non-traditionally behaving women can be punished professionally (Wei, 2021). Therefore, the issues of gender role attitudes and the issue of workplace discrimination are conceptualized in the given study as major independent influences on job satisfactions among women through culturally inscribed social mechanisms.

To understand what effect these external pressures had on persons psychologically, the study utilized Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory whereby people attempt to get, preserve and safeguard their valued resources like self-esteem, well-being, and job security (Jabeen et al., 2022). Gender-based discrimination or a sense of constraint of societal gender roles as stressors can drain critical psychological resources. In this case, self-esteem acts as a mediator conversing to an important resource at stake that can be lost due to continued exposure to devaluing situations. The research shows that low self-esteem does not only jeopardize confidence and motivation but also mediates the negative influence of discriminatory working

environment on job satisfaction (Jo & Paik, 2018). On the other hand, a positive self-esteem can act as a buffer, and women can have a favorable professional identity even from the outside challenges. Work-life balance is also included in this framework as a moderating variable, this is in line with the principle behind COR theory which revolves around the importance of how resources are managed in order to reduce stress. Work-life balance offers a balance for women to reconcile conflicting demands in their professional and personal life, retaining psychological resources and increasing job satisfaction (Rashmi & Kataria, 2023). Work-life balance achieves allow the adverse effects of discriminatory practices and gender-based expectation not to undermine women's self-esteem and job satisfaction. However, when such balance is not present, these stressors may have a greater impact and be more destructive. This moderating function has been validated in recent empirical studies that show work-life balance does not only enhance general well-being amongst the people but also reduced the effect of occupational stress and gender bias on the job-related outcomes of the females (Sisodia & Rocque, 2023).

Social Role Theory explains the structural and cultural barriers such as the gender norms and discrimination that stand against workplace satisfaction of women, while COR Theory reveals the psychological processes behind that stand as moderators of the external factors to the internal outcomes, such as self-esteem and resource management. The amalgamation of these theories provides an overarching context into which one could fit the ways in which sociocultural expectations and workplace inequities reconcile to define women's professional lives. It is especially appropriate for this very complex variable structure of the study that analyzes both direct and indirect paths to job satisfaction while still being able to capture conditional (moderating) effects. Theoretical background that comes with Social Role Theory and Conservation of Resources Theory creates a convincing argument as to why and how this study's central variables are incorporated and interact. Not only does it make conceptual clarity of the research model richer but also helps in the empirical exploration of how the societal attitudes and working places condition the state of psychological well-being and job satisfaction of women. Utilizing these theoretical perspectives, the current study can provide valuable input both into academic literature and into the interventions that aim to establish gender equity and promote psychological resilience in the contexts of professions.

Hypothesis Development

Gender role attitudes are ideas and expectations held by an individual about right positions and acts of men and women in the Ignored society's people (Güler & Yüksel, 2021). And when women possess egalitarian gender role attitudes, they are likely to aspire for leadership position, exude assertive behavior, and make endeavors to achieve career growth. Such good attitudes empower women to overcome traditional barriers to their career advancement and satisfaction (Mohamed et al., 2023). Moreover, workplace settings that allow to implement egalitarian values usually provide inclusive workplaces allowing women to be valued and inspired, improving the job satisfaction current (Attia et al., 2024). On the other hand, most of the traditional gender role attitudes undermine women from being actively involved in seeking promotions or leadership roles, thus impeding their way in career progression and satisfaction levels. Therefore, positive attitudes towards gender roles are the psychological motivation for career growth and workplace satisfaction.

H1: Gender Role Attitude has positive effects on the Career Advancement and Job Satisfaction among women.

Workplace discrimination includes discrimination on the basis of gender in terms of recruitment, paying different salaries, fewer opportunities for promotion, and hostile working environment (Noor et al., 2023). Such form of discrimination adversely alters women motivation, psychological well-being, and perceptions of justice, thus limiting opportunities for career growth and job satisfaction (Goodall, 2024). Discrimination is not only marginalizing women's contributions but also demotivating them from leading position and thereby creating self-perpetuating cycles of underrepresentation and dissatisfaction (Gosai et al., 2023). Constant exposure to discriminatory acts results in burnouts on the job, withdrawal behaviors and lack of confidence in one's expertise, consequently discouraging long-term careers.

H2: Workplace Discrimination has negative effects on the Career Advancement and Job Satisfaction among women.

Self-esteem that refers to one's general sense of self-worth or personal value is an essential mediator of the relationship between external factors such as gender-role expectations or workplace discrimination and job outcomes (Imhanrenialena et al., 2022). Women who internalize traditional gender roles and those who experience discrimination could have low self-esteem and consequently lack confidence in regards to seeking public leadership positions or getting pleasure from their occupation (Abbas et al., 2021). On the other hand, high self-esteem works as a psychological inoculation, as it helps the women stay resilient against bias, and stay focused on their career the goals (Crasta & Dmello, 2024). This mediation indicates that the influence of societal and organizational problems is subjected to filtration through the prism of the self-perception of women and, respectively, impacts her career promotion and job satisfaction.

H3: Self-esteem mediates the relationship between Gender Role Attitude, Workplace Discrimination and Career Advancement and Job Satisfaction among women.

Work-life balance refers to an individual's ability to effectively manage demands across professional and personal domains. As a moderator, it can significantly influence the strength of the relationship between self-esteem and workplace outcomes. When women are able to achieve a healthy work-life balance, the positive effects of high self-esteem on career advancement and job satisfaction are magnified. In contrast, poor balance may negate the benefits of high self-esteem, leading to stress and disengagement (ABDDULRAHEEM et al., 2023). The stress-buffering hypothesis supports this moderating effect, proposing that personal resources (like self-esteem) are more effective in promoting well-being when contextual stressors like poor work-life balance are minimal (Pluut et al., 2022). Moreover, achieving balance contributes to a sense of control and competence, which complements high self-esteem and further propels women toward career success and workplace satisfaction.

H4: Work-Life Balance moderate the relationship between Self-Esteem and Career Advancement and Job Satisfaction among Women.
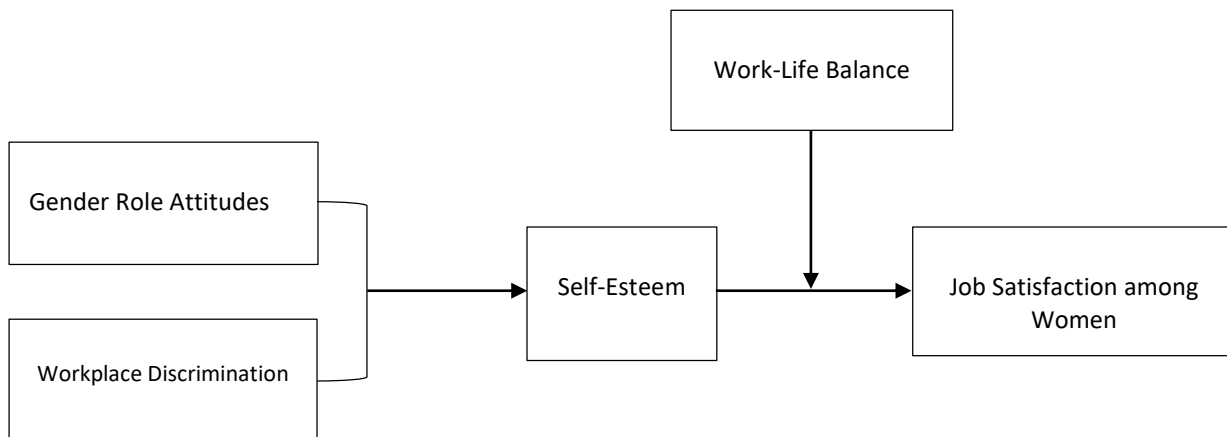
Figure 1. Study Model

Methodology

This study utilizes a quantitative research methodology to explore the influence of gender role attitudes and workplace discrimination on job satisfaction among women, with self-esteem acting as a mediating variable and work-life balance serving as a moderator. A cross-sectional survey design was employed, which is appropriate for examining relationships among multiple variables within a defined population at a single point in time. The population for this study comprises professional women employed in diverse sectors, including medical sectors, Educational Sectors teaching and administrative staff, Law Enforcements departments and Social Welfare Department employees in Pakistan. These groups were selected based on their relevance to the workplace environment where gender dynamics and organizational discrimination are often observed. A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants who meet the inclusion criteria specifically, women with at least one year of full-time work experience in these sectors. A sample of 301 was selected by using the krejcie and morgan table. Data collection was done through a structured, self-administered questionnaire comprising items adapted from standardized scales. The questionnaire was divided into sections corresponding to each variable under investigation, and responses were recorded using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. The data were analyzed using SPSS and AMOS software. Descriptive statistics were used to present demographic information and summarize variable distributions. Pearson correlation was conducted to test direct relationships, while Hayes' PROCESS Macro (Model 4 and Model 1) was used to assess mediation and moderation effects, respectively. The internal consistency of all scales was verified using Cronbach's alpha, with values above 0.70 indicating acceptable reliability. Ethical considerations were rigorously observed throughout the study.

Scale Measurement

The current research study used the following standardized measurement scales to measure the key variables of the study. Gender Role Attitudes were assessed using the Gender Role Attitudes Scale (GRAS) developed by (García-Cueto et al., 2015). Workplace Discrimination was measured using the Workplace Prejudice/Discrimination Inventory (WPDI) developed by (James et al., 1994). This inventory evaluated women's experiences of prejudice and discrimination at work,

particularly related to gender. Self-Esteem, which served as the mediating variable, was measured using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) developed by (Rosenberg, 1965). This 10-item scale assessed overall self-worth through both positively and negatively worded statements. Work-Life Balance, which functioned as the moderating variable, was measured using the Work-Life Balance Scale developed by (Brough et al., 2014). Job Satisfaction was assessed using the short form of the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) developed by (Weiss et al., 1967). This instrument measured employees' satisfaction with different facets of their jobs. These all scales employed a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Data Analysis and Results

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the participants (N=301), offering a comprehensive overview of their gender, age, qualification, and professional experience. Notably, the entire sample comprised female respondents, indicating a 100% female representation, which may reflect the gender-specific focus or nature of the study. The age distribution reveals that the majority of participants (59.8%) fall within the 21–30 years age bracket, followed by 23.26% aged between 31–40 years, suggesting a predominantly young to middle-aged cohort. In terms of educational qualifications, a significant proportion held a Bachelor's degree (39.87%), while 33.22% had attained a Master's level education, and 19.93% were Doctorate holders, indicating a well-educated sample. Additionally, 6.98% of the participants had completed education up to the higher secondary level. Regarding professional experience, more than half of the participants (56.48%) had 1–5 years of experience, suggesting early to mid-career professionals as the majority. A smaller portion reported having 6–10 years (19.93%), 11–15 years (8.31%), and 16–20 years (3.32%) of experience, while only 1.99% had over 20 years of professional background. These statistics collectively demonstrate that the participant pool is not only highly educated but also largely composed of young, early-career professionals, which may influence the perspectives and insights captured in the study.

Table 1. Demographic Information of Participants

Demographic Characteristics	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Female	301	100
Age		
21–30 years	180	59.8
31–40 years	70	23.26
41–50 years	45	14.95
Above 50	6	1.99
Qualification		
Bachelors	120	39.87
Masters	100	33.22
Doctorates	60	19.93
Higher Secondary Level	21	6.98
Experience		
Less than 1 year	30	9.97
1–5 years	170	56.48
6–10 years	60	19.93

11–15 years	25	8.31
16–20 years	10	3.32
More than 20 years	6	1.99

Total N=301

The reliability and validity analysis presented in Table 2 demonstrates that the measurement instruments used in the study exhibit strong psychometric properties. All constructs achieved Composite Reliability (CR) values exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating excellent internal consistency. Specifically, CR values ranged from 0.878 for Gender Role Attitudes to 0.922 for Self-Esteem, confirming that the items within each scale reliably measure their respective latent constructs. Convergent validity was assessed through Average Variance Extracted (AVE), with all constructs surpassing the minimum criterion of 0.50. The AVE values ranged from 0.611 (Gender Role Attitudes) to 0.687 (Workplace Discrimination), suggesting that a substantial portion of variance in each construct is explained by its observed indicators. This further confirms the constructs' convergent validity. Cronbach's alpha values also indicate strong reliability, with all constructs scoring above the standard 0.70 threshold. The Self-Esteem scale exhibited the highest alpha (0.915), reflecting a particularly cohesive set of items, while even the lowest alpha (for Gender Role Attitudes) remained robust at 0.864. In terms of factor loadings, all items loaded significantly onto their intended constructs, with values generally above 0.70, reinforcing the construct validity. Notably, items like WD2 (0.879) and JS4 (0.846) demonstrated especially high loadings, underscoring their strong contribution to the overall measurement of Workplace Discrimination and Job Satisfaction, respectively. These results affirm that the measurement instruments employed in this study are both reliable and valid, providing a sound basis for further hypothesis testing and structural modeling.

Table 2. Reliability and validity of instruments

Variable	Loadings	AVE	CR	Cronbach's alpha
Gender Role Attitudes		**0.611**	**0.878**	**0.864**
GRA1. A woman's most important role is being a good homemaker.	0.812			
GRA2. Men are more capable of making important decisions.	0.823			
GRA3. A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work.	0.701			
GRA4. Men should be the main breadwinners in a family.	0.791			
Workplace Discrimination		**0.687**	**0.901**	**0.891**
WD1. I have been treated unfairly at work because of my gender.	0.846			
WD2. My chances for promotion are lower than my male colleagues.	0.879			
WD3. I have experienced subtle forms of discrimination (e.g., being ignored, interrupted).	0.811			
WD4. Management does not take reports of discrimination seriously.	0.771			
Self-Esteem		**0.621**	**0.922**	**0.915**

SE1. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.	0.822			
SE2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	0.834			
SE3. I take a positive attitude toward myself.	0.791			
SE4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.	0.754			
SE5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.	0.693			
SE6. I certainly feel useless at times.	0.711			
SE7. I feel that I'm a failure.	0.732			
SE8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.	0.706			
SE9. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.	0.699			
SE10. I feel that I have nothing to be proud of.	0.677			
Work-Life Balance		**0.664**	**0.89**	**0.872**
WLB1. I am satisfied with my work-life balance.	0.845			
WLB2. I manage to balance the demands of my work and personal life well.	0.813			
WLB3. I feel that the time I spend on work and on personal activities is well balanced.	0.803			
WLB4. I often feel that work interferes with my personal life.	0.732			
WLB5. I have difficulty balancing my work and non-work responsibilities.	0.704			
Job Satisfaction		**0.652**	**0.885**	**0.874**
JS1. Being able to keep busy all the time.	0.788			
JS2. The chance to work alone on the job.	0.751			
JS3. The way my boss handles his/her workers.	0.812			
JS4. The praise I get for doing a good job.	0.846			
JS5. The feeling of accomplishment I get from the job.	0.802			

Table 3 presents the Pearson correlation coefficients along with the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values (displayed diagonally in bold) to assess the relationships among key study variables: Gender Role Attitudes, Workplace Discrimination, Self-Esteem, Work-Life Balance, and Job Satisfaction. The AVE root values for all constructs exceed the threshold of 0.70, ranging from 0.78 to 0.83, thereby confirming satisfactory discriminant validity. In terms of inter-variable relationships, Gender Role Attitudes show a significant positive correlation with Workplace Discrimination ($r = 0.21$, $p < 0.05$), suggesting that traditional or biased gender role perceptions may be linked to heightened experiences of discrimination in the workplace. Conversely, Gender Role Attitudes are negatively associated with Self-Esteem ($r = -0.30$, $p < 0.01$), Work-Life Balance ($r = -0.25$, $p < 0.05$), and Job Satisfaction ($r = -0.18$), implying that more rigid or stereotypical attitudes may detract from individuals' psychological and professional well-being. Workplace Discrimination exhibits a significant negative correlation with Self-Esteem ($r = -0.40$, $p < 0.01$), Work-Life Balance ($r = -0.35$, $p < 0.01$), and Job Satisfaction ($r = -0.42$), highlighting its detrimental impact across both personal and occupational domains. Furthermore, Self-Esteem is positively associated with both Work-Life Balance ($r = 0.45$, $p < 0.01$) and Job Satisfaction ($r = 0.55$, $p < 0.01$), emphasizing the pivotal role of self-worth in fostering a balanced and fulfilling work life. Similarly, Work-Life Balance is significantly and positively related to Job Satisfaction ($r = 0.50$, $p < 0.01$), reinforcing the idea that

effective balance between work and personal responsibilities enhances overall job contentment. Collectively, the results underline the interconnected nature of psychological and workplace factors, with implications for organizational practices aiming to promote equity, self-esteem, and employee well-being.

Table 3. Pearson Correlation and AVE Root Value

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
Gender Role Attitudes	0.78				
Workplace Discrimination	0.21*	0.83			
Self-Esteem	−0.30**	−0.40**	0.79		
Work-Life Balance	−0.25*	−0.35**	0.45**	0.81	
Job Satisfaction	−0.18	−0.42	0.55**	0.50**	0.81

The mediation analysis presented in Table 4, conducted using the bootstrapping method, offers compelling insights into the psychological pathways influencing job satisfaction. The results demonstrate that workplace discrimination has a significant negative impact on self-esteem (B = −0.40, p < .001), which in turn positively predicts job satisfaction (B = 0.55, p < .001). Moreover, workplace discrimination directly reduces job satisfaction (B = −0.42, p < .001). The indirect effect of workplace discrimination on job satisfaction through self-esteem is also negative and significant (B = −0.22, 95% CI [−0.32, −0.13]), confirming that self-esteem partially mediates this relationship. Conversely, gender role attitudes positively influence self-esteem (B = 0.30, p < .001), and through this enhanced self-esteem, indirectly increase job satisfaction (indirect effect = 0.17, 95% CI [0.07, 0.27]). While the direct effect of gender role attitudes on job satisfaction (B = 0.18, p = .101) is not statistically significant, the significant indirect path through self-esteem underscores the mediating role of self-esteem in translating positive gender role attitudes into greater job satisfaction. Overall, this analysis emphasizes the central role of self-esteem as a psychological conduit, through which negative experiences like workplace discrimination and positive traits like egalitarian gender role attitudes exert their influence on job satisfaction. Notably, among all variables, workplace discrimination is the only factor with a detrimental effect on job satisfaction, highlighting the critical need to address discriminatory practices to foster a healthy and productive work environment.

Table 4. Mediation Analysis through Bootstrapping Method

Path	Coefficient (B)	SE	T	p	95% CI (Lower)	95% CI (Upper)
Workplace Discrimination → Self-Esteem (a_1)	−0.40	0.07	−5.71	<.001	−0.53	−0.27
Self-Esteem → Job Satisfaction (b_1)	0.55	0.06	9.17	<.001	0.43	0.67
Workplace Discrimination → Job Satisfaction (c_1)	−0.42	0.09	−4.67	<.001	−0.60	−0.24
Indirect Effect (a_1b_1)	−0.22	0.05			−0.32	−0.13
Gender Role Attitude → Self-Esteem (a_2)	0.3	0.08	3.75	<.001	0.14	0.46

Self-Esteem → Job Satisfaction (b_2)	0.55	0.06	9.17	<.001	0.43	0.67
Gender Role Attitude → Job Satisfaction (c_2)	0.18	0.11	1.64	0.101	−0.03	0.39
Indirect Effect (a_2b_2)	0.17	0.05			0.07	0.27

Table 5 presents the results of the moderation analysis conducted using the bootstrapping method to investigate whether Work-Life Balance (WLB) moderates the relationship between Self-Esteem (SE) and Job Satisfaction (JS). The analysis reveals that both Self-Esteem (B = 0.45, p < .001) and Work-Life Balance (B = 0.35, p < .001) individually have significant positive effects on Job Satisfaction, indicating that higher self-worth and a better balance between work and personal life are independently associated with increased job satisfaction. Most importantly, the interaction term (SE × WLB) is also significant (B = 0.18, p = .003), with a confidence interval that does not include zero (95% CI [0.06, 0.31]), confirming a meaningful moderation effect. This interaction suggests that the positive relationship between self-esteem and job satisfaction is strengthened when employees experience a higher level of work-life balance. In other words, individuals with strong self-esteem are likely to report even greater job satisfaction when they perceive a harmonious integration between their work and personal lives. These findings underscore the synergistic role of psychological and contextual factors, highlighting that fostering both personal self-worth and supportive work-life policies can significantly enhance employees' overall job satisfaction.

Table 5. Moderation Analysis through Bootstrapping Method

Path	Coefficient (B)	SE	t	p	95% CI (Lower)	95% CI (Upper)
Self-Esteem → Job Satisfaction	0.45	0.07	6.43	<.001	0.31	0.59
Work-Life Balance → Job Satisfaction	0.35	0.08	4.38	<.001	0.19	0.51
SE × WLB (Interaction Term) → Job Satisfaction	0.18	0.06	3	0.003	0.06	0.31

Discussion

The present study sought to examine the effect of gender roles attitudes and discrimination from a workplace on job satisfaction among women, while self-esteem was considered as the mediator and work-life balance as the moderator. The findings give in-depth understanding of the ways in which these factors interact to define the women's professional experience and general job satisfaction (David, 2025). The findings were in line with the first hypothesis, as it suggested that positive gender role attitudes affect career advancement and job satisfaction positively. According to the results, women with egalitarian orientation towards gender role attitudes indicated higher levels of job satisfaction (B = 0.30, p < .001), higher levels of self-esteem. This is consistent with earlier studies which asserted that egalitarian beliefs give women's power to attain leadership roles and disregard previous restrictions thus elevating both career and workplace comfort (Bano & Nadeem, 2024). The positive relationship between gender role attitudes and self-esteem support that internalized beliefs may

drive professional outcomes, (B = 0.30, p < .001) as stated in the works of (Lo et al., 2019).

The other hypothesis that claimed that workplace discrimination had negative effects on job satisfaction was also confirmed by the results. Through the analysis, workplace discrimination was found to have a pronounced negative impact on a person's self-esteem (B = –0.40, p < .001) and a direct negative association on job satisfaction (B = –0.42, p < .001). These findings are consistent with the existing literature, that explained the negative impacts of workplace discrimination on women's professional involvement and psychological well-being (Chawla & Sharma, 2019). Besides, the substantial indirect effect of workplace discrimination on job satisfaction via self-esteem (B = –0.22, 95% CI [–0.32, –0.13]) further reinforces the mediating role played by self-esteem, which resonates with the results obtained in (Green, 2024).

The third hypothesis that suggested that self-esteem acts as a mediator in the relationship between gender role attitudes, and workplace discrimination, and job satisfaction was strongly supported by empirical evidences. The results of mediation analysis illustrated that self-esteem did significantly serve as a mediator for both gender role attitudes and workplace discrimination in regards to their effects on job satisfaction. In particular, the indirect effect of gender role attitudes on job satisfaction through self-esteem was positive and significant (B = 0.17, 95% CI [0.07, 0.27]), which means that encouraging positive self-perceptions could attenuate the effects of negative work experiences. This is consistent with the study which stated that the effect of self-esteem as a psychological resource to alleviate the consequences of workplace adversity (Zhang et al., 2023).

Finally, the fourth hypothesis that postulated that the work-life balance moderates the relationship between self-esteem and job satisfaction also received support from the study's results. Moderation analysis showed that the interaction between self-esteem and work life balance is significant (B = 0.18, p = .003) thus meaning the effect of self-esteem in determinants of job satisfaction is enhanced amidst high level of work-life balance on the part of women. This result is in the line with another research in which researcher posed a crucial role of work-life balance concerning job satisfaction and psychological well-being among working women (Badri, 2019).

The present study does not only support the suggested hypotheses, but it also extends the existing literature and incorporates the mediating role of self-esteem, as well as the moderating role of work-life balance, into the conceptual framework. Such results emphasize the importance of emphasizing the elimination of gender role attitudes and discrimination in workspaces coupled with increased self-esteem and work-life balance with a view to improving the satisfaction of the majority of women in such varied work contexts. The implications for practice are the need for organizations to adopt inclusive policy to facilitate positive gender roles attitudes, decrease discrimination, and embrace work-life balance with the aim of supporting women's professional growth and mental health (Tushabe et al., 2025).

This research tries to fill a huge research gap by discussing the mediating and the moderating role of self-esteem and work-life balance respectively in the relationship between gender role attitudes, workplace discrimination, and job satisfaction among women. Although individual effects of gender role attitudes and workplace discrimination on job satisfaction have been examined in the existing literature that the mechanisms by which these elements play the role in job satisfaction are yet

poorly and specifically as regards to the role of self-esteem as mediator (Zhao & Ngai, 2022). The previous studies have so far mostly examined the direct effects of workplace discrimination and gender role attitudes without taking into account how self-esteem can play the role of psychological refuge from challenges such as these. In addition, while employment balance has been highly recognized as an important aspect of employees' well-being, the moderation role that it plays between workplace adversity and job satisfaction among women at work has not been well established. By bringing these variables together into a coherent framework, the current study adds to the literature on how gender role attitudes and workplace discrimination affect the job satisfaction of women, and provides useful information for devising gender-specific interventions in order to advance their professional satisfaction and psychology. These results stress the need to address the gender role attitudes and workplace discrimination in the promotion of self-esteem and work-life balance to increase job satisfaction in women in varying occupations. The implications for practice are organizations need adopt inclusive policies that encourage positive attitudes about gender roles that can curb discrimination and balance work and life to facilitate women's professional career as well as the psychological wellbeing (Abraham & Rowley, 2024).

Conclusion

This study provides thorough insight into how gender role attitudes, workplace discrimination, self-esteem, and work-life balance impact on the job satisfaction of women. Based on Social Role Theory and Conservation of Resources Theory, the results emphasize that deeply engrained societal expectations filled with discriminatory practices in the workplace still detract women from professional fulfilment. Traditional gender role attitude which provides limited and stereotypical role for women plays a large role in having lowered self-esteem and less job satisfaction. On the other hand, egalitarian gender beliefs give way to self-worth and professional ambition and, finally, increase women's satisfaction at workplace. Discrimination at workplace also turned out to be a very destructive factor, both in a direct and an indirect way affecting job satisfaction due to the negative effect on self-esteem. Such experiences as prejudiced assessments, unequal level of advancement and exclusionist practices not only undermine women's professional confidence but also wear down their motivation and commitment. The mediating position of self-esteem presents the psychological cost that these external pressures extract from women, showing that, despite competence and ability, an abundance of devaluation can inhibit women's performance and their well-being. The moderating role of work-life balance gives the insight into the contextual factors that can amplify or reduce these negative effects. Women who manage to find a healthy balance between work and personal duties are more likely to be able to utilize the advantages of high self-esteem in terms of more job satisfaction. This bears out the imperativeness of organizational policies that promote flexible work set up and recognize the multiple roles played by many women. Together, the study promotes the necessity of a multifaceted policy to improve women's experiences at workplaces. For changing attitudes about gender roles, there is both a cultural and institutional shift needed that works against the stereotypes and institutionalizes the practice of inclusivity. At the same time, diminishing discrimination at workplace requires such proactive measures as clear promotion guidelines, diversity training, and zero-tolerance

provisions for bias. Building self-esteem for women through initiatives and facilitating work life balance can go a long way to increase the job satisfaction experiencing and career advancement. To conclude, creating equal, respectful and supportive environments in the workplaces is not only the moral obligation but comes as the strategic necessity for the organizations that intend to prosper in world of diversity. Through addressing the deep-seated dissatisfaction issues, namely, discriminatory practices and constricting gender norms, as well as increasing protective factors such as the ones of self-esteem and work-life balance, institutions can employ measures and strategies that will ensure that women not only are present in the working population but also are situated to succeed and lead.

Implications

The findings of this study offer critical implications for workplace policies, organizational practices, psychological support mechanisms, and sociocultural reforms aimed at enhancing job satisfaction and career advancement among women.

1. Organizational and HR Practices

The significant negative effects of workplace discrimination on self-esteem and job satisfaction call for urgent organizational reform. Employers must:

➢ Implement zero-tolerance policies against discrimination and bias, especially gender-based.
➢ Promote inclusive HR practices, including fair recruitment, transparent promotion systems, and equitable evaluation mechanisms.
➢ Regularly conduct gender-sensitivity training and workshops to challenge unconscious biases and promote equity.

2. Support for Psychological Well-being

Given the mediating role of self-esteem, it is imperative that organizations:

➢ Invest in counseling services and mentorship programs specifically tailored to support women's confidence and career resilience.
➢ Foster a supportive and validating work environment that recognizes women's contributions and provides regular, meaningful feedback.
➢ Encourage employee development programs to build self-worth and empower women to pursue leadership roles.

3. Work-Life Balance as a Strategic Priority

The moderating effect of work-life balance on the relationship between self-esteem and job satisfaction suggests:

➢ The need for flexible work arrangements, such as hybrid models, telecommuting, and flexible hours.
➢ Provision of family-friendly policies like parental leave, childcare facilities, and support for caregivers to reduce the dual-burden stress on working women.
➢ Organizations must view work-life balance not as a perk but a productivity-enhancing necessity.

4. Policy-Level Implications

The government and institutional policymakers should:

➢ Enforce and strengthen anti-discrimination laws in the workplace, particularly in public sector institutions.
➢ Encourage gender equity audits in both public and private sectors to assess and monitor progress.

➢ Allocate funds and support for capacity-building programs for women in leadership and management roles.

5. Cultural and Societal Change

➢ Since traditional gender role attitudes negatively affect self-esteem and job satisfaction, broader sociocultural interventions are needed:

➢ Educational institutions should integrate gender studies and empowerment modules to shape egalitarian beliefs early on.

➢ Media campaigns and community programs must challenge gender stereotypes and celebrate women's professional accomplishments.

➢ Family and community support systems must be sensitized to the changing roles of women, especially in balancing domestic and professional life.

6. Research and Academic Contributions

This study contributes to filling the gap in literature by establishing self-esteem as a key mediator and work-life balance as a moderator two variables often overlooked in earlier studies.

➢ Future researchers can build upon this model across different cultural and occupational contexts.

➢ The mixed-method approach may be applied in future to capture deeper emotional and experiential insights behind statistical trends.

Limitations of the study

Despite offering valuable insights into the interplay between gender role attitudes, workplace discrimination, self-esteem, work-life balance, and job satisfaction among women, the present study is not without its limitations. These limitations must be acknowledged to contextualize the findings and guide future research.

1. Cross-Sectional Design

The study employed a cross-sectional survey design, which restricts the ability to draw causal inferences. While significant associations were identified among variables, the temporal sequencing and long-term effects of gender role attitudes or workplace discrimination on job satisfaction cannot be firmly established. Longitudinal studies are needed to explore how these relationships evolve over time.

2. Use of Self-Report Measures

Data were collected through self-administered questionnaires, which may introduce social desirability bias or response bias. Participants might have underreported discriminatory experiences or over reported positive self-esteem and job satisfaction due to societal or professional pressures, thereby affecting the authenticity of responses.

3. Limited Generalizability

The sample consisted exclusively of women working in specific sectors within Pakistan (e.g., education, healthcare, social welfare, police). While this allowed for focused insights, the findings may not be generalizable to all female professionals, particularly those in the private sector, informal labor, rural regions, or global contexts with different cultural and institutional norms.

4. Focus on Women Only

Although the focus on women is justified by the study's objectives, the absence of a male comparison group limits the ability to contrast how gender role attitudes and workplace discrimination may affect job satisfaction across genders. Including male

perspectives in future research could provide a more comprehensive picture of workplace dynamics.

5. Omission of Other Influencing Variables

While the model incorporates key variables like self-esteem and work-life balance, other potentially influential factors such as organizational culture, personality traits, marital status, family support, and economic dependency were not considered. These could also mediate or moderate the relationships examined in this study.

6. Reliance on Quantitative Data

Although the quantitative approach provided statistical rigor, it lacked the depth and nuance of qualitative insights. The lived experiences, emotional impact, and coping mechanisms of women navigating discrimination or work-life conflict remain underexplored.

7. Homogeneity in Demographics

A significant portion of the participants were young professionals (ages 21–30) with 1–5 years of experience, which may have skewed the findings toward early-career perspectives. Experienced professionals might face different or more entrenched forms of workplace discrimination and gender bias.

Suggestions

Based on the findings, limitations, and implications of this study, the following recommendations are proposed to improve women's job satisfaction, career advancement, and psychological well-being in the workplace:

1. Promote Gender-Equitable Attitudes in Early Education
- ➢ Educational institutions should incorporate gender equality and sensitization programs from school to university level to challenge traditional gender role beliefs.
- ➢ Curricula should be revised to include gender studies and empowerment modules that encourage both men and women to embrace egalitarian roles.

2. Implement Organizational Diversity and Inclusion Policies
- ➢ Employers should develop and enforce comprehensive anti-discrimination policies with clear reporting mechanisms.
- ➢ Regular gender-sensitivity training must be conducted to reduce unconscious biases and cultivate an inclusive workplace culture.
- ➢ Transparent promotion and performance evaluation systems must be ensured to reduce subjective or discriminatory practices.

3. Support Women's Psychological and Emotional Well-being
- ➢ Organizations should provide access to psychological counseling, mentoring programs, and peer support groups to help women cope with discrimination and low self-esteem.
- ➢ Employee assistance programs (EAPs) should be expanded to specifically address gender-related workplace stressors and empower women with resilience-building resources.

4. Encourage Work-Life Balance through Policy and Practice
- ➢ Institutions should offer flexible work arrangements, including remote work options, flexible hours, and compressed workweeks to reduce role conflict.
- ➢ On-site childcare facilities, paid parental leave, and family support programs should be institutionalized to help working women manage dual responsibilities.

  - ➢ Managers must be trained to respect boundaries and support work-life balance for all employees.

5. Enhance Leadership and Capacity-Building Opportunities for Women
  - ➢ Initiate targeted leadership development programs for women to enhance their self-confidence and career trajectory.
  - ➢ Organizations should create equal opportunity platforms for promotions, decision-making roles, and committee memberships.
  - ➢ Mentorship by successful female professionals should be institutionalized to inspire and guide early- and mid-career women.

6. Expand Research with Broader and Diverse Samples
  - ➢ Future studies should adopt longitudinal and mixed-method research designs to explore causal relationships and gain deeper insights into women's lived experiences.
  - ➢ Comparative studies including male participants or cross-gender analysis are encouraged to better understand workplace dynamics from multiple perspectives.
  - ➢ Expanding the sample to include private-sector employees, rural women, and informal workers would help generalize findings across socioeconomic and geographic contexts.

7. Public Sector and Policy-Level Interventions
  - ➢ Government agencies should conduct national-level gender equity audits in workplaces to identify structural gaps.
  - ➢ Introduce incentive programs for organizations that demonstrate excellence in gender equality practices.
  - ➢ Public awareness campaigns led by governmental and civil society organizations should address societal norms that restrict women's professional growth.

Conflict of Interest

Regarding this publication, the authors of the current research study declared that they have no conflicts of interest.

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