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SUBJECT

Equality and Social Justice

RECEIVED 28 January 2025

REVISED 08 April 2025

ACCEPTED 14 April 2025

PUBLISHED 30 June 2025

CITATION

Sham Rambely, N. A., Madni, M., &
Murad, M. (2025). Gender Equality and
Social Justice for Women
Entrepreneurship Career Choice in
Pakistan: A Mediating Role of Opposite
Gender Support. *Journal of Banking and
Social Equity*, 4(1), 29-43.
<https://doi.org/10.52461/jbse.v4i1.4263>

JBSE

DOI



ACADEMIC PAPER

Gender Equality and Social Justice for Women Entrepreneurship Career Choice in Pakistan: A Mediating Role of Opposite Gender Support

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ABSTRACT

This first objective of this study was to measure (a) the impact of gender equality on women entrepreneurial career choice and (b) the impact of social justice on women entrepreneurial career choice. The second objective of this study was to investigate the mediating role of opposite gender support in the relationship between (a) gender equality and women entrepreneurial career choice and (b) social justice and women entrepreneurial career choice. Using purposive sampling, 307 usable responses were collected from women entrepreneurs in Pakistan to test the hypotheses. RStudio was used for analysis of data using “semnr” library. The study concludes that both gender equality and social equity have a significant but medium effect on women entrepreneurship career choice.

KEYWORDS

Gender Equality, Social Justice, Opposite Gender Support, Women Entrepreneurship, Career Choice.

INTRODUCTION

Women entrepreneurial career has a significant contribution to economies of developed countries but remains a challenge for developing countries specifically in South Asia (Murad, Othman, & Kamarudin, 2024a). Consequently, the future of economic growth in the developing countries is uncertain without the contribution of women in startup businesses (Salahuddin, Mahmood, & Ahmad, 2022). However, the women in poor countries may benefit from gender equality and social justice (Tillmar et al., 2022). The scholarly debate pointed out the need of women entrepreneurial career in the developing countries to support the job market (Mustafa et al., 2021) and economy (Rietveld & Patel, 2022). According to Muhammad, Ullah and Smith (2023), women entrepreneurial career choice is utilization of female population into the country development. Most of the developed countries including United States and



United Kingdom have a large number of women entrepreneurs more than 14 million and 1.6 million respectively. It underscores that woman entrepreneurial career choice has substantial contribution into country development economically.

Pakistani economy is struggling with economic issues while the government is continuously signing financial aid from International Monetary Fund (IMF). The job creation for the new students including female has become a major issue in Pakistan as unemployment rate is increasing years (Afshan, Shahid, & Tunio, 2021). Many scholars conducted research on issues related to women entrepreneurship career in Pakistan discussing the issues in entrepreneurial education (Rizvi et al., 2023) and government policies (Khan et al., 2021). Furthermore, the scholars also discussed social structure and cultural norms are hurdles in women entrepreneurship development in Pakistan (Muhammad & Ximei, 2022). However, it appears that scholars paid little attention to understanding the role of gender equality and social justice while understanding women entrepreneurial career choice. It is assumed that the constructs gender equality and social justice are at infancy stage in entrepreneurship literature. Therefore, this research addresses this issue to empirically understand the impact of gender equality and social justice on women entrepreneurial career choice. Similarly, there is lack of scholarly discussing regarding the mediating role of opposite gender support, while the phenomena is affecting women entrepreneurship (Brieger, Sonbol, & De Clercq, 2024). Considering this, there is need to understand the mediating effect of opposite gender support on women entrepreneurial career choice.

This first objective of this study was to measure (a) the impact of gender equality on women entrepreneurial career choice and (b) the impact of social justice on women entrepreneurial career choice. The second objective of this study was to investigate the mediating role of opposite gender support in the relationship between (a) gender equality and women entrepreneurial career choice and (b) social justice and women entrepreneurial career choice. The study has some contribution to literature and practices. Firstly, the study contributes to the understanding of relationships between gender equality, social justice and women entrepreneurial career choice empirically. Secondly, it contributes to stimulus – response theory, outlining its use in the entrepreneurial literature. On the other hand, the study recommends policymakers and practitioners to work on social justice, gender equality and opposite gender support to improve the women entrepreneurial career choice in developing countries specifically.

The rest of study is divided into a structure starting from review of literature. In review of literature, the comprehensive understanding of gender quality, social justice, opposite gender support and women entrepreneurial career choice is discussed. In addition, the theoretical underpinning and hypotheses development sections are also in review of literature section. Furthermore, the third section of paper is based on methodology reporting the research design, population, instrument, data collection and comprehensive data analysis procedure. The fourth section is based on discussion and conclusion while the following sections are based on implications, limitations and future directions of the study.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Gender Equality and Entrepreneurship

Gender equality is important factor economic growth and social development of any country (Kong & Kim, 2022). The equality of gender refers to the availability of opportunities to both male and female. In the perspective of entrepreneurship, gender equality refers to accessibility of resources and market opportunities by male and female to operate their business (Raman et al., 2022). Although in entrepreneurial business, the gender equality is practiced in developed countries (Gabarret & D'Andria, 2021). However, it is still challenging to succeed in gender equality in developing countries (Meliou & Ozbilgin, 2024). The social and cultural factors are barriers in gender equality in the perspective of businesses in the developing countries.



Social Justice and Entrepreneurship

Social justice refers to the equality in opportunities, social, political and economic rights (Dodd et al., 2022). It opens the door and provide opportunities for public to improve their overall behaviour for social roles and responsibilities (Ruiz, Amorós, & Guerrero, 2023). The social justice promotes equality among the community which is also significant to operationalize the business (Talmage, 2021). Women have their rights in the society where the social justice is core moto (Ranville & Barros, 2022). Similarly, the opportunities and economic wellbeing of women is also improved in the society where the government and other stakeholders are promoting social justice (Manjon, Merino, & Cairns, 2022). Therefore, social justice is also a critical factor for entrepreneurial business development.

Opposite Gender Support and Entrepreneurship

Support from opposite gender is significant for progress to women (Liñán, Jaén, & Martín, 2022). This support can be emotional and financial. When women are managing entrepreneurial businesses, they are taking risks to deal with significant challenges such as market opportunities (Love, Nikolaev, & Dhakal, 2024). Therefore, a significant need to the women is required to develop their overall behaviour for social justice (Ahmetaj, Kruja, & Hysa, 2023). Furthermore, when the women are motivated to develop their business, they required moral and practical support from their family members (Feldmann, Lukes, & Uhlaner, 2022). Thus, the support from opposite gender is considered as a significant factor for women entrepreneurship development.

The Underpinning Theory

Stimulus – response theory explain is a conceptual framework where the external stimuli effects the respond of individual (Skinner, 1935). This theory was originally developed to understand the psychology and tested by many studies in social sciences (Murad et al., 2024a). According to the conceptualization of this theory, the external influence is considered as a significant factor which influences the response of individuals. The researchers used this theory in marketing, human resource management and business management. This theory is also applied in entrepreneurship literature to understand the response of individuals related to external stimuli. Similarly, this theory is underpinned by this research to support the relationship between gender equality, social justice and women entrepreneurial career choice. According to Naguib (2024), gender equality is an external factor which influences the perception of individuals. Furthermore, McWhirter and McWha-Hermann (2021) discussed that social justice being an external factor influences the behaviour of individual. Therefore, both social justice and gender equality are considered as stimuli. On the other hand, women entrepreneurial career choice is considered as response factor which is influenced by support by the university (Murad, Othman, & Kamarudin, 2024b), family and government. Therefore, social – response theory is considered in this research to support the hypothesized relationships between variables.

Hypotheses Development

The study Meliou and Ozbilgin (2024) denoted that equality to women in social structure influences their entrepreneurial intention. While Raman et al. (2022) also discussed that elimination of gender based discrimination provides ground for women entrepreneurship. According to Tillmar et al. (2022), when women perceive equality in the business development, their entrepreneurial intention is positively developed. Furthermore, Motoyama et al. (2021) and Gabarret and D’Andria (2021) concluded that entrepreneurial behaviour of women is improved when they perceived gender equality. The study Kong and Kim (2022) discussed that gender equality in the terms of financial and social support develop positive entrepreneurial behaviour of women. Meanwhile, Xie and Wu (2022) also emphasized that zero tolerance to gender based discrimination is significant factor to improve women behaviour for entrepreneurship. The aforementioned studies develop the argument to support the following hypothesis.

H1: Gender equality has a positive effect on women entrepreneurship career choice.



Social justice in the society is important for providing equality opportunities to women and men (Dodd et al., 2022). The study Rietveld and Patel (2022) discussed that social justice improves the overall behaviour of women to start their business. Whereas Manjon et al. (2022) discussed when there is significant social justice in the society, women tends to start and grow their entrepreneurial business. According to Ruiz et al. (2023), the perceived social justice to women is a positive factor to support women entrepreneurial career. Furthermore, Talmage (2021) discussed that when there is social justice in the society, it becomes possible for the women to start their entrepreneurial business. Ranville and Barros (2022) also supported the above discussion while reporting the social justice helps to support women owned business in the society. The aforementioned studies develop the argument to support the following hypothesis.

H2: Social justice has a positive effect on women entrepreneurship career choice.

Feldmann et al. (2022) discussed that support from opposite gender is significant to grow women business in developing economies. Furthermore, Ahmetaj et al. (2023) found when there is support to women from father and brother, they become efficient in business management. According to Padilla-Angulo, Díaz-Pichardo and Leal-Rodríguez (2023), support from opposite gender is significant for women to grow their business strategically. However, Liñán et al. (2022) discussed that support from opposite gender has no impact on women business management. Another research Datta, Bazan and Arnold (2022) also reported that support from opposite gender has no effect on women business. While Love et al. (2024) discussed that gender equality has significant and Welsh et al. (2023) found that gender equality have no effect on women business. Hence, there is need to measure the moderating role of opposite gender support. The aforementioned studies develop the argument to support the following hypothesis.

H3: Opposite gender support (father, brother and husband) positively mediates the effect of gender equality on women entrepreneurship career choice.

The research Santos-Jaén, Iglesias-Sánchez and Jambrino-Maldonado (2022) discussed when there is no social justice for women to start a business, the role of family support becomes important. Furthermore, Crecente, Sarabia and del Val (2022) found that support from opposite gender is helpful for women to grow their business. According to Brieger and Gielnik (2021), the absence of social justice in any society is not good for women business because of their discrimination. However, Santos, Marques and Ferreira (2021) discussed that when there is no support from family and opposite gender, it becomes difficult for women to start business. Whereas Zhu, Thornhill and Hsu (2021) found that the social support from men of family is significant to grow women entrepreneurial business. Another study Ettis (2021) discussed that lack of family support becomes a trouble in women entrepreneurial business. The aforementioned studies develop the argument to support the following hypothesis.

H4: Opposite gender support (father, brother and husband) positively mediates the effect of social justice on women entrepreneurship career choice.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Population

In social science, the quantitative studies are used to collect numerical data (primary or secondary) to analyze the relationships between variables. However, the studies measuring behavioural variables mostly collect data from humans. The scholarly debate among research also support to collect quantitative data from human using a self-administrated questionnaire. This questionnaire serves as a platform to collect data for measuring the variables of the study. This research is also designed to collect primary data from human using a Likert scale questionnaire. The Likert scale questionnaire is used to measure the responses on rating scale that is helpful for the respondents to participate in the survey.

The population of any research is considered significant because the findings are generalized to it. Furthermore, the elements in the population are respondents who are well-known about the under discussed



phenomenon and able to answer the statements in the questionnaire. Since this research is based on women entrepreneurs in Pakistan, the population of the study is women entrepreneurs of both registered and unregistered businesses. The women entrepreneurs from registered and unregistered businesses are considered in this study as Pakistan is a developing country, and there is lack of government regulations to register every business. Therefore, women entrepreneurs in five capital cities of Pakistan (Islamabad, Lahore, Karachi, Peshawar and Quetta) were approached for data collection. Only the owners of the businesses (women entrepreneurs) were selected to collect the data.

Furthermore, this study used probability sampling method where purposive sampling is considered for data collection. The purposive sampling was helpful to collect data when there was diversity in respondents and there is no sampling frame. As discussed earlier, both women entrepreneurs from both registered and unregistered businesses were considered, only purposive sampling was selected as suitable for data collection after the discussion with scholars. In this research, no human participation was involved as data is collected on questionnaire and no information about cell was collected. Therefore, ethical approval from any committee was not required to collect data.

Measurement and Data Collection

The variables of this study were operationalized to collect data. Gender equality was operationalized to measure how the equality of gender is perceived by women entrepreneurs in Pakistan to run their business. This variable was measured with an instrument based on eight scale items for example, “I believe the women owned business are accepted in society same as men owned business.” Furthermore, social justice was operationalized in this research as social justice is helpful for women entrepreneurs in Pakistani to operationalize their business. The variable was measured by an instrument based on seven scale items for example “I perceived society has acceptance for women owned newly established business”.

Furthermore, the variable opposite gender support was operationalized to measure the support from opposite gender to women entrepreneurs in Pakistan. The variable was measured with an instrument based on five scale items for example “I have financial support from my father to operationalize the business.” While the variable women entrepreneurship career choice was measured with an instrument of six scale items for example “I prefer to entrepreneurial career to increase my personal income.”

The instruments to measure the relationships between the variables were integrated into questionnaire. The study used printed version of the questionnaire to collect data. According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970), a small sample is reliable to analyze the relationship between variables. However, Memon et al. (2020) discussed that minimum sample of three hundreds is reliable to measure the relationship between variables in social science studies. Therefore, this study distributed 500 questionnaires to collect the data. In every city (Islamabad, Lahore, Karachi, Peshawar and Quetta) equal number of questionnaires were distributed using purposive sampling. All queries of the respondents were also addressed to collect the data. However, 362 responses were collected back from participants. During the preliminary analysis, the inconsistency in responses was found and deleted. Therefore, a sample of 307 remaining participants was found the correct data to reach on findings.

Data Analysis Procedure

The study used regression method to analyze the data. However, this study used SPSS 26 and RStudio to analyze the data. SPSS 26 was used for demographic analysis while RStudio was used for inferential statistics. This method of analysis was used to provide novelty in findings as the previous studies use this method in social sciences. The data was decoded into RStudio and library “seminr” was used to reach on the findings. The data was analyzed after developing equations. In the process of data analysis, seminr library was loaded into RStudio. Furthermore, the following equation was developed for checking skewness and kurtosis value.



```
# Calculate skewness and kurtosis
skew_kurt_table <- data.frame(Variable = colnames(mydataset),
  Skewness = sapply(mydataset, skewness),
  Kurtosis = sapply(mydataset, kurtosis))
# Print the table
print(skew_kurt_table)
```

Furthermore, the following equation was developed for specification of measurement model and structural model in the study. It was necessary to specify the accurate model to reach on research findings.

```
# Create measurement model
mymodel_mm <- constructs(
  composite("GE", multi_items("GE", 1:8)),
  composite("SJ", multi_items("SJ", 1:7)),
  composite("OGS", multi_items("OGS", 1:5)),
  composite("WECC", multi_items("WECC", 1:6)))
# Create structural model
mymodel_sm <- relationships(
  paths(from = c("GE", "SJ"), to = c("OGS", "WECC")),
  paths(from = c("OGS"), to = c("WECC")))
```

After specification of measurement model and structural model correctly, the following equations were developed to inspect the summary of both models and further findings such as factor loadings, reliability of data, variance inflation factor and Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio.

```
# Summarize the model results
summary_mymodel <- summary(mymodel_pls_model)
# Inspect the indicator loadings
summary_mymodel$loadings
# Inspect the composite reliability
summary_mymodel$reliability
# Inspect the structural model collinearity VIF
summary_mymodel$vif_antecedents
# HTMT criterion
summary_mymodel$validity$hmt
```

Finally, the given below equations were used to specify the model for bootstrapping. Furthermore, the given below equations were used to inspect the effect size of constructs on one another. Therefore, the research has novelty to analyze the data using RStudio.

```
# Bootstrap the model
boot_mymodel <- bootstrap_model(seminr_model = mymodel_pls_model, nboot = 1000)
sum_boot_mymodel <- summary(boot_mymodel, alpha = 0.10)
print(sum_boot_mymodel)
# Inspect indirect effects for GE through OGS to WECC
```



```
effect_GE_OGS_WECC <- specific_effect_significance(boot_mymodel, from
= "GE", through = "OGS", to = "WECC", alpha = 0.05)
# Inspect indirect effects for SJ through OGS to WECC
effect_SJ_OGS_WECC <- specific_effect_significance(boot_mymodel, from
= "SJ", through = "OGS", to = "WECC", alpha = 0.05)
# Inspect the effect sizes
summary_mymodel$fSquare
```

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

IBM SPSS 26 was used to analyze the demographic data in this research. The study found that 15% of the respondents (women entrepreneurs) were between age of 20 – 25 years and 49% were between age of 26 – 30 years. Whereas 36% of participants women entrepreneurs were in age group of more than 30 years. Furthermore, the marital status of women entrepreneurs was also measured. The study found that 41% of women entrepreneurs who participated were married while 59% were unmarried. The business experience of the participants was also measured. The study found 15% women entrepreneurs had business experience of more than 6 months. However, 58% of women entrepreneurs had business experience between 1 – 3 years and 27% experience more than 3 years. Finally, 31% of the women entrepreneurs run manufacturing businesses while 69% were owned businesses based on services. The demographic data is clearly explained in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographics (n = 307).

Variable	Level	Frequency	Total	Proportion
Age	20 - 25 Years	45	307	15%
	26 - 30 Years	151	307	49%
	More than 30 Years	111	307	36%
Marital Status	Married	125	307	41%
	Unmarried	182	307	59%
Business Experience	More than 6 Months	46	307	15%
	Between 1 - 3 Years	177	307	58%
	More than 3 Years	84	307	27%
Business Category	Manufacturing	94	307	31%
	Service	213	307	69%

At the second step, the normality of distribution in the data was confirmed. Skewness and kurtosis findings between -3 and +3 are accepted for normality of distribution (Royston, 1992). Table 2 confirmed that skewness and kurtosis were significantly achieved. Therefore, no issues in normality of distribution were identified. Furthermore, factor loadings were checked to determine the reliability of individual scale items in the instrument. The factor loadings value above 0.60 is considered significant (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011). The study found reliability of individual scale items in the instrument was achieved (see Table 2). Hence, data was reported as significant for further analysis.

The reliability and validity of data was checked at the next stage. Cronbach’s alpha value above 0.70 is accepted as significant for reliability of instruments (Hair et al., 2011). While composite reliability (rhoC) value above 0.70 is also accepted as significant for validity of the instruments (Hair et al., 2022). In social sciences, the average variance extraction (AVE) value is checked to determine the variance in the data. The values of AVE above 0.50 are accepted as significant (Hair et al., 2022). Table 3 reported that all aforementioned thresholds were achieved. Hence, the data of this research was considered significant for further analysis.



Table 2: Skewness and Kurtosis.

Variable	Skewness/	Kurtosis	Factor Loadings
GE1	-0.029	1.994	0.840
GE2	0.031	2.020	0.806
GE3	0.017	1.850	0.828
GE4	-0.021	1.806	0.831
GE5	-0.119	1.885	0.832
GE6	0.049	1.798	0.827
GE7	0.050	1.981	0.829
GE8	0.042	1.928	0.819
SJ1	-0.105	2.048	0.633
SJ2	-0.054	1.992	0.647
SJ3	0.009	1.913	0.802
SJ4	0.040	1.977	0.791
SJ5	-0.057	1.919	0.826
SJ6	-0.040	1.911	0.812
SJ7	-0.033	1.845	0.786
OGS1	0.011	1.912	0.806
OGS2	-0.179	2.003	0.826
OGS3	-0.156	1.875	0.847
OGS4	-0.220	1.964	0.831
OGS5	-0.110	1.776	0.832
WECC1	-0.115	1.874	0.826
WECC2	-0.118	1.847	0.832
WECC3	0.024	1.958	0.823
WECC4	-0.059	1.726	0.833
WECC5	-0.053	1.856	0.636
WECC6	-0.065	1.796	0.624

Note: GE = Gender Equality, SJ = Social Justice, OGS = Opposite Gender Support and WECC = Women Entrepreneurial Career Choice

Source: Author

Table 3: Reliability and Validity.

Construct	Alpha	rhoC	AVE
GE	0.934	0.945	0.683
SJ	0.876	0.905	0.578
OGS	0.886	0.916	0.686
WECC	0.818	0.868	0.535

Note: GE = Gender Equality, SJ = Social Justice, OGS = Opposite Gender Support and WECC = Women Entrepreneurial Career Choice

Source: Author

Moreover, the findings of variance inflation factor (VIF) were tested to check the common method variance issues in the data. It is significant to test because the same instruments are used in different studies. The findings of VIF less than 3.3 are accepted as significant for no common method variance issues in the data (Hair et al., 2011). Table 4 reports the findings of VIF.

The discriminant validity in the data was tested measuring Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio. HTMT ratio is measured to confirm the constructs which are theoretically different also differ empirically. The



findings of HTMT ratio less than 0.85 are accepted as significant (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015). The findings in Table 5 confirmed that all constructs achieved significant discriminant validity.

Table 4: Variance Inflation Factor (VIF).

Construct	GE	SJ	OGS
OGS	1.968	1.968	
WECC	2.064	2.311	1.694

Note: GE = Gender Equality, SJ = Social Justice, OGS = Opposite Gender Support and WECC = Women Entrepreneurial Career Choice

Source: Author

Table 5: Discriminant Validity.

Construct	GE	SJ	OGS	WECC
GE				
SJ	0.779			
OGS	0.608	0.699		
WECC	0.671	0.763	0.966	

Note: GE = Gender Equality, SJ = Social Justice, OGS = Opposite Gender Support and WECC = Women Entrepreneurial Career Choice

Source: Author

The findings of path analysis were tested with $t > 1.96$ threshold (Hair et al., 2011). The findings of direct paths were investigated to test H1 and H2. The first hypothesis (H1) was supported and confirmed that gender equality has a positive effect on women entrepreneurship career choice. Furthermore, the second hypothesis (H2) was supported and confirmed that social justice has a positive effect on women entrepreneurship career choice. The findings are significant to achieve the first objective of research (see Table 6).

Table 6: Direct Paths.

Predictor	Outcome	Original Est.	Bootstrap Mean	Bootstrap SD	T Stat.	5% CI	95% CI
GE	WECC	0.100	0.098	0.046	2.190	0.027	0.172
SJ	WECC	0.122	0.123	0.048	2.567	0.044	0.207

Note: GE = Gender Equality, SJ = Social Justice, OGS = Opposite Gender Support and WECC = Women Entrepreneurial Career Choice

Source: Author

Table 7: Indirect Paths.

Predictor	Mediator	Outcome	Original Est.	Bootstrap Mean	Bootstrap SD	T Stat.	2.5% CI	97.5% CI
GE	OGS	WECC	0.173	0.175	0.042	4.077	0.096	0.262
SJ	OGS	WECC	0.327	0.327	0.042	7.736	0.246	0.408

Note: GE = Gender Equality, SJ = Social Justice, OGS = Opposite Gender Support and WECC = Women Entrepreneurial Career Choice

Source: Author

Furthermore, the mediating hypotheses were H3 and H4. These hypotheses were tested to achieve the second objective of the study (see Table 7). The third hypothesis (H3) was supported and confirmed that opposite gender support (father, brother and husband) positively mediates the effect of gender equality on



women entrepreneurship career choice. While the fourth hypothesis (H4) was supported and confirmed that opposite gender support (father, brother and husband) positively mediates the effect of social justice on women entrepreneurship career choice.

The effect size of independent variables on dependent variables was also tested (see Table 8). According to Hair et al. (2011), f-square is effect size and ≥ 0.02 is small and ≥ 0.15 is medium. While the effect size ≥ 0.35 is large. The study found that both gender equality (0.019) and social justice (0.023) have a significant effect on women entrepreneurial career choice.

Table 8: Effect Size.

Construct	WECC
GE	0.019
SJ	0.023

Note: GE = Gender Equality, SJ = Social Justice and WECC = Women Entrepreneurial Career Choice
Source: Author

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings of this research are discussed in the context of previous studies. This first objective of this study was to measure (a) the impact of gender equality on women entrepreneurial career choice and (b) the impact of social justice on women entrepreneurial career choice. To achieve this objective, H1 and H2 were tested. The first hypothesis (H1) was supported and confirmed that gender equality has a positive effect on women entrepreneurship career choice. The findings of this hypothesis are aligned with Meliou and Ozbilgin (2024). The study discussed that gender equality is good for women to access to all resources that are necessary for their business startup. Furthermore, Tillmar et al. (2022) also supports the relationship between gender equality and business development by the women. The findings of Gabarret and D'Andria (2021) also support H1 by discussing the significant role of gender diversity in utilizing the resources fearlessly to start entrepreneurial business. While the study Raman et al. (2022) also discussed that when there is gender quality in the society, it becomes possible for women to find their space in entrepreneurial business development. Therefore, the positive relationship between gender equality and women entrepreneurship is supported by this study.

Furthermore, the second hypothesis (H2) was supported and confirmed that social justice has a positive effect on women entrepreneurship career choice. Previous research Dodd et al. (2022) also supported this hypothesis confirming social justice is perceived positively by women to choose entrepreneurial career. Whereas Rietveld and Patel (2022) also discussed that without social justice, it becomes difficult for the women to choose entrepreneurial career. In the context of developing countries, Ruiz et al. (2023) discussed that the absence of social justice limits the opportunities for women to start their entrepreneurial career. Another study Talmage (2021) also discussed that the freedom to women to work in the society develops positive attitude in them to start a business. Thus, the relationship between social justice and women entrepreneurial career choice is also supported by the existing studies.

The second objective of this study was to investigate the mediating role of opposite gender support in the relationship between (a) gender equality and women entrepreneurial career choice and (b) social justice and women entrepreneurial career choice. To achieve this objective, H3 and H4 were tested. The third hypothesis (H3) was supported and confirmed that opposite gender support (father, brother and husband) positively mediates the effect of gender equality on women entrepreneurship career choice. The existing studies Liñán et al. (2022) and Feldmann et al. (2022) also discussed that support from father and husband is important for women to start business in developing country. Furthermore, the study Ahmetaj et al. (2023) also supported that when male members of society support the females to start a business, it becomes effective to capture the market. The findings of Malmström et al. (2024) also align with this research as the study discussed both



parental support and social equity are significant to start the entrepreneurial business. Moreover, Love et al. (2024) found that entrepreneurial business development is possible by women when they have reasonable support from male members of the society. Although the mediating role of opposite gender support is novel contribution by this research but it has support from literature.

While the fourth hypothesis (H4) was supported and confirmed that opposite gender support (father, brother and husband) positively mediates the effect of social justice on women entrepreneurship career choice. The findings of this hypothesis are supported by previous studies (Gupta, Batra, & Gupta, 2022; Margaça et al., 2021). The study Ettis (2021) also discussed that social justice motivate the men to support women for their career development. While Zhu et al. (2021) found that men support to women for entrepreneurial career is way forward for their entrepreneurial career and economic growth. Similarly, Crecente et al. (2022) discussed that when there is social justice in the society, it become significant for women to be supported by men for their entrepreneurial startup. Another study Santos-Jaén et al. (2022) also discussed that support men support to women for entrepreneurial career is supported by their positive attitude. Even though the mediating relationship of opposite gender support reported in this research is significant and novel, but it has support from the previous research.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, this study has significant findings for both literature and practitioners. Academically, the study extended the use of stimulus – response theory to entrepreneurship literature to understand the relationship between gender equality, social justice and women entrepreneurial career choice. Practically, the practitioners are recommended to understand the theory and ensure gender equality and social justice as stimulus for women entrepreneurs. The study further concludes that women entrepreneurial career choice is also improved with the mediation of opposite gender support. The developing countries are recommended to work on the practical recommendations by this research to improve the women entrepreneurial career choice. Hence, it is also the responsibility government and non-government organizations to promote gender equality and social justice cause in the developing countries to improve the entrepreneurial career among women.

IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

Theoretical Contributions

The study addresses the gaps in literature by explaining the relationships between gender equality, social justice and women entrepreneurial career choice in Pakistan. The study opens up the scholarly debate by confirming the significant impact of gender equality on women entrepreneurial career choice in Pakistan. It is confirmed that gender equality is a key factor that significantly influences the career choice intention of women in the developing countries. Previously, the research in literature paid little attention to address this relationship. Furthermore, the study contributes to literature that social justice has a significant impact on women entrepreneurial career choice. Although the existing research discussed this relationship in developed countries context, but literature was limited to address this relationship in developing countries. Therefore, the findings of this research contributed to the context of developing countries. The scholarship while discussing the relationship between social justice and women entrepreneurial career choice is improved.

In addition, this study provides valuable understanding about the moderating role of opposite gender support. Firstly, it improves the scholarly understanding about the significance of opposite gender support as a moderator between gender equality and women entrepreneurial career choice. Secondly, it found that opposite gender support also moderate the relationship between social justice and women entrepreneurial career choice. Therefore, the study contributed that woman entrepreneurial career choice is positive moderator for the impact of gender equality and social justice on women entrepreneurial career choice. This contribution by this research has scholarly impact as previous studies have limited discussion about the moderating role of opposite gender support in the context of women entrepreneurial career choice.



Practical Recommendations

The study has significant contribution from practical perspective. To begin with, the study asserts that women entrepreneurial career is developed with social justice and gender equality in the society. The factors (social justice and gender equality) provide guarantee to the economic growth of the country. In the society, the practices of gender equality and social justice are significant to provide a sustainable life to public. Furthermore, the study argues that the policymakers concerned to promote women entrepreneurial career choice are recommended to focus on gender equality. The promotion of gender equality improves the perception of women towards entrepreneurial career choice to a great extent.

On the other hand, the policymakers are recommended to focus on social justice. Although the role of social justice is significant in development of any country progress, but focusing on social justice for women is also critical to improve their entrepreneurial career choice. With the additional support of social justice environment along with gender equality support, the developing countries can play a significant role to develop entrepreneurial career choice perception among women. In addition to it, the study also recommends the support from opposite gender is significant to develop women entrepreneurial career choice. The study recommends that opposite gender support from parent, brother and husband is significant for women to influence their entrepreneurial career. In a nutshell, the study addresses the problem by recommending that gender equality, social justice and opposite gender support are significant factor to contribute to women entrepreneurship career choice. The policymakers and stakeholders of developing countries are supposed to work on aforementioned recommendations to develop improve entrepreneurial career choice among women.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Although the study contributed significant recommendations for policymakers to improve women entrepreneurship career choice in Pakistan. However, the findings have some limitations which required further research. Firstly, this study is limited to population of one country (Pakistan) only which is significant limitation for generalization of findings. Although there are studies in literature conducted on one country population, but it is an issue in generalization of findings. Therefore, the future studies are required to measure these relationships in other countries such as India and Bangladesh. In this way, it would be significant factor to advance literature. Secondly, the study is limited to measurement of women entrepreneurship career choice only. Even though the findings are noteworthy but the future studies are required to measure women entrepreneurial business' growth. It would contribute to holistic understand to determine the relationships between variables. Finally, during the literature review it was found that there is bibliometric research on women entrepreneurship career choice. Following this, designing future studies in this context would be a significant contribution to academic literature on women entrepreneurship.

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