

AN IN-DEPTH STUDY OF JOB SATISFACTION AMONG WOMEN TRANSITIONING FROM TRADITIONAL LABOR MARKET ROLES TO ONLINE JOBS IN PAKISTAN

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INTRODUCTION

Pakistan faces fundamental labor market change because modern technology and developing online job markets continue to reshape the employment landscape. Flexibility and autonomy define today's changing labor markets which provide people better choice to manage their work versus personal time connection. Women highly benefit from this shift in employment since they have throughout history encountered numerous challenges to entering the workforce because of societal expectations and their limited educational access and discrimination.

Pakistan's freelance economy is among the fastest-growing in the world, with a reported 69% growth rate (Payoneer). Online employment provides Pakistani women with an alternative to traditional jobs, because it enables them to work from home along with financial independence and diverse professional opportunities. However, despite this promising trend, gender disparities in labor force participation persist. While women make up 48.4% of the population, only 14% receive education beyond Grade 12, and their workforce participation remains significantly lower than men's (UN Women, 2023).

A profound analysis of how Pakistani women experience satisfaction changes when they transition to online employment remains necessary for deeper understanding. Job satisfaction depends on multiple elements such as compensation together with work-life balance and career advancement opportunities as well as job security and workplace culture (Inayat & Jahanzeb Khan, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered changes in the nature of employment, more so with the evolution of telework being one of the most dominant trends, many women have found increased satisfaction in remote work due to greater flexibility and autonomy (Alassaf et al., 2023).

This policy brief examines the factors influencing job satisfaction among women in Pakistan, focusing on the transition from traditional roles to online employment. It explores the challenges and opportunities of this shift, assesses its impact on job satisfaction, and offers recommendations for organizations and policymakers to improve job satisfaction in both traditional and online workplaces. Addressing these issues is critical for advancing gender equity, fostering economic growth, and ensuring that Pakistani women can fully benefit from the evolving job market. The

findings of this study can contribute to labor policies, digital literacy programs, and workplace inclusion strategies, ultimately promoting a more equitable and productive workforce in Pakistan.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses Schlossberg's Transition Theory to explore the experiences of Pakistani women transitioning from onsite to online jobs, focusing on self-awareness, situational factors, support networks, and coping mechanisms. Online surveys conducted via Google Forms, featuring a 5-point Likert scale and qualitative insights, assess job satisfaction factors such as flexibility, stress, and work-life balance. In addition to the survey data, the Labor Force Survey 2021 is used to support the findings and to check for sample bias.

Using snowball sampling, 95 women transitioning to online jobs and 45 women in traditional roles were recruited. Data analysis, performed with Stata Software, employs descriptive statistics while ensuring ethical considerations like informed consent and confidentiality. This approach provides a detailed understanding of the factors shaping women's job satisfaction in evolving labor markets.

FINDINGS

Demographic Trends and Employment Patterns

Research data collected from 140 women reveals the expanding demographic of young female workers in digital labor markets through a comparative study of 45 onsite workers and 95 online workers. Women between 18 and 25 years old found the largest demographic group in the sample (44.12%) yet 20% of them choose online work. Women in the age group of 26–32 are most frequently working in both digital and onsite roles because the changing work environment attracts experienced professionals. Marital status plays a key role, with unmarried workers (63.16%) choose online work as their first option because flexibility is a defining factor for them.

Educational Background and Sectoral Distribution

Employment opportunities in both sectors positively relate to higher education attainment as more than sixty percent of employees possess at least sixteen years of formal study. The majority of workers in both onsite and online roles hold MPhil degrees at 62.22% and 63.16% respectively. Graduates with 10–12 years of education encounter substantial difficulties when trying to enter positions that require specialized digital skills in online work. Social Sciences dominate employment (48.78% onsite, 46.31% online), while Computer Science is more prevalent in online jobs (8.42%), reflecting demand for technical expertise.

Income Disparities and Economic Preferences

Online jobs offer a higher average income (PKR 69,863.16) compared to onsite roles (PKR 50,577.78), though earnings are less predictable. Women in online roles benefit from reduced commuting costs (47.85%) and work-related expenses (42.85%), making these jobs financially

attractive. However, onsite jobs provide greater long-term security through benefits like pensions (13.33%) and health insurance (19.99%). These trade-offs highlight different worker priorities—flexibility versus financial stability.

Work Flexibility and Job Satisfaction

Online jobs provide significant autonomy, with 44.21% reporting flexible hours compared to rigid schedules in onsite roles (35.6%). Despite this, 77.89% of online workers report improved work-life balance, compared to only 31.1% in onsite jobs. Structured routines in onsite roles appeal to those prioritizing stability, while online work enables better family and childcare management.

Stress and Workplace Satisfaction

Onsite jobs generate higher stress, with 26.7% reporting extreme stress versus 15.16% among freelancers. More relaxed work environments contribute to lower stress for online workers (38.94% report low stress). However, interpersonal interactions in onsite jobs foster stronger workplace cohesion, leading to higher satisfaction (71.11% vs. 68.4% overall).

Employment Transitions and Policy Implications

A strong interest in transitioning to online jobs exists, with 50.53% of government employees and 37.8% of onsite workers considering the shift. While onsite workers (35.6%) express concerns over income stability, online jobs attract those seeking autonomy and higher pay. Unmarried women prioritize financial independence, while married women value stability, aligning with economic theories of risk aversion and labor-leisure trade off.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study's findings, this research presents key policy recommendations with significant implications for improving job satisfaction and economic opportunities for women transitioning from traditional labor market roles to online employment in Pakistan.

1. Enhance Digital Skill Development

- Establish targeted training programs, especially for women with lower educational backgrounds, to improve digital literacy and employability in online jobs.
- Partner with private sector stakeholders to provide accessible, affordable, and practical skill-building courses.

2. Promote Flexible Work Policies

- Encourage businesses to adopt hybrid work models that offer flexibility while ensuring income stability.
- Develop workplace policies that support work-life balance, particularly for married women managing family responsibilities.

3. **Ensure Social Security and Benefits for Online Workers**

- The government should establish a **Freelancer Social Protection Fund (FSPF)**, to ensure social security for online workers in Pakistan by offering health insurance, pension plans, and income stability support through voluntary contributions and government co-funding.
- To provide access to financial benefits, tax incentives, and microloans, a **Digital Labor Welfare Card** should be introduced. Additionally, **legal recognition of freelancers**, partnerships with digital platforms and integration with fintech services, should be prioritized to improve worker protections and economic security.

4. **Facilitate Market Access for Online Workers**

- The government needs to enhance online employment platforms and endorse Pakistani digital freelancers in international markets.
- The government should encourage IT service providers and digital firms to assist female digital entrepreneurs.

5. **Improve Financial Inclusion for Women in Online Jobs**

- The financial service must expand its microloan offerings together with tax advantages for women who want to begin digital work.
- A training program should be established to teach women online workers how to handle their earnings since they fluctuate frequently.

6. **Infrastructure:**

- It is essential to provide reliable internet access, cost-effective technology, and secure online platforms to enable women's participation in the digital economy.

7. **Monitoring and Data:**

- Establish monitoring systems to deter exploitation within digital employment sectors.
- Perform periodic labor market assessments and Time Use Surveys to guide region-specific strategies and tackle time poverty.