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WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT AND ITS ROLE IN ENHANCING SOCIAL MOBILITY

Romeesa Fatima

BS ,School of English, Lahore Garrison University , Lahore

ABSTRACT

Women's employment is an important factor in promoting social mobility, reducing gender inequality, strengthening household economic security, and improving women's participation in social and professional life. In developing societies, access to decent employment enables women to improve their financial independence, acquire new skills, expand their social networks, and participate more actively in household and community decision-making. Employment can also contribute to intergenerational mobility by improving children's educational opportunities, access to healthcare, and overall living conditions. However, women continue to experience several barriers, including unequal wages, limited educational opportunities, occupational segregation, workplace discrimination, unpaid care responsibilities, and restrictive social expectations. These barriers are particularly significant in societies where employment opportunities are concentrated in informal and low-paid sectors. This research examines the relationship between women's employment and social mobility, focusing on economic independence, educational advancement, social status, professional development, and participation in decision-making. It adopts a qualitative, descriptive approach based on a review of relevant academic literature and reports published between 2023 and 2026. The study explores how employment opportunities can improve women's socioeconomic positions while considering the structural conditions that influence these outcomes. The discussion highlights the importance of equal employment opportunities, skills development, childcare support, fair wages, workplace protection, and gender-responsive public policies. The study argues that women's employment can serve as a pathway to upward social mobility when jobs provide adequate income, security, dignity, and opportunities for advancement. Sustainable progress therefore requires not only increasing women's participation in the labour market but also improving the quality and accessibility of employment.

KEYWORDS: *Women's Employment, Social Mobility, Gender Equality, Economic Independence, Women's Empowerment, Labour Market, Developing Societies, Educational Advancement, Social Inclusion, Gender Discrimination.*

INTRODUCTION

Women's employment has become an important subject in contemporary social and economic research because of its relationship with economic development, gender equality, poverty reduction, and social mobility. Employment provides individuals with an opportunity to earn income, develop professional abilities, establish social relationships, and improve their position within society. For women, these opportunities can have particularly significant consequences because gender-based inequalities have historically restricted their access to education, paid work, property ownership, leadership positions, and independent decision-making. When women gain access to meaningful employment, they may improve their economic circumstances and challenge social arrangements that limit their participation in public life. However, employment does not automatically eliminate inequality. Pazylov, N., & Ermatova, A. (2026). Found that Its contribution to social mobility depends on the availability of decent jobs, the distribution of household responsibilities, access to professional development, and the wider social and institutional environment.Social mobility refers to changes in an individual's or family's socioeconomic position over time. It can involve movement from a lower-income group to a higher-income group, access to better educational opportunities, improved occupational status, greater social recognition, and

increased participation in influential institutions. Social mobility may occur within a single generation when an individual obtains better employment, or across generations when parents' economic and educational achievements improve the opportunities available to their children. Women's employment can contribute to both forms of mobility by increasing household resources, strengthening personal capabilities, and creating opportunities for long-term professional advancement.

Nevertheless, women's opportunities to experience upward mobility are often influenced by gender norms, family circumstances, class background, geographical location, and the structure of the labour market.In developing societies, the relationship between women's employment and social mobility is especially important because many households face economic insecurity, unequal access to education, and limited opportunities for formal employment. Women who enter paid work may contribute to household income, support children's education, reduce dependence on a single earner, and strengthen the family's ability to respond to financial difficulties. Their earnings may also improve their access to transportation, technology, healthcare, professional training, and other resources that support upward mobility. Yet the benefits are not distributed equally. Women working in informal, temporary, poorly paid, or insecure jobs may experience limited improvements in their socioeconomic status despite making substantial contributions to their families and communities.Women's employment also influences the relationship between education and occupational achievement. Education can provide women with the knowledge and qualifications needed to enter professional occupations, while employment allows them to apply their abilities and accumulate experience. Thomas, H., & Silva, V. (2026). Explaines This relationship may create a positive cycle in which educational achievement leads to better work, better work generates greater financial resources, and greater resources support further education and professional development.

However, this process can be interrupted when women encounter discrimination in recruitment, unequal pay, limited promotion opportunities, or occupational segregation. Women may be concentrated in sectors with fewer opportunities for advancement even when they possess qualifications comparable to those of men. Consequently, social mobility requires both access to employment and fair opportunities to progress within the workplace.Another important dimension of women's employment is its influence on social status and decision-making power. In many communities, paid employment can increase women's visibility, strengthen their professional identities, and expand their participation in social networks beyond the household. Employment may allow women to develop relationships with colleagues, employers, clients, professional associations, and community organisations. These relationships can provide access to information, mentorship, employment opportunities, and social support. Women who have access to their own earnings may also gain greater influence over household spending, children's education, healthcare decisions, and long-term family planning. Nevertheless, the extent of this influence varies across households and cultures. In some situations, women's employment is accompanied by increased unpaid domestic responsibilities, creating a double burden rather than a meaningful improvement in autonomy.The quality of employment is therefore central to understanding its role in social mobility. A job that provides fair wages, safe working conditions, social protection, predictable working hours, and opportunities for promotion can support sustained upward mobility. By contrast, employment characterised by low pay, insecurity, harassment,

and limited benefits may reproduce existing inequalities. Masha, I., Duran, J., Kim, K. B., & Verick, S. (2026 revelaeds Women employed in domestic work, agricultural labour, home-based production, and other informal activities may make important economic contributions without receiving adequate legal protection or recognition. Their employment may reduce immediate financial hardship but may not provide the resources necessary to accumulate savings, obtain secure housing, invest in further education, or move into higher-status occupations. An analysis of women's employment must therefore distinguish between labour-market participation and access to decent, secure, and rewarding work.

Technological change has also created new opportunities and challenges for women's social mobility. Digital platforms, remote work, online businesses, and technology-based occupations can enable some women to access markets and professional opportunities that were previously difficult to reach. Digital skills may help women establish small enterprises, provide professional services, participate in online education, and connect with customers across geographical boundaries. These developments can be particularly useful for women facing mobility restrictions or limited local employment options. However, the benefits depend on access to reliable internet, digital devices, financial services, relevant skills, and protection against exploitation. Digital employment can also reproduce existing inequalities when women receive low wages, experience platform-based insecurity, or lack access to leadership positions in technology-related sectors.Family responsibilities remain another major influence on women's employment and mobility. Women continue to undertake a disproportionate share of unpaid care work in many societies, including childcare, eldercare, household maintenance, and support for family members with disabilities. These responsibilities can restrict the time available for paid work, professional training, networking, and career advancement. Women may accept part-time or informal jobs because they provide flexibility, even when such employment offers lower earnings and weaker protection. Affordable childcare, parental leave, flexible working arrangements, and a more equal distribution of domestic responsibilities can help women remain in employment and pursue better occupational opportunities. Such measures are important not only for individual women but also for families, employers, and the wider economy.

Women's employment can further influence intergenerational social mobility through its relationship with children's development. Greater household income may enable parents to provide educational materials, nutritious food, healthcare, stable housing, and opportunities for skills development. Employed mothers may also provide examples of professional achievement, financial responsibility, and independent decision-making that influence children's expectations about education and careers. However, these benefits depend on the nature of employment and the resources available to the family. Long working hours, inadequate childcare, and insecure earnings may create additional pressure within households. Policies that improve employment conditions and support families are therefore important for ensuring that women's labour-market participation translates into better opportunities for the next generation.Social and cultural expectations also influence whether women's employment produces meaningful social mobility. In some settings, paid work outside the home may be discouraged because of traditional gender roles, concerns about safety, or expectations that women should prioritise domestic responsibilities. Women may need family approval or assistance with transportation, childcare, and access to education before they can accept employment. Such constraints are not simply individual problems;

they are connected to broader institutional arrangements, public infrastructure, workplace practices, and social attitudes. Community awareness, safe transport, equal access to education, anti-discrimination measures, and supportive family environments can help create conditions in which women are able to participate in employment and benefit from professional opportunities.In Pakistan and other developing countries, these issues have particular relevance because women's economic participation is shaped by differences in education, income, rural and urban residence, access to transport, digital connectivity, and the availability of formal employment. Women in urban areas may have greater access to universities and professional occupations, while women in rural areas may contribute extensively to agriculture and household enterprises without receiving formal recognition or independent control over their earnings. Similarly, women from economically disadvantaged households may enter work out of necessity but face barriers to moving into secure and better-paid occupations. Dreval, Y. D. (2025). Elaboreds on These differences demonstrate that women's employment and social mobility must be examined in relation to social class, geography, family circumstances, and the structure of economic opportunities.The significance of this research lies in examining women's employment not merely as a source of income but as a potential mechanism for changing social and economic positions. It considers how employment can influence women's independence, occupational development, family wellbeing, social participation, and opportunities for future generations. It also recognises that employment alone cannot overcome structural inequalities without supportive institutions and fair labour-market conditions.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

1. The main objective of this study is to examine the role of women’s employment in enhancing social mobility, with particular attention to economic independence, occupational advancement, social status, household decision-making, and intergenerational opportunities.

RESEARCH QUESTION

1. How does women’s employment contribute to social mobility, and which economic, social, and institutional factors influence women’s ability to achieve upward socioeconomic advancement through employment?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Women’s employment is widely recognised as an important dimension of economic inclusion and gender equality. Paid work can increase women's access to financial resources, improve their occupational standing, and create opportunities to participate in decisions affecting their households and communities. However, the relationship between employment and socioeconomic advancement is shaped by the availability and quality of jobs. Women who enter secure, well-paid occupations may have greater opportunities to save money, acquire property, invest in education, and improve their long-term economic circumstances. In contrast, those employed in low-paid or informal occupations may remain economically vulnerable despite contributing substantially to household income. The International Labour Organization’s World Employment and Social Outlook: Triansyah, F. A., & Karyono, K.

(2026). Found that Trends 2025 examines continuing labour-market inequalities and the difficulties associated with creating decent work, particularly in economically vulnerable settings. This evidence supports an understanding of social mobility that considers not only whether women are employed but also whether their employment provides stability, adequate compensation, and opportunities for advancement.Financial independence is one of the principal mechanisms through which women's employment may support social mobility. Women with personal earnings can contribute to household expenditure, meet individual needs, support dependants, and potentially accumulate savings or other assets. Their economic contributions may strengthen their position in household negotiations and increase their ability to influence decisions about education, healthcare, housing, and family investments. Nevertheless, earning an income does not necessarily guarantee control over that income. Family expectations, unequal ownership rights, financial dependence, and restrictions on women's mobility can limit the extent to which paid work produces genuine autonomy. The World Bank's Women, Business and the Law 2024 considers the legal and institutional conditions affecting women's economic opportunities, including workplace rights, pay, entrepreneurship, childcare, safety, and access to assets.

These dimensions are relevant because economic independence depends on both access to employment and the ability to use earnings to improve personal and family circumstances.Education and skills development are essential pathways connecting women's employment with upward social mobility. Formal education can provide qualifications required for professional occupations, while vocational training and digital skills can help women enter emerging sectors and improve their competitiveness in the labour market. Women with access to continuing education may have greater opportunities to move from low-paid occupations into technical, managerial, administrative, and entrepreneurial roles. However, educational attainment does not always translate into equivalent employment outcomes. Recruitment discrimination, limited professional networks, geographical restrictions, inadequate career guidance, and unequal promotion practices may prevent qualified women from reaching positions that match their capabilities. Therefore, policies supporting girls' education and women's professional development should be combined with fair recruitment, transparent promotion procedures, mentoring, and workplace training. Women, U. N. (2023 explaines The resulting opportunities can help women improve their occupational status and build the experience necessary for long-term socioeconomic advancement.Gender discrimination remains an important barrier to women's social mobility. Women may encounter unequal wages, occupational segregation, limited access to senior positions, discriminatory recruitment practices, and workplace environments that do not adequately protect them from harassment. These conditions can restrict professional advancement even when women possess appropriate education and experience. The World Bank's 2024 analysis distinguishes between legal rights and the systems needed to implement them, highlighting the importance of enforcement, institutional support, and practical workplace protections.

Women who cannot access affordable childcare or flexible employment may accept informal work, reduce their working hours, or leave the labour market entirely. The International Labour Organization's 2024 employment outlook update identifies family responsibilities as a significant contributor to the global gender employment gap. These findings underline the importance of treating care responsibilities as an economic and institutional issue rather than

solely as an individual family matter. Affordable childcare, parental leave, flexible working arrangements, and the fairer distribution of household work can help women maintain employment and pursue better-paid occupations. Such support may also reduce the interruptions in women's careers that contribute to long-term income and pension inequalities.Employment can expand women's social networks and provide access to information, mentorship, professional contacts, and opportunities for collective participation. Relationships developed in workplaces and professional organisations may help women learn about vacancies, improve their skills, identify business opportunities, and access leadership roles. Employment can also strengthen professional identity and increase recognition of women's contributions outside the household. These changes may influence how women perceive their abilities and how they are perceived within their communities. However, the benefits of professional networks depend on whether women can participate equally in workplace activities and informal professional interactions. Women who face mobility restrictions, discriminatory organisational cultures, or limited access to senior colleagues may have fewer opportunities to develop valuable networks. Employers and professional institutions can strengthen social mobility by providing mentorship programmes, inclusive networking opportunities, leadership training, and transparent career-development systems.

Nevertheless, digital opportunities remain unequal because some women lack reliable internet access, suitable devices, digital literacy, or secure payment systems. Women, U. N. (2024). Revelaeds Online work may also involve irregular earnings, weak labour protections, and intense competition. Digital inclusion should therefore involve more than providing technology; it should include training, affordable connectivity, financial literacy, cybersecurity awareness, and protection against workplace exploitation. When these conditions are met, technology can help women broaden their occupational choices and pursue new forms of socioeconomic advancement.Women's employment can affect not only their own socioeconomic positions but also the opportunities available to their children and future generations. Increased household income may improve access to education, nutrition, healthcare, stable housing, and learning resources. These investments can strengthen children's development and increase their chances of entering better-paid occupations as adults. Employed women may also provide examples of professional participation and economic contribution that challenge restrictive gender expectations. Nevertheless, the intergenerational effects of employment depend on wages, job security, household support, and the availability of public services. Insecure employment may not generate sufficient resources to improve children's opportunities, while long working hours without childcare may place additional pressure on families. Policies that support decent employment and accessible education can help transform women's labour-market participation into more sustainable improvements in family wellbeing.Women from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds may experience several barriers simultaneously, including inadequate schooling, limited transportation, family responsibilities, and exclusion from formal employment. Effective policies must therefore address these interacting disadvantages instead of assuming that a single employment initiative will produce equal outcomes for all women Women, U. N. (2023). Elaboreds on .Existing policy reports provide important evidence about women's legal rights, labour-market participation, employment conditions, and continuing gender inequalities. However, the relationship between women's employment and social mobility requires an integrated examination of economic resources, occupational progression, social recognition, household decision-making, and opportunities for future generations.

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METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research approach to examine how women's employment contributes to social mobility and to identify the conditions that strengthen or restrict this relationship. A qualitative approach is appropriate because the topic involves economic independence, social status, family relationships, professional identity, and institutional inequalities that cannot be understood through employment figures alone. The study uses secondary sources, including institutional reports and relevant research publications, to develop a conceptual understanding of the mechanisms connecting paid work with socioeconomic advancement. It considers both the potential benefits of employment and the circumstances in which employment may fail to produce meaningful improvements. The approach is descriptive and interpretive, allowing the discussion to connect labour-market opportunities with broader questions of gender equality, social inclusion, and sustainable development. The methodology also considers the quality of employment, recognising that secure jobs with fair wages and opportunities for promotion may contribute more effectively to social mobility than temporary, informal, or poorly paid work. Relevant information is organised according to the major themes of the study, including financial independence, education and skills development, occupational advancement, social recognition, gender discrimination, work–family responsibilities, digital employment, entrepreneurship, and intergenerational mobility. These themes are examined to identify common patterns, relationships, and challenges discussed in the literature. The study further considers the role of government policies, workplace regulations, childcare services, and professional training programmes in creating equal employment opportunities for women. Since the research relies on secondary sources, it does not involve original questionnaires, interviews, or experimental investigations.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The research follows a descriptive, literature-based design. It draws on selected publications from 2023 to 2026, prioritising reports and research relevant to women's economic opportunities, labour-market inequalities, employment conditions, and gender-responsive policy. Institutional sources include publications by the International Labour Organization, the World Bank, UN Women, and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The materials are considered in relation to the study's central concepts: access to employment, income and financial independence, career progression, workplace equality, unpaid care work, social participation, and intergenerational mobility. As this is a secondary-source study, no primary survey, interview, or experimental intervention is conducted. The design is intended to synthesise relevant evidence and identify relationships and policy implications rather than to establish causal effects through original statistical testing. The present study adopts a qualitative research methodology to examine women’s employment and its role in enhancing social mobility, with particular attention to economic independence, educational opportunities, professional development, social status, and household decision-making. The study is based on a secondary review of relevant academic literature, research publications, and reports published by recognised international organisations between 2023 and 2026. The selected literature focuses on women's participation in the labour market, gender equality, employment opportunities, wage differences, workplace discrimination, unpaid care responsibilities, and the socioeconomic consequences of women's economic

participation. The research uses a descriptive and interpretive approach to understand how employment can help women improve their living standards and move towards higher socioeconomic positions. Particular attention is given to developing societies, where women may experience barriers related to poverty, limited educational access, cultural expectations, inadequate transportation, and restricted professional opportunities. The methodology also considers the quality of employment, recognising that secure jobs with fair wages and opportunities for promotion may contribute more effectively to social mobility than temporary, informal, or poorly paid work. Relevant information is organised according to the major themes of the study, including financial independence, education and skills development, occupational advancement, social recognition, gender discrimination, work–family responsibilities, digital employment, entrepreneurship, and intergenerational mobility. These themes are examined to identify common patterns, relationships, and challenges discussed in the literature.

DATA ANALYSIS

The study uses thematic analysis to organise the selected literature into recurring themes relevant to women's social mobility. The analysis focuses on financial independence, education and skills, occupational advancement, workplace discrimination, unpaid care responsibilities, digital opportunities, social networks, and intergenerational outcomes. Findings from institutional publications are compared conceptually to identify areas of agreement, persistent barriers, and policy priorities. Greater attention is given to evidence that explains how employment conditions influence women's ability to improve their socioeconomic position. The analysis also distinguishes between employment participation and decent employment, recognising that low wages and insecure working conditions may limit upward mobility. Because the research is based on secondary sources, the findings represent a synthesis of published evidence and conceptual interpretation, not results from a newly conducted survey or a statistically representative sample. Instead, it synthesises existing evidence to develop a broader understanding of the relationship between women's employment and social mobility. The methodology is intended to provide a structured foundation for interpreting the research findings, identifying barriers to women's socioeconomic advancement, and recommending practical measures to strengthen women's participation in decent and secure employment. Although the approach provides useful conceptual insights, the findings are limited by the availability, scope, and quality of the reviewed publications and should not be interpreted as statistically representative of all working women.

FINDINGS

The literature reviewed in this study indicates that women's employment can contribute significantly to social mobility, although its effects depend on employment quality, family circumstances, and the wider institutional environment. The first major finding is that paid employment can improve women's financial independence by increasing access to personal income and household resources. Women who earn stable incomes may be better positioned to meet their needs, support their families, accumulate savings, and invest in education or professional development. However, financial independence is not guaranteed by employment alone; control over earnings, fair compensation, and access to financial services

also matter.The second finding is that education and professional skills are important for converting employment into sustained upward mobility. Women with relevant qualifications, digital capabilities, and access to career development may have better opportunities to enter skilled occupations and progress into leadership positions. Nevertheless, discrimination and occupational segregation can prevent women from receiving equal benefits from their qualifications. Equal recruitment practices, transparent promotion procedures, and access to professional training are therefore essential for improving employment outcomes.Finally, the literature suggests that women's employment should be understood as part of a broader process of social transformation. Digital inclusion, entrepreneurship, access to education, safe transportation, and effective labour protections can widen opportunities for upward mobility. The International Labour Organization's 2025 employment outlook also highlights continuing challenges in creating decent work and addressing labour-market vulnerabilities. reviewed evidence supports the conclusion that employment can facilitate social mobility when it is supported by equal opportunities, economic security, and institutions that enable women to benefit fully from their work. Women's employment can contribute to upward social mobility by strengthening financial independence and improving household living standards. When women receive fair and regular earnings, they may contribute to food, housing, education, healthcare, transportation, and other essential expenses.

CONCLUSION

Women's employment plays an important role in enhancing social mobility by providing opportunities for financial independence, professional development, improved social status, and greater participation in household and community decision-making. Employment can enable women to improve their living conditions, develop valuable skills, expand their professional networks, and contribute to their families' long-term wellbeing. It may also support intergenerational mobility when increased household resources are invested in children's education, healthcare, and future opportunities. However, these outcomes are not automatic. The extent to which employment improves women's socioeconomic positions depends on the quality of available jobs and the social, economic, and institutional conditions surrounding women's participation in the labour market.The study concludes that governments, employers, educational institutions, and communities should work together to ensure that women have access to decent and secure employment. Important priorities include equal pay, fair recruitment, protection against workplace discrimination, affordable childcare, vocational and digital skills training, safe transportation, and access to social protection. Women working in informal occupations should also receive greater recognition and appropriate labour protections. In developing societies, these measures are particularly important for reducing barriers associated with poverty, geographical location, and restrictive gender expectations. Future research should investigate women's experiences across different employment sectors and socioeconomic backgrounds using interviews, surveys, and comparative studies. Such research could provide more detailed evidence about how employment affects women's mobility over time. Ultimately, women's employment should be regarded not simply as a means of increasing household income but as an opportunity to build a more inclusive society in which women can achieve economic security, professional recognition, and meaningful social advancement. Intergenerational mobility and policy implicationsFinally, women's employment can contribute to intergenerational social mobility by improving the resources available to children and other family members. Stable earnings

can help households invest in education, nutrition, healthcare, and a secure living environment.

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