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## Article

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# **Making Decent Work a Reality to Transgender Individuals: A Step towards a Realization of Sustainable Development Goals in Developing Countries**

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## **Abstract**

The main objective of the study is to determine the scope and importance of the crucial indicators that have positive impact in the provision of decent work (DW) opportunities to transgender individuals. In exploring the dynamics of DW, this study also investigates the important role of social & family support (SFS), career orientation (CO) and career initiatives (CI). Data was gathered from 341 transgender individuals residing in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. In this study, we used a cross-sectional design and survey method. Moreover, questionnaires were used to collect the data. Statistical techniques like regression and structural equation modelling (SEM) were applied to analyze the data by making use of SPSS and AMOS. Findings of the study support a positive predictive association of SFS, CO, and CI with DW, therefore, this emphasizes their relevance in shaping DW among transgender individuals. The findings of the study demonstrate that CI mediates the associations between SFS and DW, and CO and DW. The outcomes of this research indicate that SFS, CO, and CI have a significant role in ensuring DW role. Through focusing on the mediating mechanism in which CO, SFS and CI are important predictors, this study is first of its kind in the context of developing countries that attempts to present a solid framework that would be helpful in providing decent work opportunities to underprivileged class of the society especially transgender individuals residing in developing countries.

**Keywords:** Decent work, career orientation, social & family support, career initiatives, transgender, Pakistan..

## 1. Introduction

There has been a growing acceptance of transgender rights in various developed countries, which has led to the development of guidelines that promote workplace inclusion, non-discrimination, and provision of health services etc. (Reid et. al., 2022; Zachariah & Nandini, 2023). Moreover, legislative protections and public support have also grown toward providing decent working environment to transgender community (Salvati & Koc, 2022). However, situation is not similar for transgender individuals in the context of developing countries; challenges still persist regardless of the efforts made by the governments to change the existing situation (Coleman et. al., 2022). Therefore, transgender individuals are experiencing unreliable relief, job insecurity and social exclusion (Zachariah & Nandini, 2023). It is obvious that an additional effort has to be made to achieve truly equal and inclusive job conditions for all these people, considering the fact that advanced nations have made significant progress in expanding transgender rights in the workplace (Table, Tronstad & Kearns, 2022). In developing countries, it is extremely challenging for transgender individuals to acquire equal work opportunities due to increased discrimination, social marginalization, and an absence of legal protections (Sifat & Shafi, 2021). Therefore, it is critical that these gaps should be addressed in developing nations where the struggle for economic inclusion and fundamental rights continues to remain under the dark shadow.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) plays an essential role in developing and promoting decent work (DW) across the world. This notion is based on the belief that employment should not only offer financial benefits, but also provide people with certain fundamental rights, opportunities, and protection (ILO, 1999). The ILO efforts seek to establish an environment in which work is characterized as a mean to a dignified and meaningful existence, as well as to improve global labor conditions and ensure the protection and dignity of all employees (Laaser & Bolton, 2022). However, the achievement of the ILO in fostering DW is dependent on member countries and willingness of worldwide organizations in enforcing labor standards (Thomas, 2021). Setting priorities of DW constitutes not just an ethical obligation but also a critical driver for economic growth, social stability and global prosperity among individuals and nations (Qaiser & Abid, 2022).

According to Moore et al. (2023), the progression of DW is critical for employment and labor, comprising numerous facets of working conditions. However, developing countries show varying levels of development as they face diverse challenges (Wang & Klugman, 2020). Moreover, persistent imbalances in these countries indicate the importance of continuous efforts to promote DW and reduce workforce imbalances (Gibb & Ishaq, 2020). Conversely, in developing countries like Pakistan challenges such as inefficient labor

unions, child labor and gender discrimination are clearly visible everywhere (Laaser & Bolton, 2022). Therefore, it is upmost duty of the government to make a strong commitment to promote DW for transgender individuals in thier countries.

According to Salvati & Koc (2022), social & family support (SFS) and career orientation (CO) play a critical role to promote DW among transgender individuals. SFS play an important role to promote psychological and emotional support in transgender community and help them to carry out their job-related activities successfully (Pazil et. al., 2023). However, substantial contribution of CO is meaningful when it relates to perform job related tasks and achieve their set goals (Chen, Kumara & Sivakumar, 2021). Therefore, both SFS and CO are essential for transgender individual for career development of transgender individual in the context of DW (Pazil et. al., 2023).

Deutsch, et al. (2023) focuses on the significance of SFS and CO to involve transgender individual in meaningful DW initiatives. It is essential to note that SFS and CO are important determinants, however alone they are insufficient to instantly persuade transgender individuals to be wholly engaged in DW. Therefore, we need to comprehend the fundamental mechanism to explain this complex relationship. In order to fill this knowledge gap, we proposed career initiatives (CI) as a mediating variable in this association. CI are organized activities and programs that assist individuals in developing their careers through the provision of support, opportunities, and resources for progress and development (Liu & Ren, 2022). SFS and CO serve as dynamic catalysts driving the growth of individual's CI. Considering this mechanism, it becomes evident that SFS and CO serve as the primary factors for enhancing CI and bringing positive change in DW initiatives.

This research was carried out to investigate how CI affect the association between SFS, CO and DW among transgender individuals. By considering the role of CI, this study enriches the available literature by investigating the dynamics of SFS and CO to enable transgender individuals in engaging in DW activities. This research has various significant implications. First, it shows how to promote DW among transgender individuals in Pakistan. Second, it helps policymakers to develop rational and acceptable policies for transgender community. Third, in developing country governments could utilize these findings to empower this marginalized community by establishing strategies that comply with ILO standards. To fulfill the objectives, the current study unfolds into numerous sections. The next section analyzes the pertinent academic work on the emergence of various constructs and assumptions. Subsequent sections discuss the research methodology, findings, discussions, theoretical and managerial implications, limitations, and future research.

## **2. Literature Review**

### *2.1 Theoretical Foundation*

Over the last twenty years, scholars have directed their attention more towards the notion of "Decent Work," driven by a desire to promote social inclusion and protect the rights of

marginalized workers (Saxena, 2021). The ILO established an extensive agenda for the workforce within society at large, as reflected by its three constituencies, pushing them to effectively utilize their enormous resources to build up opportunities and positively support reducing and eventually eradicating poverty (Smith & Sinkford, 2022). A comprehensive and well-balanced approach, the ILO's Agenda for Decent Work strategically addresses decent work and meaningful employment for everyone across national, local, sectoral, and global levels (Bhadra, 2021).

DW encompasses a variety of working conditions based on dignity, social justice, and fairness values. It highlights a dedication to creating an atmosphere in which these principles are prioritized (Pereira et al., 2021). Moreover, it also involves fair pay, employment security, and a secure workplace (Saxena, 2021). However, these values are disregarded in many parts of the world, which results in pervasive disparities, exploitation, and unstable work (De Prins, Stuer, & Gielens, 2020). Therefore, promoting DW is essential because it not only protects the rights of employees but also plays a critical role in promoting equitable economic growth (Winchenbach, Hanna & Miller, 2019). In addition to being ethically acceptable, decent labor is essential to equitable and economically viable societies (Xu, Liu & Tang, 2022).

It is indisputable that social support - which includes help, providing care, and relationships with friends, coworkers, and family is essential for achieving overall well-being (Pazil et al., 2023; Le & Loan, 2022); it is also essential to provide emotional, practical, and even financial support in order to promote a feeling of safety and inclusion (Manuel et al., 2020). However, a lack of support or insufficient assistance can cause stress, mental health problems, and a higher probability of social isolation (Delerue Matos et. al., 2021). Therefore, comprehending the value of SFS is critical for enhancing resilience on a personal level and also for improving quality of life in general (Xu, Liu & Tang, 2022).

"Career orientation" is a vast term in professional development that encompasses a person's interest and mindsets toward employment, and perceived talents (Hirschi & Koen, 2021). CO helps people proceed from a broad awareness of both work and life to a deeper realization of viable and realistic options for careers (McElroy & Weng, 2016). However, Scholars pointed out a scarcity of studies on various facets of CO (Khattab et al., 2022). Therefore, understanding and implementing the notion of CO is critical for making professions more accessible and realistic. In this study, we focused on three aspects of CO: career decidedness, career importance, and career aspiration. Career decidedness analyzes people's trustworthiness regarding their decision about job selection, whereas career importance examines the amount to which a person's profession leads to his/her awareness and provides a feeling of purpose and significance in life (Ahn, Dik & Hornback, 2017; Yasir, et al. 2014). Career aspiration is an individual's intentions to obtain or pursue a certain profession (Dries & Pepermans, 2007). Finally, on account of individuals'

perspectives and attitudes to their professions, CO serve as essential inspiration for individual conduct and employment decision.

In a changing world where jobs are changing quickly and society is becoming more complex, people should be ready to adapt flexibility than being stuck on fixed career tracks (Rubery, 2015). According to Lent (2018), during times of social change and economic instability, people frequently experience discouragement, depression, and a sense of pessimism over their future options. Additionally, when society and the economy are changing and there is economic uncertainty, people often feel frustrated and despondent about their prospects (Banerjee & Duflo, 2019). In a nutshell, CO provides people with insight into a variety of career options, which helps them choose careers that fit their interests, family dynamics, and way of life, and also enables personal growth (Bonache & Stirpe, 2016). Effective career advancement starts with self-evaluation and exploration (Hulsman & van der Vloodt, 2015). To make educated professional decisions and ultimately reach goals and fulfill dreams, people need to have a clear understanding of their own needs, talents, interests, and competencies.

## *2.2 Hypotheses Development*

### *2.2.1 Social & Family Support and Decent Work*

The association between SFS and DW is undeniable crucial because such support systems could substantially facilitate individuals' accessibility to lucrative job opportunities (Chen, Kumara & Sivakumar, 2021). Moreno de la Santa (2020) stated that access to inexpensive childcare facilities, psychological support, and a supportive family network can have a substantial effect on a person's capacity to locate and retain a DW. Furthermore, the existence of SFS could establish a positive atmosphere that motivates individuals to explore their interests and sustain a balance between work and personal life (Nattrass & Seekings, 2019). However, the absence of SFS can be a barrier in finding and maintaining DW, specifically for individuals who are caregivers (Sigstad & Garrels, 2023). Therefore, developing strong SFS networks serves as a crucial aspect of ensuring DW opportunities for all human beings. These argument support that the relationship between SFS and DW is multifaceted and significant, resulting in such support networks frequently functioning as critical facilitators in individuals' journeys toward finding and maintaining meaningful employment. Based on these arguments we proposed the hypothesis as follows:

H<sub>1</sub>: Social and family support is positively associated with decent work.

### *2.2.2 Career Orientation and Decent Work*

The comprehensive connection of a person's professional goals, values, and preferences with the key principles of DW makes the complex relationship between CO and DW (Fournier et. al., 2020). Furthermore, the essence of the issue is the compatibility of a person's professional goals and values with the fundamental principles of DW (Cascio & Racine, 2018). Those who value equal protection, treatment, and dignity at workplace not only experience more personal fulfillment in their employment but also have an important

role in creating and maintaining legitimate employment environments (Drewery, Prett & Church, 2022). However, Organizations that disregard these core values may have difficulty in keeping equal treatment in the workplace (Ferraro et al., 2023). Therefore, integrating a worker's CO with DW standards is obviously critical in establishing ethical and satisfying career paths while contributing to a healthy work environment (Cortellazzo et al., 2020). In conclusion, individuals as well as organizations must acknowledge the critical role of professional integrity standards to establish career success pertaining to workplace dynamics (Drewery, Prett & Church, 2022). We developed a subsequent hypothesis in accordance with these arguments:

H<sub>2</sub>: Career orientation is positively associated with decent work.

#### 2.2.3 Social & Family Support and Career Initiatives

SFS is critical for establishing CI (Gabriel & Aguinis, 2022). Furthermore, these systems of support serve as a fundamental foundation for psychological stability and inspiration (Perry-Jenkins & Gerstel, 2020). However, it is crucial to remember that not all people gain access to such assistance, underlining the need for social initiatives that establish inclusive settings (Baice et. al., 2021). Therefore, acknowledging and enhancing SFS networks could result in equitable opportunities for professional growth, benefiting individuals as well as society. Additionally, SFS not only enables individuals to achieve their CI but also serves as an effective support system throughout challenging circumstances (Chhabra et al., 2020). As a result, the positive connection between SFS and CI contributes not just to DW, but additionally to emotional fulfillment and resilience (Deutsch, et al., 2023). We have presented the subsequent hypothesis based on these considerations.

H<sub>3</sub>: Social and family support is positively associated with career initiatives.

#### 2.2.4 Career Orientation and Career Initiatives

According to Van der Heijden (2002), various factors have an enormous impact on a worker's consistent approaches, which play a substantial role in developing CI that are favorable for career achievement. In this context, CO is often recognized as an essential factor (Crowley-Henry, Benson & Al Ariss, 2019). CO may have a favorable impact on both their present successes and future aspirations, as well as their CI which guides their desires and methods for success (Heslin, Keating & Ashford, 2020). The current study is based on the action regulation theory, and it examines the evolving connections between career orientation, involvement in career activities, as well as perceived career accomplishments (Jackson & Tomlinson, 2020). However, employees, according to this theory, govern their behavior through cognitive procedures such as CO, CI, career selection, and regular monitoring and feedback of their activities (Crowley-Henry, Benson & Al Ariss, 2019). Therefore, CO contributes towards realizing ambitions of an individual through realistic goals in life, whereas CI convert theses aspirations into achievable targets (Kossek & Buzzanell, 2018). Based on aforementioned arguments, it is assumed that:

H<sub>4</sub>: Career orientation is positively associated with career initiatives.

#### 2.2.5 Career Initiatives and Decent Work

According to Gibb & Ishaq, (2020), CI includes exploring various work alternatives, completing a personal evaluation to determine suitability for those choices, and strategically determining the best approaches to develop a cohesive career path. Moreover, individuals who are involved in CI may integrate their work and personal ambitions, supporting the accomplishment of larger goals and promoting meaningful DW (Randev & Jha, 2023). However, CI is a continuous process that enables individuals to navigate various transitions, ultimately attaining their true potential for DW. (Gutowski et al., 2021). Continuous involvement in career initiatives indicates a possibility of getting DW by demonstrating confidence, a positive attitude, and proactive dedication to accomplishing personal as well as professional objectives (Blustein, Lysova & Duffy, 2023). Effective CI is critical in streamlining the paths to DW (Sehnbruch et al., 2015). Defined objectives allow people to concentrate on their developments; the more a person strives toward a certain goal, the more likely it will be met quickly (Cooke, Xu & Bian, 2019). In short, participating in professional initiatives drives individuals to boost efficiency and productivity, thereby allowing them to achieve a greater degree of DW. On the basis of these explanations, we formed the following hypothesis:

H<sub>5</sub>: Career initiatives are positively associated with decent work.

#### 2.2.6 Mediating Role of Career Initiatives between Social & Family Support and Decent Work

The association between SFS and DW is undeniably important; however, an individual's keen interest in professional activities has a significant outcome (Mansour & Tremblay, 2016). An extensive SFS network is important, it is tangible measures made toward career development that ultimately determine an individual's DW objectives (Wang et al., 2019). However, it is critical to comprehend that relying entirely on SFS may not result in the intended consequence of obtaining meaningful goals of DW (Aruldoss, Kowalski & Parayitam, 2021).

Determining how CI mediates the relationship between SFS and DW is crucial to comprehend the complex dynamics of the workplace. Furthermore, it emphasizes that, even though outside support is important, proactive individual efforts - like those shown by CI – is essential as well for establishing successful professional pathways. However, this highlights the relationship's complexities, as the existence of SFS does not ensure excellent professional achievement. Therefore, there is a greater need to investigate and improve CI in order to have a thorough understanding of successful ways for building supportive DW. Therefore, comprehending the relationship between SFS and the attainment of meaningful DW requires grasping and actively participating in CI.

H<sub>6</sub>: The association between social and family support and decent work is mediated by career initiatives



### 2.2.7 Mediating Role of Career Initiatives between Career Orientation and Decent Work

Individuals may address their CO by enhancing their participation in CI. CI is a specific capacity that leads transgender individuals to accomplish DW goals (D'Cruz et. al., 2022). CI acts as a mediator, establishing a dynamic interplay between CO and DW. The involvement of CI as a mediator in the connection between CO and DW may be justified on two different grounds. The fundamental rationale is that CO encourages individuals to participate in more CI activities, making it a critical component of developing DW (Khaskheli et al., 2020). Another explanation is that CO allows people to identify their priorities and ambitions, while CI enables them to achieve them, thereby enhancing DW (Story & Castanheira, 2019).

Comprehending the complex dynamics of occupational fulfillment requires examining the mediating function of CI in the relationship between CO and DW. Furthermore, it says that, while a defined CO establishes a direction, the transforming influence on legitimate work experiences is dependent on individual CI. However, this complexity highlights the fact that CO does not guarantee successful work outcomes, therefore a careful analysis of the interactions between CI and the broader context of DW is required. Therefore, establishing strategies that support CO as well as DW requires an intensive understanding of this interaction. In light of these arguments, the following hypotheses have been proposed:

H<sub>7</sub>: The association between career orientation and decent work is mediated by career initiatives.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Data Collection and Research Participants

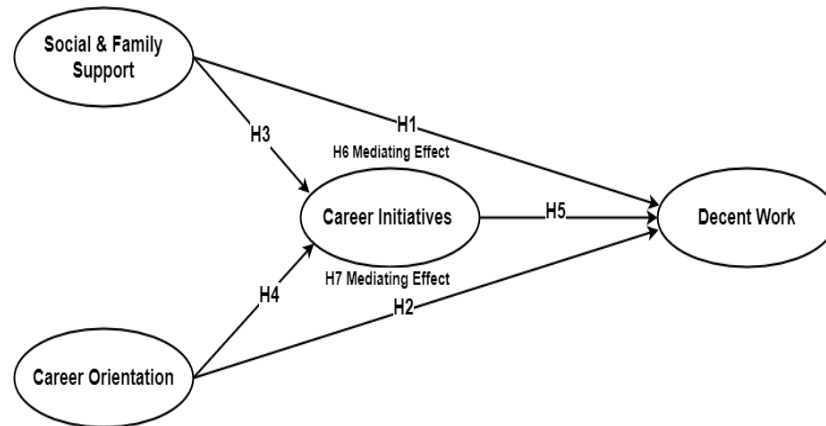
The proposed framework was investigated by using a cross-sectional study design. In order to carry out a detailed investigation, data were collected from 341 transgender individuals in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, with the objective of exploring the influence of SFS and CO on transgender individuals' meaningful DW. After interacting with 511 people, 341 transgender individuals consented to participate in the study through a convenient sample procedure. Trained male research assistants collected the data from designated places, and 7 transgender facilitators were also included in the data-gathering process with the objective for maintaining cultural sensitivity. Their critical role includes contacting and cooperating with the transgender community to acquire the necessary information, as well as establishing rapport and building confidence. Despite their excellent contribution, it is important to mention that the data collection process is a very challenging and hectic task. Initially, a lot of transgender individuals were reluctant to provide the essential information. Consequently, we established a research plan by establishing 7 research teams comprising of a research assistant and a transgender facilitator in each team. The role of transgender facilitators was critical in assuring the availability of participant and readiness

to participate in the survey. It is important to mention that many of the respondents we interacted with were illiterate, therefore, majority of questionnaires were completed by research assistants who initially recorded the data provided by participants and fill the questionnaires accordingly. Therefore, the collaborative work of research assistants and transgender facilitators was crucial in overcoming obstacles and ensuring a reliable data collection.

In our study, we employed a survey method by using questionnaires for data collection. However, according to Kraus et al. (2020), the data from single sources could bring common method bias (CMB); therefore, Harman's single-factor technique was used to address this issue, we obtained variance of 33.43% for a single factor. The value of CBM below the threshold value of 50% indicates that there is no CBM issue in the study.

### 3.2 Measurement

Transgender individuals were given the opportunity to provide their perspectives on their CO, SFS, and CI associated with meaningful DW. They were also asked to share their thoughts on professional achievement and DW by means of CI. We evaluated each item through a Likert scale consisting of five points (1 indicates strongly disagree while 5 indicates strongly agree). Our study encompassed a total of 43 questions, including 40 questions about latent variables and three on demographics.



**Figure 1: Theoretical Framework**

Figure 1 depicts the model that explains the relationships among SFS, CO and DW among transgender persons in Pakistan. CI is the mediating variable in this framework.

#### 3.2.1 Decent Work

For the purpose of determining DW, we used a 10-item scale derived from ILO (2008). Regarding overall goals, the ILO's community workforce agenda focuses on job creation, workplace rights, social protection, and gender equality. For these elements, the resulting alpha value was 0.796, suggesting a substantial amount of internal consistency.

### 3.2.2 Social & Family Support

In order to evaluate SFS we employed a 13-item scale. Six-item scale to measure social support were adopted from the study of Sarason et al. (1987), whereas seven-items scale to measure family support were adopted from the work of Dunst, Jenkins, & Trivette (2007). These items had an alpha score of 0.807, suggesting an exceptionally high degree of internal consistency.

### 3.2.3 Career Orientation

A six-item scale formulated by Ellemers et al., (1998) was used to measure CO, which is defined as the amount of commitment to an employment responsibilities or profession. The items have an alpha score of 0.810, suggesting a high level of internal consistency.

### 3.2.4 Career Initiatives

Respondents reported their opinions on the importance of career initiatives, their understanding of career objectives, and the function of CI in the framework of professional growth. We assessed this variable using a 11-item scale developed from King (1999), which yielded an alpha score of 0.872, suggesting an acceptable extent of internal consistency.

## 4. Analysis and Outcomes

We employed different analytical software like SPSS (v20) and AMOS (7.0) for analysis of the data. The association amongst the variables were calculated by using these advanced software packages. The use of these statistical packages made it possible to calculate reliable and robust outcomes.

**Table 1: Demographics (N = 341)**

Transgender Age		Percentage	Transgender Education		Percentage
21-30 years	83	24.34	Illiterate	143	41.94
31-40 years	154	45.16	Primary	77	22.58
41-50 years	65	19.06	Matriculation	67	19.65
51-60 years	31	9.09	Intermediate	35	10.26
> 60 years	8	2.35	Graduate	11	3.23
			Master	8	2.35
Transgender Income (Rupees)		Percentage	MS/MPhil/PhD	0	0
20000 – 40000	109	31.96			
41000– 60000	153	44.87			
61000– 80000	58	17.01			
81000– 100000	13	3.81			
Above 100000	8	2.35			

In this study, convergent validity and Construct validity were also estimated. The values of Composite Reliability and Average Variance Extraction were greater than the threshold level, which points out the appropriate level of convergent validity. Moreover, the results showed that composite reliability (CR) is greater than the threshold level and  $CR > AVE$  and  $AVE > 0.85$ . Table 2 presents the values of CR, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Standard Loading (SL). Discriminant validity was measured by using Fornell & Larcker (1981) method.

Table 2 presents the results to confirm the construct validity by using Cronbach's alpha value and corrected item-total correlation (CITC). Based on the results, the value of CITC was more than 0.6 and the values of Cronbach's alpha were greater than 0.80. Multi-collinearity was checked by using the Myers' (1990) standards.

Multi-collinearity was checked by using variance inflation factor (VIF) and tolerance values. Moreover, average VIF and maximum VIF were also checked. All of these measures provided values that were well close to the approved limits (average VIF  $> 2$ , tolerance  $> 0.2$ , and 5, and largest VIF  $< 10$ ), indicating the reliability of the variables included in the study. confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) technique was used to check the discriminant validity. Four different models were used to check the discriminant validity and come up with a conclusion that four-factor model is best fit in which SFS, CO, CI and DW were taken as four different factors. The CFA examination of the four-factor model using SEM shows that the evidence is accurately matched: (df = 721;  $\chi^2 = 269.08$ ; CFI = 0.863; GFI = 0.918;  $p < 0.001$ ; and SRMR = 0.063). This extensive analysis not only supports an absence of multi-collinearity but also validates the discriminant validity of the suggested factors, giving a strong basis for our empirical investigation.

**Table 2: Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Construct Measures**

Variables		CITC	FL	t-value	AVE	CR	Alpha
<b>Social &amp; Family Support</b> (Sarason et. al., 1987; Dunst, Jenkins, & Trivette, 2007)	SFS1	0.717	0.828	11.15	0.85	0.901	0.785
	SFS2	0.689	0.724	10.24			
	SFS3	0.713	0.880	12.365			
	SFS4	0.721	0.883	11.872			
	SFS5	0.699	0.889	12.214			
	SFS6	0.645	0.832	11.621			
	SFS7	0.711	0.683	13.324			
	SFS8	0.714	0.825	13.129			
	SFS9	0.821	0.687	13.721			
	SFS10	0.678	0.773	12.906			
	SFS11	0.7214	0.874	14.387			
	SFS12	0.7319	0.910	14.451			
	SFS13	0.755	0.922	14.617			
<b>Career Orientation</b> (Ellemers, de Gilder & Van Den Heuvel, 1998)	CO1	0.824	0.741	12.687	0.87	0.981	0.798
	CO2	0.654	0.768	13.452			
	CO3	0.7231	0.788	13.841			
	CO4	0.762	0.893	14.552			
	CO4	0.713	0.855	11.216			
	CO4	0.698	0.884	12.684			
<b>Career Initiatives</b> (King, 1999)	CI1	0.687	0.814	14.254	0.89	0.882	0.792
	CI2	0.725	0.724	12.364			
	CI3	0.764	0.822	14.267			
	CI4	0.687	0.771	13.364			
	CI5	0.699	0.722	14.741			
	CI6	0.755	0.812	11.346			
	CI7	0.667	0.851	14.037			
	CI8	0.725	0.765	13.452			
	CI9	0.688	0.807	11.122			
	CI10	0.671	0.836	12.515			
	CI11	0.714	0.828	14.724			
<b>Decent Work</b> (ILO, 2018)	DW1	0.765	0.741	11.572	0.86	0.983	0.887
	DW2	0.687	0.817	12.657			
	DW3	0.698	0.806	13.421			
	DW4	0.725	0.833	11.307			
	DW5	0.655	0.892	13.245			
	DW6	0.7271	0.901	12.827			
	DW7	0.681	0.879	13.421			
	DW 8	0.751	0.927	11.281			
	DW 9	0.691	0.912	12.657			
	DW10	0.716	0.797	13.829			

Confirmatory factor analysis. Note(s): (df = 721; CFI = 0.833;  $\chi^2 = 269.08$ ; GFI = 0.918; SRMR = 0.063; p = 0.001)

The outcomes of descriptive statistics and relationships between variables are shown in Table 3. An apparent pattern comes up from the descriptive data analysis, demonstrating that nearly all of the respondents reported higher SFS scores. The findings are supported by additional evidence such as the greater mean value of SFS scores amongst the respondents. These findings highlighted a common tendency amongst respondents to have significant levels of SFS, indicating an identifiable characteristic or pattern underlying the dataset. CI and DW average levels were, correspondingly, 4.5 and 4.4.

The results of Table 3 indicated a relationship between SFS and DW ( $r = 0.21$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), CO and DW ( $r = 0.33$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ); CO and CI ( $r = 0.29$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ); SFS and CI ( $r = 0.36$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ); and CI and DW ( $r = 0.42$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). It is crucial to note that we may perform studies on the indirect effects of these interactions. However, the aforementioned analysis approach, on the other hand, not only helps us grasp the complex relationship of variables but also makes it possible to investigate and determine the diverse consequences and relevance of these interactions. Therefore, investigating indirect effects is a crucial way to obtain a deeper understanding of the complexities connected with our research approach.

**Table 3: Descriptive Statistics and Correlation**

Construct	M	SD	CR	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Transgender Age	33	.84	-	-						
Transgender Income	21	.71	-	-	-					
Transgender Education	3.4	.77	-	-	-	-	-			
SFS	4.5	.80	.82	.09	.07	.08	<b>.88</b>			
CO	4.3	.89	.93	0.09	0.08	0.07	.46**	<b>.87</b>		
CI	4.2	.91	.85	.08	.09	.08	.29	.36**	<b>.79</b>	
DW	4.6	.83	.78	.07	.08	.06	.21	.33	.42**	<b>0.90</b>

n = 341; CO (Career Orientation); SFS (Social & Family Support); CI (Career Initiatives); DW (Decent Work)

#### 4.1 Hypotheses Testing

We have employed structural equation modeling (SEM) to comprehensively explore the study hypotheses. The approach described here was utilized because of the capacity to precisely portray complex relationships among variables, providing an effective basis for hypothesis test validation in our study setting. Table 4 depicts the path analysis. The finding shown in Table 4 indicates that SFS and DW are favorably and significantly correlated ( $\beta = 0.21$ ,  $t = 3.73$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ). Hypothesis 1 of the research is therefore confirmed. Moreover, CO and DW are favorably and significantly correlated ( $\beta = 0.33$ ,  $t = 3.34$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ) which

confirmed the study hypothesis 2. Additionally, the findings demonstrated a significant relationship between SFS and CI ( $\beta = 0.36$ ,  $t = 6.31$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ). These results are consistent with research Hypothesis 3. Similarly, it is evident from the findings that CO and CI are significantly related ( $\beta = 0.29$ ,  $t = 6.41$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ). As a result, research Hypothesis 4 was confirmed. Hypothesis 5 was confirmed through the values of CI and DW that showed significant values ( $\beta = 0.42$ ,  $t = 6.12$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ).

**Table 4: Regression Analysis (CI as mediator and DW as dependent variable)**

	Career Initiatives						Decent Work				
Construct	R2	SE	$\beta$	t-value	Sig.		R2	SE	$\beta$	t-value	Sig.
SFS	0.34	0.198	0.36	6.31	0.00		0.23	0.039	0.21	3.73	0.00
CO	0.27	0.189	0.29	6.41	0.00		0.31	0.041	0.33	3.34	0.00
CI (mediator)	-	-	-	-	-		0.29	0.052	0.42	6.12	0.00

SFS (Social & Family Support); CI (Career Initiatives); CO (Career Orientation); Sig: Significance

In order to confirm the indirect effects of SFS and CO, the results of multiple regression analysis are presented in Table 5. When CI was used as a mediator, the direct impact of SFS declined to an insignificant level ( $\beta = .07$ ,  $SE = 0.071$ ,  $t\text{-value} = 3.45$ ). These findings confirmed Hypothesis 6 by indicating that CI mediates the relationship between SFS and CO. Furthermore, when CI was introduced in the model as a mediator, the direct effect of CO declined and ultimately became insignificant. The results ( $\beta = .05$ ,  $SE = 0.069$ ,  $t\text{-value} = 3.51$ ) demonstrated that CI mediates the CO-DW relationship and supported Hypothesis H7. Figure-2 presents important values to justify the research hypotheses.

**Table 5: Multiple Regression Results of DW**

Model	Variables	R2	F	SE	$\beta$	t-value	Sig.
1	SFS	0.39	85.12	0.071	.07	3.45	0.49
	CI			0.063	.41	8.88	0.00
2	CO	0.33	71.89	0.069	.05	3.51	0.41
	CI			0.057	.43	8.79	0.00

CO (Career Orientation); SFS (Social & Family Support); CI (Career Initiatives); DW (Decent work); Sig: Significance.

Figure 2 represents simple and multiple regressions among variables social and family support, career orientation, career initiative and decent work in this framework.

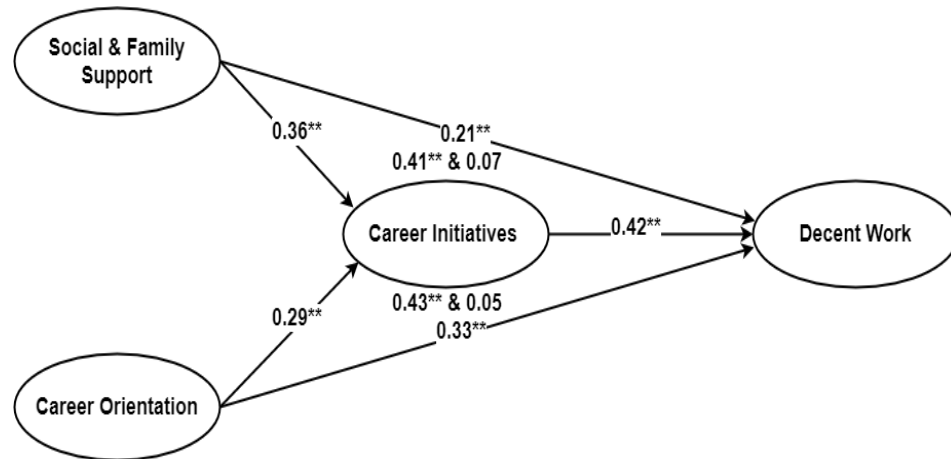


Figure 2: Coefficients of Simple & Multiple Regressions

## 5. Discussion

We have systematically developed and evaluated a theoretical model for this research. In this model, two independent variables SFS and CO have a positive relationship with dependent variable DW, which is also supported by the study of Baice et. al. (2021) and Drewery, Prett & Church (2022). Furthermore, the variable CI dynamically mediates both of the aforementioned relationships. This complex theoretical framework not only allows us to investigate the direct correlations but also sheds light on the critical function of CI in understanding the fundamental mechanisms and interdependencies within our study topic. In this research, a theoretical model has been developed and evaluated in which SFS and CO as independent variables are positively correlated with dependent variable DW, and both relationships were actively mediated by CI. Seven hypotheses that we have developed and evaluated in order to investigate the aforementioned connections were confirmed by the results of this study. According to research H1, the relationship between SFS and DW is positive which indicates that SFS promotes DW. The work of Sigstad & Garrels (2023) is also in favor of the said argument. H2 of the study proved that there exists a positive relationship between CO and DW. The work of Cascio & Racine (2018) also supports this argument. Regarding H3, a positive association between SFS and CI was established. The results of our research are consistent with the study of Deutsch, et al. (2023) by demonstrating the critical role that SFS plays in fostering CI. According to H4 of the study, there is a positive correlation between CO and CI interaction. The study by Kossek & Buzzanell (2018) emphasizes the crucial significance of CO in the development of CI, supporting the justification for its setting priorities. H5 revealed that there exists a positive relationship between CI and DW. The same arguments are confirmed by the study of Gutowski et al. (2021). H6 of the study highlighted that the mediating role of CI is crucial in the relationship of SFS and DW, whereas H7 confirmed that SFS predicts DW through



mediation of CI. According to the findings of H6 and H7, CI is critical in bridging the relationship between SFS-DW and CO-DW. Together, these relationships develop important pathway that strengthens the foundation for transgender people to pursue and accomplish DW; these arguments are supported by the similar studies of Aruldoss, Kowalski & Parayitam, (2021); D'Cruz et. al., (2022) and Wang et al., (2019).

### *5.1 Theoretical and managerial Contributions*

This research makes a substantial theoretical contribution by proposing a particular DW framework addressing the unique challenges and needs encountered by developing nations like Pakistan. First, this study contributes to the existing literature on DW and career development by exploring the specific challenges confronted by transgender individuals in developing countries. Second, this framework explains how the interaction of various variables, such as SFS, CO and CI, affects DW. This study conducted an in-depth investigation of SFS and CO to determine DW among transgender individuals in the developing countries. Third, this study emphasizes that the free-will approach of CI and persistent involvement by transgender persons will help to build up the need to promote autonomy and self-determination paradigm in career development.

The findings of the research have significant implications pertaining to legislative bodies and transgender individuals, highlighting the need for legislative reforms to foster policies that can favorably influence the lives of marginalized communities while harmonizing with broader socioeconomic objectives. Moreover, the study suggests that CI may promote DW of individuals through enabling them to focus on their goals. Furthermore, the study emphasized on the importance of CI as a voluntary endeavor among the transgender community. However, its effectiveness is dependent on the support of lawmakers and administrative authorities. Therefore, through paying attention to the continual development of CI, there is a potential to facilitate individuals to prioritize their obligations and follow a more enriched career-oriented path. Another important managerial contribution highlights the critical role of transgender individuals' continuous engagement in promoting the development of CI. However, this study emphasizes the combined effect of SFS, CO, and CI in the promotion of DW. When transgender people have an innate desire to improve their DW through devotion and self-awareness to DW, this motivation manifests itself in practical activities like CI. Therefore, this strategy mutually benefits by contributing to the creation of acceptable employment.

### *5.2 Limitations and Future Research*

Although this research provided insightful findings, however, the cross-sectional design and reliance on data provided by respondents could cause possible biases associated with social desirability. To solve these constraints and investigate the multidimensional elements of SFS, CO, CI, and DW, future studies should use a mixed-methods approach. Furthermore, looking into different moderators and mediators can improve the depth and

complexity of comprehending the association between SFS, CO and DW in further research.

### 5.3 Conclusion

It is obvious that an absence of DW prospects exerts a more substantial burden on transgender individuals than on the rest of the population. Therefore, it is critical to identify this discrepancy, especially when confronted with challenges such as inadequate career data and cross-national comparisons. Even after completing their education, a lot of transgender individuals encounter difficulties to find decent work, which can lead to frustration and a decreasing level of ambition. Moreover, due to biased impediments and misleading assumptions about their potential for work, a number of transgender individuals are reluctant to search for respectable employment. Instead, they make their income by doing low-value jobs in the informal economy with little support from their families and communities. Therefore, in order to motivate transgender individuals to fulfill their responsibilities in a more career-oriented manner, NGOs, policymakers, other government organizations, and transgender community themselves should make serious efforts on the provision of DW.

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