Mediating Effects of Factors Influencing Career Satisfaction of Women Academicians in Higher Education

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Abstract

India is expected to be the largest higher - education system in the world by 2030, overtaking China and USA. With over 900 institutions as in 2017–18 and the largest youth population, it has been predicted that one in every fourth individual graduating will belong to Indian educational institutions. A deeper analysis of the All India Survey of Higher Education (AISHE, 2017–18) revealed a decline of teachers in higher education, thus making it imperative to understand the reasons for the decline, especially among women academicians. Women academicians account for 42% of total higher education teachers' population with less than 25% at professor level and only a handful occupy the coveted post of vice-chancellor. While various individual and organizational factors may be at play, this study used structural equation modeling to comprehend the influence of career advancement in the career satisfaction of women academicians. Data were collected from 351 women academicians working in higher education institutions in Indian cities using a structured questionnaire, which showed Career Advancement as a full mediator of Career Satisfaction which in turn was influenced by Career Management Techniques and Work – Life Balance factors. Confirmatory factor analysis was used to determine convergent and discriminant validities. The fitment of the model was ascertained by evaluating structural model and the hypothesized relationships. The findings highlighted the importance of Career Advancement and its influence on Career Satisfaction. This research reiterated the need for policy makers, government, and higher education institutions to focus on ensuring a clear career path with suitable opportunities to ensure the longevity and success of women academicians.

Keywords : **women academicians, structural equation modelling, career satisfaction, career advancement, higher education**

JEL Classification : I230, J160, J240, J280, M510

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The presence of women in academics starts as learners, and eventually, some become educators. According to the World Bank Data, on an average, the percentage of women academicians has grown from 30.726% in 1974 to 41.964 % in 2017 (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, n.d.), but their proportion in higher education continues to remain dismal at senior levels. Only 20% women academicians occupied grade A position in 28 European countries in 2014 and remained a minority even in prominent EU countries like Belgium (15.6%), Germany (17.3%), the United Kingdom (17.5%), France (19.3%), Switzerland (19.3%), and Sweden (23.8%)

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(Catalyst, 2020). Even USA, with the largest higher education system in the world, has 32.4% of women as professors (Catalyst, 2020). Similarly, analysis of Times Higher Education World Rankings 2019 revealed that only 34% of the top 200 institutes are currently led by women (Kumar, 2015). India, which is home to over 900 universities (Press Information Bureau, Government of India, 2018), the ratio of female professors to their male counterparts has been consistently low and has remained nearly stagnant over the last six years (Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, 2018). There are only 13 women vice-chancellors in the country of which six are from all women-universities. While women academicians are very passionate about teaching, they choose not to apply for higher posts. While the glass ceiling and various individual or organizational barriers could be the reason why women academicians have not been able to compete with their male counterparts (Kumar, 2015), it poses an important question if women academicians are satisfied with their teaching careers and their career progression.

Career can be evaluated on objective or subjective criteria of success. Subjective criteria for success in career are based on the inner components, which involve the individual's personal internal understanding, perceptions, and assessments of their accomplishments in the workplace (Arthur, Khapova, & Wilderom, 2005). Female employees use more subjective measures like quality of career advancement and satisfaction as compared to males who evaluate their career achievement on more objective measures like pay, designation, and promotion (Simpson, 1995 ; White, 1995).

Career advancement remains one of the most important metrics of career satisfaction (August & Waltman, 2004). A review of relevant research works indicates that the career advancement of women has been examined from various aspects – individual, environmental, role of co-workers and mentorship, work life balance, societal and glass ceiling (Allen, French, & Poteet, 2016). Patwardhan, Mayya, and Joshi (2018) in their study indicated that job and career satisfaction were not affected by the most debated issue “glass ceiling” and organizational support had a positive effect on the results of the work. Female academicians' reluctance to occupy leadership roles, family responsibilities, and negative gender stereotypes were observed as significant barriers in career progression of women deans in Vietnamese higher education (Nguyen, 2013).

With the aim of attracting and retaining best quality teachers in Indian higher education, UGC felt the need of revising the promotion scheme, and hence, a new set of UGC regulations under CAS (Career Advancement Scheme) were introduced, which placed more emphasis on research output and teaching quality (Press Information Bureau, Government of India, 2018). While the job for an academic in an aided institution can fall into the category of tenure tracked positions which have clear career path, there is a second category of jobs in higher education colleges which are called as non - tenure tracked positions and are characterized by lesser pay and higher workloads (Ghosh & Tandon, 2018). The task force constituted by UGC seemed to reflect extensive practices of biasness and harassment among women working in higher education institutions (Kumar, 2015). Hence, there is a strong need to recognize and evaluate the degree of perceptions, aspirations, and satisfaction of women academicians with respect to their career advancement.

Career satisfaction of women academicians has been seldom studied in relation to the factors that either facilitate or may hinder their career advancement. There are many pragmatic studies available both in Indian and international contexts about job satisfaction of employees in different sectors including academia, but there is paucity of research on career satisfaction, especially in context of Indian women academia in higher education institutions. This research, therefore, differs from earlier studies as it goes beyond job satisfaction and tries to understand the larger subjective aspect of career satisfaction. The current research draws from the proposed employee – level career pathway model (Hedge & Rineer, 2017) in which we try to examine role of individual, organizational, and work – life balance factors in Indian higher education context. The study further examines the mediating effects of individual career management factors and work – life balance factors on career advancement. Finally, the study evaluates the role of career advancement in career satisfaction of women academicians in Indian higher education institutions.

Literature Review and Hypotheses Formulation

(1) Theoretical Framework : According to the employee – centred career pathway model proposed by Hedge and Rineer (2017), employees are able to successfully manage their careers not only because of their positive outlook and behaviour towards their performance in respective roles, but also because of organizational support and interrelationship of job and domestic factors. Two important outcomes, career advancement and career satisfaction are influenced by individual, organizational, and work – life balance factors along with the company's career pathways system. In this study, we apply this model to women academicians in higher education. We have made only minor modifications to the model so as to suit Indian higher education nomenclature, the first one being replacing 'career growth' with 'career advancement.' Career growth can be defined as an, "Individual's perception about his or her career advancement within an organization" (Dialoke & Nkechi, 2017, p.10). Rao, Vani, and Meesala (2014) demonstrated that employee engagement is highly critical and contributes most to career progress followed by best HR practices and employee performance was not found to be related to career success as performance may be just a symbol but not the essence of career progress. Lakshminarayanan, Pai, and Ramaprasad (2016) revealed that managerial skills and self-efficacy are collectively stronger in predicting job performance than either of the predictors alone. Similarly, career success has multiple indicators with career satisfaction being subjective in nature (Ishak, 2015). Since our research focuses on the subjective measures of career success to women academicians (Simpson, 1995), we consider career satisfaction over career success. The proposed model also explores this link for women academicians.

(2) Defining Constructs : The definitions of the various constructs and sub-constructs are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Constructs and Definitions

Sr. No.	Construct	Definition
1	**Individual Behavioral Factors *(IBF)***	IBF is made up of primarily four factors : Career Self-Efficacy, Perceived Employability, Proactive Personality, and Career Adaptability (Hedge & Rineer, 2017).
2	**Organizational Factors *(OF)***	Eisenberger, Cummings, Armeli, and Lynch (1997) explained that workers' beliefs regarding the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares concerning their well-being is termed as perceived organizational support.
3	**Work – Life Balance Factors *(WF)***	According to Sundaresan (2014), striking a balance between work, career, family, leisure, social obligations, health, and spirituality is defined as work – life balance.
4	**Individual Career Management Factors *(ICMF)***	ICMF is made up of primarily four factors : Career Insight, Career Commitment, Career Planning, and Career Exploration (Hedge & Rineer, 2017).
5	**Career Advancement *(CA)***	According to Weng, McElroy, Morrow, and Liu (2010), career growth was conceptualized by four factors : Career Goal Progress, Professional Ability Development, Promotion Speed, and Remuneration Growth.
6	**Career Satisfaction *(CSA)***	Trivellas, Kakkos, Blanas, and Santouridis (2015) termed career satisfaction as the reflection of the inner attitudes of people towards their career and also the developments in their career which forms a subjective side of career success.

(3) Hypotheses Formulation : Based upon our extensive literature review on the various constructs and sub – constructs of our proposed model, the following are the hypotheses that are formulated :

↳ **H_1 :** Work – Life Balance Factor (WF) is a partial/full mediator between Individual Behavioral Factors (IBF) and Individual Career Management Factors (ICMF).

↳ **H_2 :** Work – Life Balance Factor (WF) is a partial/full mediator between Individual Behavioral Factors (IBF) and Career Advancement (CA).

↳ **H_3 :** Work – Life Balance Factor (WF) is a partial/full mediator between Organizational Factors (OF) and Individual Career Management Factors (ICMF).

↳ **H_4 :** Work – Life Balance Factor (WF) is a partial/full mediator between Organizational Factors (OF) and Career Advancement (CA).

↳ **H_5 :** Individual Career Management (ICMF) is a partial/full mediator between Individual Behavioral Factors (IBF) and Career Advancement (CA).

↳ **H_6 :** Individual Career Management (ICMF) is a partial/full mediator between Organizational Factors (OF) and Career Advancement (CA).

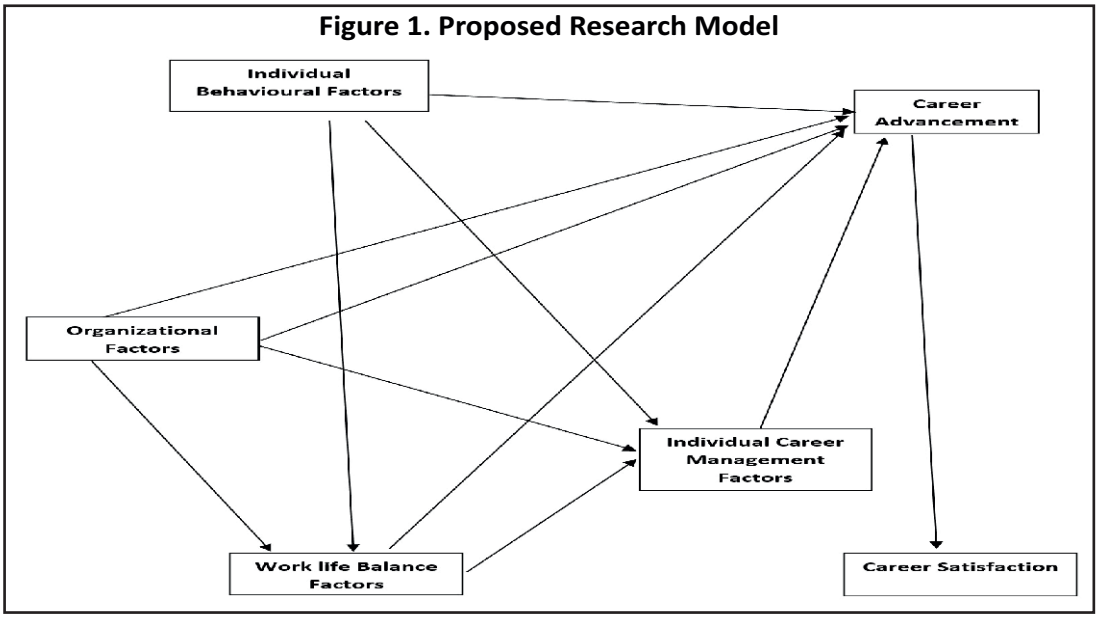
↳ **H_7 :** Individual Career Management (ICMF) is a partial/full mediator between Work – Life Balance Factors (WF) and Career Advancement (CA).

↳ **H_8 :** Career Advancement (CA) is a partial/full mediator between Individual Behavioral Factors (IBF) and Career Satisfaction (CSA).

↳ **H_9 :** Career Advancement (CA) is a partial/full mediator between Organizational Factors (OF) and Career Satisfaction (CSA).

↳ **H_{10} :** Career Advancement (CA) is a partial/full mediator between Work – Life Balance Factors (WF) and Career Satisfaction (CSA).

Figure 1. Proposed Research Model



↳ **H_{11} :** Career Advancement (CA) is a partial/full mediator between Individual Career Management Factors (ICMF) and Career Satisfaction (CSA).

(4) Research Model : The proposed model for the research is depicted in Figure 1.

Research Methodology

(1) Research Design : The proposed research model (Figure 1) is tested by using the questionnaire method under exploratory research framework. A survey instrument was prepared with the help of factors and constructs from different comprehensive studies as shown in Table 2. The chosen items/variables were regarded to be examined using a 5 - point Likert scale. The questionnaire consisted of two parts ; the first segment gathered overall general data of the respondents and the second segment contained items measuring constructs such as Individual Behavioural Factors, Organizational Factors, Work – Life Balance Factors, Individual Career Management Factors, Career Advancement, and Career Satisfaction. Parameters of the scale ranged from *"strongly agree"* (5) to *"strongly disagree"* (1).

A pilot study was conducted with a sample of 40 respondents to test the suitability of the survey instrument. Based on satisfactory results, the survey instrument was finalized with minor changes in language.

Table 2. Constructs and Sources

Constructs / Sub-Constructs	Number of Items	Sources
1. Individual Behavioural Factors *(IBF)*		
1.1 Career self-efficacy	5	Gaudron (2011)
1.2 Perceived employability	5	Rothwell and Arnold (2007)
1.3 Proactive personality	5	Bateman and Crant (1993)
1.4 Career adaptability	4	Savickas and Porfeli (2012) ; Ryba, Zhang, Huang, and Aunola (2017)
2.Organizational Factors *(OF)*	6	Eisenberger, Stinglhamber, Vandenberghe, Sucharski, and Rhoades (2002)
3. Work – Life Balance Factors *(WF)*	7	Brough, Timms, Driscoll, Kalliath, Siu, Sit, and Lo (2014)
4.Individual Career Management Factors *(ICMF)*		
4.1 Career insight	5	London and Noe (1997)
4.2 Career commitment	4	Blau (1988)
4.3 Career planning	4	Abele and Wiese (2008)
4.4 Career exploration	4	Hirschi (2009)
5. Career Advancement *(CA)*		Weng and Hu (2009)
5.1 Career goal progress	4	
5.2 Professional ability development	4	
5.3 Promotion speed	4	
5.4 Remuneration growth	3	
6.Career Satisfaction *(CSA)*	7	Greenhaus, Parasuraman, and Wormley (1990) ; Nabi (1999)

(2) Data Collection : Primary data were collected from head of departments (HoDs), course co-ordinators, committee heads, associate professors, professors, vice- principals, principals of government and private higher education institutes from four higher education hubs in the country, that is, Mumbai, Pune, Bangalore, and Chennai. The survey instrument was administered in the academic year 2018–19 to collect data from women academicians from these cities. Women academicians with minimum 5 years of experience in higher education who had experienced career growth under Career Advancement Scheme (CAS) were considered for the survey. Out of 400 respondents, 351 (87.75 percent) questionnaires were found to be suitable for the study. The study was completed in one year's time frame, that is, between 2018–19 starting from instrument finalization, data collection, coding, data analysis, drafting, and paper revisions.

Data Analysis and Results

Using the AMOS program, structural equation modelling (SEM) is used to analyze and interpret information from the questionnaires. For SEM, the process suggested by Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, and Tatham (2013) is used in which the first step includes testing the measurement model for its validity and reliability. Convergent and discriminant validity of constructs is tested using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and alpha coefficients from Cronbach have been used to check reliability of constructs. The second stage involves evaluating structural model and hypotheses testing. Path analysis is performed to represent the latent variables' casual interactions.

↳ **Independent Variables :** The independent variables of the study are Individual Behavioural Factors and Organizational Factors.

↳ **Dependent Variables :** Dependent variables are Work – Life Factors, Individual Career Management Factors, Career Advancement, and Career Satisfaction.

↳ **Mediator Variables :** Mediator variables are Work – Life Factors, Individual Career Management Factors, and Career Advancement.

(1) Assessment of Measurement Model : The first step in the evaluation of the measurement model is confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in which it can be seen that all Cronbach's alpha coefficient values are above 0.8, which shows high degree of reliability (Prashar, Sai Vijay, & Parsad, 2017). Items with lower factor loadings are removed (Netemeyer, Bearden, & Sharma, 2003) and those with values above 0.7 are retained to ensure construct reliability (Field, 2013).

Table 3. Measurement Model (CFA)

Factors and Items	Factor Loading	Critical Ratio	@	Average Variance Extracted	Construct Reliability
Individual Behavioural Factors *(IBF)*			**.847**	**.582**	**.847**
Career self-efficacy ***(IBF1)***	.772	14.283			
Perceived employability ***(IBF2)***	.700	12.879			
Proactive personality ***(IBF3)***	.789	Fixed			
Career adaptability ***(IBF4)***	.787	14.543			
Individual Career Management Factors *(ICMF)*			**.873**	**.635**	**.874**
Career insight ***(ICMF1)***	.794	16.603			
Career commitment ***(ICMF2)***	.733	14.966			

Career planning ***(ICMF3)***	.815	17.154			
Career exploration ***(ICMF4)***	.842	Fixed			
Organizational Factors *(OF)*			**.910**	**.607**	**.860**
OF1	.806	Fixed			
OF2	.717	13.873			
OF3	.856	16.768			
OF4	.730	14.162			
OF5	Deleted	Deleted			
OF6	Deleted	Deleted			
Work – Life Factors *(WF)*			**.947**	**.744**	**.935**
WF1	**.782**	**19.217**			
WF2	**.871**	**23.923**			
WF3	**Deleted**	**Deleted**			
WF4	**.900**	**Fixed**			
WF5	**.903**	**25.963**			
WF6	**.851**	**22.732**			
WF7	**Deleted**	**Deleted**			
Career Advancement *(CA)*			**.854**	**.593**	**.854**
Career goal progress *(CA1)*	**.800**	**Fixed**			
Professional ability development ***(CA2)***	**.749**	**14.261**			
Promotion speed ***(CA3)***	**.776**	**14.911**			
Remuneration growth ***(CA4)***	**.755**	**14.419**			
Career Satisfaction *(CSA)*			**.921**	**.690**	**.898**
CSA1	**.706**	**15.396**			
CSA2	**Deleted**	**Deleted**			
CSA3	**.882**	**Fixed**			
CSA4	**Deleted**	**Deleted**			
CSA5	**Deleted**	**Deleted**			
CSA6	**.877**	**21.794**			
CSA7	**.846**	**20.569**			

Note. Goodness of fit indices:

CMIN/*DF* = 1.557 ; CFI = .973 ; GFI = .918 ; AGFI = .898 ; NFI = .928 ; IFI = .973 ; TLI = .969

RMSEA = .040 ; SRMR =.0454

According to Hair et al. (2013), the fitment of the suggested measuring model should be based on the values of the absolute and relative fit indices. The ratio of chi-square to the degree of freedom (CMIN/*DF*) should be less than 5 and other indices such as comparative fit index (CFI), goodness-of-fit index (GFI), adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI), normed fit index (NFI), incremental fit index (IFI), and Tucker – Lewis index (TLI) should be higher than 0.9. The approximate root mean square error (RMSEA) should be lower than 0.08. The values obtained from the study (Table 3) are CFI = 0.973, GFI = 0.918, AGFI = 0.898, NFI = 0.928, IFI = 0.973, TLI = 0.969, and RMSEA = 0.040. The results find the fitment indices for the measurement model to be adequate.

For determining construct validity of constructs, we find out convergent and discriminant validities (Ping Jr., 2004). The statistical significance of the factor loadings is high for critical ratio (Table 3). Average variance extracted (AVE) of the six factors lies between 0.58 and 0.74. These values are greater than the suggested minimum value of 0.5 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Convergent validity has, therefore, been established.

Table 4. Discriminant Validity Test

	IBF	*ICMF*	*OF*	*WF*	*CA*	*CSA*
IBF	**0.763***					
ICMF	0.396	**0.797***				
OF	0.264	0.308	**0.797***			
WF	0.357	0.364	0.399	**0.835***		
CA	0.465	0.527	0.390	0.447	**0.770***	
CSA	0.386	0.396	0.272	0.321	0.509	**0.769***

Note. The values in * indicate square root of average variance extracted (AVE), while others indicate correlation coefficients.

Figure 2. Structural Model Estimates

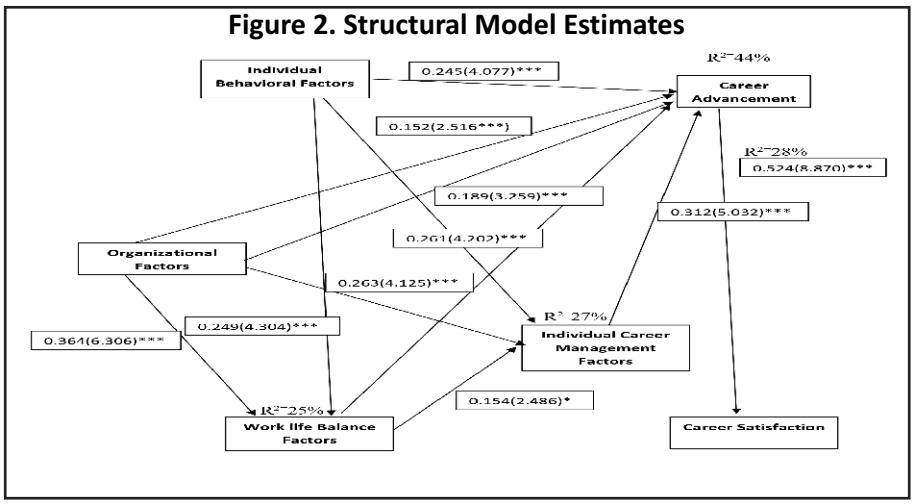


Table 5. Structural Parameter Estimates (Robustness Check)

Independent & Dependent Variables	Estimates	Critical Ratio	Result
IBF → *CA*	0.245	4.077***	Accepted
IBF → *ICMF*	0.261	4.202***	Accepted
IBF → *WF*	0.249	4.304***	Accepted
ICMF → *CA*	0.312	5.032***	Accepted
OF → *CA*	0.152	2.516*	Accepted
OF → *ICMF*	0.263	4.125***	Accepted
OF → *WF*	0.364	6.306***	Accepted
WF → *CA*	0.189	3.259**	Accepted
WF → *ICMF*	0.154	2.486*	Accepted
CA → *CSA*	0.524	8.870***	Accepted

Goodness of fit indices:

CMIN/*DF* = 1.591 ; CFI = .971 ; GFI = .916 ; AGFI = .896 ; NFI = .926 ; IFI = .971 ; TLI = .967 ; RMSEA = .041 ; SRMR =.0653

Each latent construct's square root of AVE is greater than its corresponding coefficient of correlation (Table 4). This indicates discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Since convergent and discriminant validity are established for all constructs, we conclude that construct validity has been established.

(2) Structural Model – Model Fit and Hypotheses Testing : SEM is used to evaluate the strength of relation between the six factors. The path coefficients (β) and variance explained (R^2) between various factors are shown in Figure 2. Similar to the measurement model, the fitment of the structural model is assessed using the same fitment indices as shown in Table 5.

The results (refer Table 5) display a good fitment of the proposed model as CMIN/*DF* = 1.591, CFI = 0.971, NFI = 0.926, GFI = 0.916, AGFI = 0.896, IFI = 0.971, TLI = 0.967, and RMSEA = 0.041. The value of SRMR value obtained for the current study is 0.06, which shows good model fit.

(3) Mediation Effects : By comparing the direct and indirect impact of independent variables on dependent variables, the mediation impact is tested. For evaluating the indirect effect, bootstrapping is performed and path coefficients are evaluated ; also, significance level (bias corrected *p* - values – two tailed test) is also calculated by running AMOS. By using AMOS plugin, the corrected indirect effect values are ascertained (Gaskin & Lim, 2018).

The results of the mediation analysis (Table 6) show Career Advancement as a full mediator of the various factors affecting Career Satisfaction. Similarly, Work – Life Balance factors and Individual Career Management factors are seen as partial mediators to factors affecting Career Advancement. The findings also appear to show that variables relating to Individual Career Management have a great impact on Career Advancement as compared to variables relating to Work – Life Balance.

Table 6. Testing Mediation Effects

	Hypothesis	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect (Gaskin)	Remarks
H_1	*IBF* → *WF* → *ICMF*	**0.261****	**0.037****	**Partial Mediation**
H_2	*IBF* → *WF* → *CA*	**0.232****	**0.049*****	**Partial Mediation**
H_3	*OF* → *WF* → *ICMF*	**0.263****	**0.055***	**Partial Mediation**
H_4	*OF* → *WF* → *CA*	**0.150***	**0.072*****	**Partial Mediation**
H_5	*IBF* → *ICMF* → *CA*	**0.232****	**0.099*****	**Partial Mediation**
H_6	*OF* → *ICMF* → *CA*	**0.150***	**0.099*****	**Partial Mediation**
H_7	*WF* → *ICMF* → *CA*	**0.187****	**0.048***	**Partial Mediation**
H_8	*IBF* → *CA* → *CSA*	**0.162(ns)**	**0.127*****	**Full Mediation**
H_9	*OF* → *CA* → *CSA*	**0.047(ns)**	**0.074****	**Full Mediation**
H_{10}	*WF* → *CA* → *CSA*	**0.056(ns)**	**0.088*****	**Full Mediation**
H_{11}	*ICMF* → *CA* → *CSA*	**0.105(ns)**	**0.160*****	**Full Mediation**

Note. ns = not significant; * = $p < 0.05$; ** = $p < 0.01$; *** = $p < 0.001$.

Discussion

The research is found to be consistent with the career pathways model proposed by Hedge and Rineer (2017) and gives great insights into the career satisfaction of Indian higher education institutions among female academicians. The findings indicate that career advancement has a significant impact on career satisfaction of women academicians, which is consistent with prior research of Igbaria and Greenhaus (1992), who stated in their findings that career advancement had a direct positive relation with career satisfaction.

Based on the SEM analysis, it is observed that Work – Life Balance Factors act as partial mediators between the exogenous variables (Behavioural Factors and Organizational Factors) and Individual Career Management

Factors & Career Advancement Factors. Earlier studies were restricted to career advancement variables in which enrichment of the work – family was found to be a partial mediator between perceived organizational support and job outcomes (Baral & Bhargava, 2010 ; Nicklin & McNall, 2013). Mittal, Singh, and Sharma (2017) found a significant and positive relation between individual behavioural factors and work – life balance in middle and senior level managers.

Our study supports the results of Godshalk and Sosik (2003), who said that subjective career achievement was heavily associated with individual career management factors. Our study also evaluates the mediator impact on the two exogenous variables of Individual Career Management Factors. Our findings are comparable to research demonstrating career commitment as a partial mediator between self-efficacy and career success (Ballout, 2009) and career commitment as a partial mediator between organization and career growth variables (Kim, Kang, Lee, & McLean, 2016). Our research, however, contradicts the results of De Vos and Soens (2008), who discovered career insight to be a full mediator between career attitude and career success.

Our findings show that Career Advancement highly influences Career Satisfaction among women academicians and acts as a full mediator between Individual Behavioural Factors and Career Satisfaction. These findings support studies which found proactive personality affecting career progression, which in turn affected career satisfaction (Seibert, Kraimer, & Crant, 2001). Our study also reinforces the findings of Sommer and Kulkarni (2012), who found that career advancement was a full mediator between perceived supervisor support and career satisfaction.

Implications and Recommendations

Retaining female academicians has been one of the biggest challenges in front of higher education institutions who aspire for quality and diversity. However, an important first step towards retention is to understand what contributes towards career satisfaction of female academics. Our research has measured subjective career satisfaction of female academicians where our findings indicate that in comparison to individual career management factors and work – life factors, for women academicians, perception of career advancement has more impact on their subjective career satisfaction. Hence, for higher education institutions, it is important to focus on professional achievements and accomplishments of female academics, which are important factors linked to their subjective career satisfaction. In order to retain women academicians, we suggest that institutions should devise retention plans by classifying their full-time faculties in two groups, the first one being employees who have newly joined the institution and the second one being older employees who have been loyal towards the institution and have spent significant years with the same. The retention strategy to enhance career satisfaction of these two groups should be different. For the first group of newly joined employees, an institution can seek their ambitions and career goals and try to provide them opportunities which will match their attitudes and abilities and hence enable them to progress in their career. The second group of women academicians, which is older and experienced and whose career advancement potential and desire the institution is already aware of ; hence, it becomes all the more important to enhance their career satisfaction by deploying a retention plan which will require both organizational and individual intervention. Career advancement from one designation to another is clearly defined and is based on Annual Performance Indicators (API) scores. But there are limited sanctioned posts ; so, progression to a higher designation is difficult. There is a need for institutions to move beyond just these fixed designations and provide women academicians' career growth through job enrichment and opportunities to display their leadership skills. There is a strong need for the government to move from career advancement policies to career growth policies for experienced staff. Thirdly, employees should be aware of organization requirements and expectations of minimum and desired level of performance on various parameters, which will increase their chances of advancement from one designation, level, and pay to another. This needs to be done with

a regular performance appraisal mechanism for all academicians. Lastly, organizational intervention is needed to facilitate women academicians who have both desire and potential by providing infrastructure (where they will be able to use innovative teaching and learning methodology), monetary and non-monetary incentives to women academicians to attend refresher courses, faculty development programmes, national/international seminars, encouraging them to enhance their research productivity by attending workshops and short term courses which will equip them to undertake quality research projects and publications.

During our literature review, we found several research papers highlighting work – life factors as one of the important factors affecting career advancement prospects of a woman academician. However, the findings of our study indicate that work – life balance is one of the factors affecting career advancement, but it is not more important than individual career management factors. While organizations might provide various opportunities to academicians to progress in their career, but first, it is the intrinsic desire of women academicians to use these opportunities in order to meet their career goals. Hence, we suggest that faculties should have a self-introspection mechanism by first acquiring the minimum required qualification (NET/SET/SLET, M.Phil., Ph.D. etc.) and experience desirable for a particular designation. Secondly, they should enhance their performance scores on parameters of teaching, learning, research, etc. by closely working with their supervisors to understand, meet, and exceed their expectations. Working on oneself and using opportunities of training and development to build competencies like leadership, networking, mobility, environment scanning, adaptability, and political shrewdness will help them to aspire and apply for top most positions in the academic hierarchy in the long run.

A general implication of this research paper would also be for policy makers to reserve certain posts for women academicians especially at higher designations, define opportunities for career growth, involve women academicians in the selection panel for senior posts, and frame policies for initiating career management practices among women academicians in higher education institutions.

Limitations of the Study and the Way Forward

While the study helps us understand career advancement and career satisfaction among women academicians in Indian higher education institutions, it is not without its limitations as is the case of any empirical study. One of the limitations of this study is that all data were collected from the same set of participants, which may lead to respondent bias. The data collected were limited to few cities and may not be generalized to the entire country based on the demographic variables (refer to Appendix Table A2). The current research has not gone into the depth of individual advancement potential as an element of abilities could have a direct or indirect impact on women academicians' career advancement. Another limitation is that only subjective dimensions of career satisfaction are studied in this research paper. The paper mainly focuses on the mediating effects of the different factors influencing career satisfaction. Further studies might attempt to comprehend the effect on these factors of demographic variables. Control variables like age, nature of institution, and size of institution can be added to test the model under different criteria.

Authors' Contribution

The idea of the research paper and statement of problem was initially conceived by Dr. Ajit J. Kurup. The title of the research paper was formulated after thorough brainstorming by all three authors. Shikha Pandey and Mushira Charfare did a detailed comprehensive review of literature of over 100 research papers related to the topic. The conceptual model was finalized by Dr. Ajit J. Kurup based on the literature review findings. Shikha Pandey and Mushira Charfare then identified various available scales for different factors. Dr. Ajit J. Kurup finalized the final questionnaire and factors. Shikha Pandey and Mushira Charfare collected data from women

academicians and further did editing and coding of the same. The measurement model analysis in AMOS was conducted by Mushira Charfare. Structural model analysis was finalized by Dr. Ajit J. Kurup. Shikha Pandey further contributed in writing the Discussion and Implications & Recommendations section of the research paper after complete SEM analysis. Finally, the references were cross - checked and verified by Mushira Charfare to complete the research paper in consultation with Dr. Ajit J. Kurup and Shikha Pandey.

Conflict of Interest

The authors certify that they have no affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest, or non-financial interest in the subject matter, or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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Appendix

Table A1. Questionnaire

Factor	Statement
Individual Behavioural Factors *(IBF)*	
Career self-efficacy *(IBF1)*	I believe in my ability to carry out activities that will help me succeed in my career.
Perceived employability *(IBF2)*	I believe I have the ability to succeed in my current role and these abilities, skills, and knowledge will help me to move between occupations successfully during my lifetime.
Proactive personality *(IBF3)*	I believe I am proactive towards aligning actively towards my role by initiating change and influencing my work environment.
Career adaptability *(IBF4)*	I am able to adapt to various circumstances related to my career by being able to cope up with both predictable and unpredictable work conditions.
Organizational Factors *(OF)*	
OF1	My organization values my contribution to its well - being.
OF2	My organization strongly considers my goals and values.
OF3	My organization really cares about my well - being.
OF4	My supervisor is willing to extend him/herself in order to help me perform my job to the best of my ability.
OF5	My supervisor takes pride in my accomplishments at work.
OF6	My supervisor tries to make my job as interesting as possible.
Work - Life Factors *(WF)*	
WF1	I can manage my roles related to family and professional life in a balanced manner.
WF2	I can make enough time for myself by preserving the balance between my professional life and family life.
WF3	I feel loyalty to my roles both in my professional life and my family.
WF4	I manage my professional and family life in a controlled manner.
WF5	I am successful at creating a balance between my multiple life roles (employee/spouse/mother, etc.).
WF6	I can deal with the situations that occur due to the conflict between my roles that are specific to my professional and family life.
WF7	I am equally content with my roles in my family and professional life.
Individual Career Management Factors *(ICMF)*	
Career insight *(ICMF1)*	I know my strengths, and hence, have realistic perceptions of myself and my organization.
Career commitment *(ICMF2)*	I have a positive attitude towards my profession or vocation.
Career planning *(ICMF3)*	I set and pursue my career goals and put in effort to outline future career development.
Career exploration *(ICMF4)*	I always engage in career development behaviors which are related to both career self-exploration and environmental exploration.
Career Advancement *(CA)*	
Career goal progress *(CA1)*	My current job allows me to achieve my career goals.
Professional ability development *(CA2)*	My current job helps me to gain new skills and new knowledge.
Promotion speed *(CA3)*	I feel that my career has advanced satisfactorily in my current company in comparison to my previous job and also when compared to my colleagues.

Remuneration growth *(CA4)*	I am happy with the speed of compensation increase in my current company.
Career Satisfaction *(CSA)*	
CSA1	I am in a position to mostly do work which I really like.
CSA2	My job title is indicative of my progress and my responsibility in the organization.
CSA3	I am pleased with the promotions I have received so far.
CSA4	I am satisfied with the success I have achieved in my career.
CSA5	I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my overall career goals.
CSA6	I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my goals for advancement.
CSA7	I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my goals for the development of new skills.

Table A2. Demographic Description of Respondents of the Survey

Demographic Variable	Demographic Categories	No	Percentage (%)
Nature of Institute	Government Aided	141	40.2
	Private	210	59.8
Age	Below 35 yrs	82	23.4
	35 – 40 yrs	101	28.8
	40 – 50 yrs	99	28.2
	Above 50	69	19.7
Designation	Assistant Professor	93	26.5
	Associate Professor	217	61.8
	Professor and others	41	11.7
Staff Strength	Below 30	144	41.0
	30 - 50	147	41.9
	Above 50	60	17.1

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