



WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN PAKISTAN: A SOCIOECONOMIC PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

When women's position is investigated for research purposes in third-world countries, gender inequalities are commonly observed. As a result, the present study focuses on the link between jobs and equality in the contemporary age. Women's access to jobs and the amount they contribute to the collective income of the family are also critical for eradicating discrimination against women. There are five dimensions of women's empowerment that the study has chosen to examine. The study highlighted how it is more likely for women to have motivation towards predominantly specialized jobs and how a small number of empowerment indicators may be linked with these distinct professional traits. The study aims to stimulate debate that women can be empowered by expanding the professional market that presents new opportunities to Pakistan's rural areas women, which are frequently overlooked in third-world nations.



Keywords: Employment, Occupation, financial Contribution, Pakistan, Socioeconomic perspective, Systematic Review

Introduction

When investigating the condition of women in third-world nations for research purposes, gender inequalities are frequently observed. According to Choudhry et al. (2019a), these gender differences contribute to various forms of inequality and financial inequities, including unfairness in healthcare, insufficient access to necessities, unequal educational opportunities, and insufficient power in many parts of life. Additionally, this lack of power increases financial insecurity. According to Musindarwezo (2018), for a nation's development, women empowerment is pivotal; for achieving sustainable progress in a society, it is critical to provide women with liberty and empowerment in the areas of healthcare, politics, and economic activities, thus helping them to set critical goals.

It is critical to the growth and stability of both genders that women's empowerment and freedom be ensured. It will preserve equilibrium in shared justice and accomplish clearly defined goals. As numerous scholars have stated, women's economic emancipation is more debatable in social and political terms than financial terms. As a result, gender equality must be prioritized. It should be recognized as a one-of-a-kind and most effective strategy for eradicating gender inequality (Muhammad et al., 2021).

Occupations are critical components of financial empowerment in terms of economic success, legislation, and power-sharing. Previously, control and selection were critical components of empowerment, and such components were the outcome of the continuing empowering operations that follow a variety of sectors and scopes (Noor et al., 2021).

Therefore, while examining empowerment issues, it is critical to understand where they arise and the fundamental ways in which they manifest. When developing policy, it is necessary to consider the context, as well as the power structures. Similarly, it is necessary to address the perpetual participants in this always-changing phase (Noor et al., 2021).

Gender is a dynamic, social construct used for manipulating women through labor division between men and women. Additionally, they regard it as a racial component of prejudiced thought. According to the predominant male ideology of division of labor, women are responsible for home chores, but males are competent for public employment, which entails more power, money, superior position, self-esteem, independence, and new opportunities for advancement. Nevertheless, due to sexist ideology, marginalizing and abusive behavior, and contained mobility in public matters, women find limited



understanding and frequently suffer in a time crunch when coming home to begin a second shift. This reserved life limits women's ability to thrive in communal living.

One of the basic problems that women go through in Pakistani marriages is inequality between the two sexes. The fertile age ranges from 15 to 49 years in this region; in urban areas, the typical marriage age is around 20 years, and it is about 19 years in rural areas (Rawoof et al., 2021). According to Jessie Bernard's 1982 research, the marital system promotes equality and sensual control. Generally, males elevated themselves above domestic responsibilities following the marital system. On the contrary, women frequently feel powerless and dependent in marital arrangements when they are responsible for giving all necessary care and services to males. Women experience home loneliness as a result of traditional marriages. Okonofua and Omonkhua (2021) noted that married folks experience far more stress than unmarried individuals.

Women's empowerment, status, and the imbalance between the two genders, altogether referred to as women's circumstances in Pakistan, cause concern. As noted by the World Economic Forum, women's socioeconomic circumstances are precarious, and gaps persist in their access to school, hospitals, monetary support, and participation in politics. In the South Asian region, Pakistan's gender equality is the lowest, i.e. 55%. Almost 70% of the country's population lives in rural areas. Women's empowerment has improved slightly in the country's cosmopolitan cities, but situations are worse in smaller municipalities, townships, and rural regions. Rural women confront widespread inequality in many spheres of life.

The majority of women's difficulties in Pakistan are similar to those faced by nineteenth-century western women. They feel emancipated and have obtained their civil rights due to the activity of the so-called first feminist wave. However, women in Pakistan, particularly in rural areas, continue to face a variety of problems. This inequity has remained prominent in rural women's life in Pakistan, which includes restricted movement, inadequacies in education and health services, a lack of economic growth, unpaid labor, pay gaps, spouse violence, abusive workplace, prolonged work timings, double work-shifts, and a weak civil structure in terms of differences, and disputes. In Pakistan, further study is required to fully grasp women's enslavement and do active research to liberate them from male-controlled norms.

Empowerment must be understood holistically as a process that results in constructing a comprehensive structure, starting from understanding the power hierarchy, i.e., structures that maintain women's subjugation (Pierobom de Avila et al., 2021). The current study examined how their employment might inspire women to understand the relationship between women and job empowerment thoroughly. Additionally, this research provides an



overview of the critical role of the activities that are related to women's empowerment. Particularly, with whom they are cooperating and their function in terms of family income. Economic empowerment entails social and political emancipation as well. Thus, social hierarchy reforms are critical for the advancement of women in Pakistan.

Justification of the Study

The World Economic Forum states that the position of Pakistani women is dire, and inequalities against them are prevalent in areas of education, healthcare, financial contribution, and participation in politics. Women's empowerment has increased marginally in Pakistan's cosmopolitan metropolises but has deteriorated in rural areas and small towns. Keep in mind that Pakistan's 70% population is rural, where they experience severe discrimination in many areas of life. As a result, the current study generally focuses on the relationship between occupations and empowerment, explicitly emphasizing an individual's ability to access professional possibilities and the service environment. Women's attitudes toward employment and their level of engagement in the accumulative family earnings of the household divisions are likewise notably significant.

Objectives of the Study

1. To elaborate on the empowerment-employment relationship in the context of Pakistani women.
2. To elaborate on the empowerment-employment status in the context of Pakistani women.
3. To elaborate on the relationship between empowerment and Pakistan's demography.
4. To elaborate on the relationship between empowerment and occupational status of women in the Pakistani context.
5. To elaborate on the relationship between empowerment and financial contribution of women in the Pakistani context.

Research Methodology

As per Komba and Lwoga (2020), a systematic review approach was used to conduct this research. This technique highlights establishing the research objectives and conducts an exhaustive examination of the subject's literature. According to Petticrew and Roberts (2006), the study results are categorized per the subject's topic. The study incorporates classified data by categorizing it into categories (Pawson et al., 2005). The study's flow is determined by evaluating classified material and titles (Rahi, 2017). Victor (2008) mentions that the guarantee of integrity is maintained by making a comparison between the research subjects and their contents.



As a consequence, this technique was selected, and the associated processes were observed. Reviewing the relevant literature resulted in the accumulation of data and information, which were coded according to the study goals. The coded data were grouped by subject. After classifying and merging the subjects, they were ordered by degree of connection.

Literature Review

As per Sepotokele (2018), women empowerment entails the authority and independence to govern their lives domestically and outside the domestic premises. It also entails the ability to influence how changes in society result in a more luxurious socioeconomic system locally as well as globally. Feminism is not one individual's attempt; it is the generalization of a diverse community. It is said to be feminist since its main objective is to research women's exploitation in society and improve the social environment for women. Both feminists believe that men-controlled society and conservative ideology promote women's subservient status despite their ideological disagreements.

As a result, a new social structure based on gender parity is required, rather than a patriarchal society. Liberal feminism claims that through re-designing important institutions such as family, work, law, and education, gender modeling in the division of labor and equality between the two genders may be achieved. According to Schmitt (2018), personal property institutions brought about cruelty toward women. During the colonial era on the Indian subcontinent, this structure was consolidated further by capitalism via remotely controlling the sources of creation.

This privilege produced a class hierarchy, which males accepted since it favored a male-dominated society. While capitalism does not favor women, it is a significant source of gender inequality. Women comprise half of the global population. In case, this half gains independence, then capitalism may suffer, because it is a system in which the means of production are regarded as communal property, and women are regarded as self-governing in financial terms just like men. Feminists from the socialist side think that the capitalist system and patriarchy are the primary causes of women's oppression.

Researchers are now attempting to define a tool for estimating and assessing the size or level of female empowerment in society. Thus, a previous study used women's position as a proxy for empowerment, with women belonging to a greater family status considered to be empowered, whereas those without such a status considered disempowered. Following that, the analysts Heywood and Mulveen (2021) used various factors for



measuring empowerment, including gender inequality, women's position in homes, and their involvement in household management; however, these were not established.

The term 'independence' does not seem particularly remarkable in the social system, but 'empowerment implies the degree of benefits and freedoms available to both genders (Khalid & Choudhry, 2021) Nonetheless, it is insufficient to consider women's economic power as proof of empowerment when researching the subject of women's empowerment (Arshad et al., 2021).

It is necessary to comprehend the resources women have and the power they have to use the respective resources. Empowerment is insufficient without control over resources. Additionally, society must make a substantial commitment to women's empowerment. Western countries' beliefs of empowerment are opposed to those of third-world countries (Koshulko, 2021). Thus, women's empowerment might be measured by examining evidence, resources, and context.

Women in Pakistan are prepared to enter into agreements with their spouses on different issues, including hobbies, social mobility, employment status, daughters' education, and household duties. However, disagreements result in conflicts that diminish women's satisfaction (Qamar et al., 2021). As a result, compared to their male counterparts, women are less pleased and satisfied with the actual as well as the virtual economic situation of their families (Whitaker et al., 2021). Additionally, various assert that Pakistan's female feminists showed frustration and dissatisfaction with their jobs. However founded their businesses with the eventual goal of selecting the type of job, working hours, and the folks they worked with. Nonetheless, the majority of women encountered social, behavioral, and economic barriers throughout their company beginnings. Thus, one can see that empowerment may be seen in various ways, but it also intersects with a variety of facets.

Empowerment Indicators

The phrase 'women empowerment' evolved from the terminology used for them, such as women's independence and autonomy in advocating for justice and their rights. Among frequently used indicators of women's empowerment are family management and the ability to travel. According to Black and Kowalski (2021), the management of women's assets has become a specifically problematic component of their empowerment.

How do the respective empowerment and their reach to resources influence the issue at hand? Establishing women's economic independence from economic factors or resources, decreases gender inequality and increases empowerment (Peinado & Serrano, 2018).



Additionally, the gender gap might be decreased by increasing women's influence over home resources, progressively strengthening women financially.

Being able to be heard in families instills confidence among women. They begin to scrutinize personal choices and significantly impact public concerns (Darvin & Demara, 2021). Concerning the debate over the relationship between empowerment and employment, the underlying argument is critical since, for the majority of people, simply doing work and increasing money is insufficient; instead, they want to influence their resources (Darvin & Demara, 2021; Heywood & Mulveen, 2021). Women can do a job and obtain money, but without control over their resources, they cannot acquire any influence or authority in their homes.

1. Empowerment and Employment

The most compelling argument in all arguments about women's empowerment is that they can earn money which may help them achieve empowerment since they are motivated to bargain by the ability to manage their resources (Okonofua & Omonkhua, 2021). If women earn, they can take care of themselves and become less dependent on the other family members for survival. It then enables individuals to exert control over the decisions and options they make in life.

In families, the increase in negotiating power is viewed as a critical factor of women's empowerment as it demonstrates their power over their households and themselves (Darvin & Demara, 2021). It bolsters women's bargaining power inside families by increasing household income and providing a more forceful fallback position (Okonofua & Omonkhua, 2021). In comparison, experts frequently assert that women face a slew of additional hurdles that serve monstrosly in controlling their lives and achieving gender equality and cannot be eradicated through job creation alone.

Thus, it may be argued that women remain un-empowered due to weak structural factors and poor choices. However, employment opportunities are limited in third-world nations including Pakistan. Due to women's poor educational attainment and lack of self-awareness, it is reasonable to assume that women-related jobs require less skill and are frequently compensated unfairly, are unable to feel safe, and are exposed to a hazardous environment at the workplace (Gupta, 2021).

Women's employment and revenue-producing activities do not eliminate their family commitments, suggesting that the majority of employed women have several responsibilities, that include jobs, home chores, and the need to safeguard their households



(Parveen, 2021). Empowerment realism is highly complex and lies at the heart of the claims expressed above. Jobs may not always result in empowering individuals; instead, they assist individuals in increasing their power and contribution to their homes. Thus, following both, the researchers identified and incorporated numerous critical elements, including the conditions that influence vocations and the kind of empowerment.

2. Empowerment and Employment Status

The researchers noticed differences after using the frameworks from previous studies. Indian women of poor class and Bengali women believe that jobs play a great role in empowering women and that those who work look for the power of decision-making in comparison to the unemployed, who lack power over their mobility, resources, and ability to amass property to safeguard their welfare (Koshulko, 2021). Simultaneously, other experts assert that with the aid of well-paying employment, enduring societal ideals may be altered (Okonofua & Omonkhua, 2021). However, research has found that simply having a job has a minimal influence on empowerment without job-related outcomes.

The power structures restricting women from participating and contributing to society are sufficiently solid and cannot be questioned just through employment. Women work primarily for survival purposes, and this type of profession has little bearing on gender contribution and it is the fundamental reason for job empowerment's failure (Kumar et al., 2021). Women don't get permission to participate in politics owing to their lower income levels, and their job does not ease home duties or provide them with comparable property civil rights (Cinar & Kose, 2018).

As per Cinar and Kose (2018), despite these difficulties, work in the appropriate circumstances might effectively combine communal efforts to empower women. Nonetheless, the question is how employment may be construed as empowerment. There is an urgent need to investigate this issue properly and examine the link between the variables that motivate women to enter the labor force, their consequences, jobs, family experiences, and wage results.

3. Empowerment and demographics

Women's empowerment can be influenced directly or indirectly by sociodemographic settings; the term 'indirectly' refers to the ability to access employment, social standing, and gender contribution predictions (Choudhry et al., 2019b; Darvin & Demara, 2021). There are specific groups of women in society who are not very motivated to be empowered, such as young females, females with lesser levels of education, rural and



impoverished females, and females of inferior rank or caste (Koshulko, 2021). Education may be the most stimulating factor for women's occupations and their relationship to empowerment since it results in life options and outcomes. Occupation and education tend to be significant factors in determining home financial power; thus, women are less involved in the executive and community problems (Black & Kowalski, 2021). As a result, women with higher education and employment rates wield a disproportionate amount of economic policymaking authority relative to other decision-making concerns.

According to Choudhry et al. (2019a), the majority of analysts in the present literature have recognized education and employment as critical indicators of women's empowerment. Nonetheless, Pakistani women lack educational and occupational requirements (Qamar et al., 2021), especially in rural areas (Khalid & Choudhry, 2021). Pakistan men have a much higher literacy rate. Pakistani women cannot start their businesses due to a lack of knowledge and societal standards in rural areas (Arshad et al., 2021). As a result, it is essential to investigate the function of education that helps increase women's empowerment by removing hurdles in the way.

Women in Pakistan are oppressed by patriarchal traditions and are trapped in a vicious wheel of life (Naseer et al., 2021). They are not free to make life-altering choices. It may encompass weddings, divorces, childbearing, healthcare, travel, inherited education, possessions, and career choice (Gautam, 2018; Khalid & Choudhry, 2021; Kumar et al., 2021; Abbas et al., 2021). Traditional sociocultural norms have gender bias, which causes repression and limitation for women, due to which they fail to acquire higher social status and agree to have lower roles (Naseer et al., 2021).

Eliminating these societal impediments is difficult (Heywood & Mulveen, 2021). As a potential impediment to equality, the sociocultural determinants constrain women and add to their submissive and victim status (Black & Kowalski, 2021). Violence against women is an ingrained practice and Pakistani women perceive themselves as vulnerable as a result of societal sexism and social norms. Power abuse and the threat of harshness erode their self-esteem (Darvin & Demara, 2021).

Society influences the characteristics of women meekly and obediently. Patriarchal standards of society compel parents to raise their girls in a subservient manner. Marriage institutions and related customs in South-East Asia, for example, dowry, have a detrimental effect on women's capacities and make them psychologically pitiable (Rawoof, et al., 2021). Similarly, early pitiable familial socialization is frequently the result of community pressure (Black & Kowalski, 2021; Heywood & Mulveen, 2021).



Koshulko (2021) asserts that a woman's drive is inextricably linked to her self-image and capabilities. Additionally, Whitaker, Hughes, and Rugendyke (2021) assert that the primary impediment to empowering women is a lack of drive, self-confidence, and socialization. Dakhan, Sohu, Mustafa, and Sohu (2021). stated that it is necessary to alter society's mentality to empower women via effective education.

Al-Qahtani, Ibrahim, Elgzar, El Sayed, and Essa (2021) assert a positive influence on empowering women in education and employment. According to Pierobom de Avila, Yamamoto, de Faria, McCulloch, and Carrington (2021), education has increased through time, and contentment is associated with higher education. Even though women are less educated than males, the enrollment of male students is encouraging in Pakistan (Parveen, 2021).

Due to growing apprehensions about Pakistan's security, limited travel is a significant cause of female illiteracy (UNICEF, 2018). In addition to political apathy, numerous factors exist in Pakistan, including reduced family income (poor), availability, reinforcing traditional gender involvement, unavailability of female instructors (Sarfraz et al., 2021). Education regarding the empowerment of Pakistani women should emphasize future research (Abbas et al., 2021).

4. Employment and Occupation

A small study was conducted to determine the link between employment and women's empowerment (Sarfranz et al., 2021). There is still compelling evidence that women's jobs affect their empowerment. Women's occupation is critical because it connects educational needs, wages, and communal influence (Gautam, 2018). However, women labor in every sphere of endeavor, particularly in India, where they perform menial labor that generates far less income and consequently pays less, such as agricultural labor and home chores (Gautam, 2018).

Nonetheless, in certain instances where women are talented and ready to engage in specialized occupations, not labor-intensive employment is generally directed toward the service sector when women pursue 'feminized' vocations such as teaching, nursing, and social work (Kumar et al., 2021). As noted above, vocations are critical for empowerment due to their associations with educational attainment and status, and ability to moderate work conditions, wage differences, and influence.

5. Empowerment and financial Contribution



In return for a wage, women's empowerment might be critical for those who wield considerable authority and reverence in their families. Women's financial assistance in running the household's budget improves their capacity to govern their share of revenue, giving them influence over both household management and policymaking (Anyanwu et al., 2018).

According to previous research, the extent of women's contribution to a household's income is another critical component of empowerment and the link between empowerment and employment. The extent to which a family depends on women's income may affect women's power and influence in their family, as it affects their positions within their family units and by decreasing reliance on male family members (Okonofua & Omonkhua, 2021).

The voice in the family affects the degree of involvement and earnings of women. As a result, their voice will get more importance and power in home choices if they contribute primarily to family income. However, if their contribution to the family's income is less, their say in critical domestic policy will be weighted less heavily (Kumar et al., 2021). Research on household earnings and empowerment demonstrated a clear correlation between increased revenue input and greater empowerment (Whitaker et al., 2021).

Prominent women who evaluate their input and status in their families are powerful and effective financially, increasing their salaries. Their increased empowerment and decrease in domestic violence result from the critical contribution to their family finances (Heywood & Mulveen, 2021). Women's wages imply that they do societal contributions and are thus deserve respect in their families. It demonstrates how women's empowerment is affected by women's income despite the patriarchal structure's impediment (Khalid & Choudhry, 2021).

While women did not talk about their wages and the rights implied an important role in ups and downs, women were seen as valuable, honored, and cherished (Khalid & Choudhry, 2021). In general, their contributions in the household might enhance their value and status to equality due to their monetary contributions to home earnings.

Conclusion

These assumptions can be made when evaluating employment's contribution to women's empowerment in the Pakistani context; the nature of work, its proximity to the home, and the extent to which women's tasks result in liberation from patriarchal society's authority. A significant income increase positively affects women's empowerment. Women



in Pakistan are less empowered in all spheres of life. They are confronted with a lack of power, travel restrictions, domestic violence prohibition, and diminished resource control. According to the current study, employment for Pakistani women appears critical to increasing their empowerment. Nevertheless, there are several barriers to developing a positive relationship with them, and work is a primary reason to have a constructive relationship with them in various situations. Globally, in countries, cultures, and families, one must address the primary impediments to women's equality and advantages if one wants to see women's professions as a dominating method of empowerment, particularly in Pakistan and the globe at large. Nonetheless, structural adjustments are required to establish jobs as a reasonably significant trend toward women's empowerment.

Recommendations

To begin, evaluating career possibilities for women is a critical element in achieving gender equality. Their work prospects must be distinct from those of conventionally employed women, and it is critical to emphasize women's presence in all employment stages. Second, women empowerment programs which have been successfully established to give small businesses job capabilities, training, and financial support have been unsatisfactory. It is critical to fully integrate beneficial cohorts, assisting women in recognizing their self-worth and fundamental civic rights. Women's perceptions may improve, which might bolster their negotiating power. As a result, their rights to make domestic decisions appear to be in their as well as their children's best interests.

Thirdly, the current study demonstrates the need to never underestimate educational levels. Not only does education enhance women's financial prospects, but it has also been shown to postpone marriages and first-birth age intervals, as well as increase women's capacity to solve their problems. As a result, women should conduct admirably to earn enormous respect and self-esteem. Women's rights must be protected for them to be empowered and equal. Finally, policies must safeguard women's fundamental rights and security. As a result, one must avoid viewing empowerment as a moment rather than a process.

Additionally, previous research has recommended women's empowerment be observed at all levels of society. Women need to struggle in comprehensive processes for their civil rights, men should participate in that, and governments should promote equality in all aspects of life. Women should be empowered globally and locally in their families, societies, economies, and politics.



For a contemporary society's transformation, women empowerment is a prerequisite. It serves as the foundation upon which a good transition may begin. Women's empowerment rates inside their families should not be overlooked or undervalued. Further in-depth research on employment and empowerment must be performed to understand better the difficulties that arise along the professional route and the mechanisms through which employment affects their lives.



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