Global Journal for Management and Administrative Sciences
ISSN (P):2788-4821 & ISSN (O): 2788-483X
Volume 3, Issue 1, Page 21-32, April 30, 2022 (Special Issue)

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE FACTORS ENHANCING WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN PAKISTANI SOCIETY

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Abstract

Woman empowerment is an important issue of the 21st century. Women are important part of any society who contribute in development process. Since the creation of Pakistan women empowerment has been neglected. According to the constitution of Pakistan, education is the basic right of every female living in Pakistan but actual situation is different (Khan, 2020). In many areas women are deprived of social development processes such as education, health, decision making in family matters and access to technology. They even don't know what their right are and they don't get equal opportunities of living respectful human life. Many plans and policies have been developed for women development but no one could be implemented. The National Policy 2002 aimed to ensure female participation in economic growth and decision making. Moreover, a bill 'Criminal Law Act 2004' against the honor killing of females was also approved by the Parliament of Pakistan (Bushra & Wajiha 2013). Similarly, many laws have been formulated regarding women empowerment but the issue of women development is still there and needs to be focused for the well-being of women and ultimately development and prosperity of the society.

The determinants of low woman empowerment are socio-cultural issues, economic issues, poverty, lack of awareness and gender discrimination. The scope of this study is to investigate factors which increase women empowerment.

Statement of the problem:

Women empowerment is one of the most important elements which contributes to the development of a nation. There are many factors which influence women empowerment in Pakistani society. The purpose of this study is to investigate factors enhancing women empowerment in Pakistani Society.

Keywords: women empowerment, actors enhancing women empowerment, women in social development processes, socio-cultural issues, economic issues

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Objectives of the study

The study is intended to be carried out keeping in view the following objectives:
1-To investigate effect of Higher education on women empowerment
2-To assess influence of economic independence on women empowerment
3- To measure effect of decision-making power on women empowerment
4-To assess influence of self-esteem on women empowerment

Research Questions

1- What is effect of Higher education on women empowerment?
2- Does economic independence influence women empowerment?
3- What is effect of decision-making power on women empowerment?
4- What is impact of self-esteem on women empowerment?

Hypothesis

H1: Higher Education has a significant effect on women empowerment.
H2: Economic independence has a significant influence on women empowerment.
H3: Decision making power has a significant effect on women empowerment.
H4: Self-esteem has a significant influence on women empowerment.

Variables

Independent variable: independent variables in this study are higher education, economic independence, decision making power and self-esteem.
Dependent Variable: Dependent variable in this study is women empowerment.
Significance of the study:
This study would be helpful for women, parents, teachers, researchers, administrators, organizations and policy makers.
Delimitation of the study:

1. The sample of the study is delimited to female students of two public universities.
2. The study is delimited to higher education, economic independence, decision making power and self-esteem as factors enhancing women empowerment.

Review of the related literature

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Empowerment

Mason and Smith (2000) are of opinion that the term empowerment can be used as autonomy and gender stratification, so these terms can be used interchangeably. Jejeebhoy (2000) also takes both terms i.e. empowerment and autonomy with same meanings and defines women empowerment as "acquisition of control of their own life and the lives of their families, society, community and markets." Noor et al (2021) consider decision making power, control of resources and access to information as indicators of women empowerment. Stromquist (1988) is of view that empowerment is something related to socio-political perception rather than participation and consciousness-raising. She focuses on three components including: cognitive, psychological and economic components to define empowerment. As far as cognitive component is concerned it is linked with the women's understanding of their conditions and causes of conditions of subordination in the society, and understanding of self and the importance of power of decision making about self, the family and the society (Hall, 1992). The psychological component deals with the formation of frame of mind that a woman can do very well for the betterment of herself and the society and that she can modify her environment since she has the potential to improve the conditions in her surroundings (Jack, 1992). As due to persistent adverse circumstances many women perceive that they cannot change their conditions and this way they develop feelings of helplessness and fall into low self-esteem and low self-confidence. Self -confidence and self-esteem can not be taught but only such conditions can be created which can develop these attributes. Economic participation and education can play vital role in this connection (Hall 1992). The economic component is concerned with participation of women in a productive activity which can lead to empower a woman financially. In this perspective empowerment is a dynamic process which involves acquiring, providing and giving the resources and empowering the women to have access to and manipulate these resources for benefit of herself, family and ultimately the society. Empowerment encompasses all social, economic and political activities which work together to achieve common goals (Tandon 2016).

Shetty (1992) is of view that empowerment can only be defined within specific contexts such as cultural, social, historical, political and economic context. Kabeer (1994) defines empowerment as a process by which women identify their power and worth.

In simple terms women empowerment enables women to acquire knowledge, skills, access to information, participate in economic activity, make important decisions about her life and her family, get confidence and increased self-esteem. With all these attributes women can live a respectable life in the society and education the best mode to empower a woman.

Literature Review

Sekar & Subbura (2014) conducted a research which aimed at creating awareness about different kinds of empowerment in women and finding what education contributes in women empowerment in Madurai district India. They selected 455 women between age group 20-50

for the research. Findings of the study indicated that education plays significant role in women empowerment and to raise women empowerment women education should be improved.

Bushra & Wajiha (2013) conducted a study to investigate elements which influence women empowerment in Pakistan. The sample of the study consisted of 200 females from two well-known colleges of Lahore. The empirical results of this study illustrated that economic participation, availability of economic opportunity for women, poverty and contents of education are elements which increase women empowerment. Moreover, in this study the factor, women holding and maintaining a bank account, as a variable, was also tested which showed extreme positive and significant effect on women empowerment. Thus, it was concluded that to enhance role of women in Pakistani society these significant factors need to be focused as they influence women empowerment.

Haq et al (2019) worked on gender discrimination regarding job opportunities in developing countries. They conducted a study to investigate the relationship between employment and empowerment. In this research access of women towards resources and their contribution towards family earning was studied. By using multistage random sampling technique 500 households were chosen for the study from four districts of Punjab, Pakistan. The findings showed that there are a few professions in which women can get higher chance of getting empowered. So, it was recommended that women empowerment should be improved by creating new job market to provide women with more opportunity of getting jobs especially for women in rural areas.

Malik & Courtney (2011) summarized the findings of a doctoral study by Malik (2005) which aimed to explore that what is the role of female participation in higher education to strengthen women empowerment in Pakistan. The population of the study consisted of female faculty members and female students from 10 public universities and 290 faculty members ,1290 students responded the survey instrument. Moreover, semi-structured interviews were also conducted with 10 faculty members and 10 students. The findings indicated that economic independence and respect in family and society due to high educational qualifications are outcome of higher education.

Noor et al (2021) conducted a research which aimed at investigating the challenge of women empowerment through entrepreneurship in Pakistan. For the study 120 women were selected from the main cities of Pakistan. The target population was divided into two groups: housewife and entrepreneur cum housewife. For data collection the survey method was used by administering a structured questionnaire. The results showed that women entrepreneurs got better decision-making power, have access to mobility, became economically independent and empowered as compared to house wife.

Procedure and Methodology

This was a descriptive research which was quantitative in nature. For the study a survey was conducted by using questionnaire based upon 5 points Likert scale. The population was female students studying in various programs of three public universities of Pakistan including the

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University of Karachi, the University of Punjab Lahore and the International Islamic University Islamabad. The data were collected from a sample of randomly selected 60 female students ,20 from each of three universities.

Analysis and interpretation of data

Data were scored and means were calculated. The data were collected on a five-point Likert type scale. The numerical values were assigned to each response and the scoring of the scale was done according to the following criteria: Strongly Agreed 5, Agreed 4, Undecided 3, Disagree 2, and Strongly Disagree 1. After carefully scoring the instrument the data were transferred to data sheets and mean scores were calculated. The data analyzed is presented in the form of 9 tables given below:

Table 1- Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Variables	N	Frequency	%age
Respondents Age	60		
18-20		17	28%
21-23		17	28%
24-30		19	31%
31-40		07	11%
Total		60	100%
Marital Status	60		
Single		50	83%
Married		10	17%
Total		60	100%
Qualification	60		
BS		34	50%
MS		24	39%
Ph.D.		02	11%
Total		60	100%
Household Monthly	60		
Income			
10000-2000		32	54%
21000-40000		13	21%
41000-60000		06	10%

61000-above		09	15%
Total		60	100%

The results indicate that 17 (28%) respondents were aged in-between 18-20 years, 17 (28%) respondents were aged in-between 21-23 years, 19 (31%) respondents were aged in-between24-30 years, while 7 (11%) respondents were aged in-between 31-40 years. Table 1 describes that 50 (83%) women were single, and 10 (17%) were married. Regarding the respondent's academic qualifications, 34 (50%) respondents were enrolled in BS, 24 (39%) respondents in MS, and 2 (11%) respondents were Ph.D. Table also illustrates that 32 (54%) respondents belonged to 10,000- 20,000 income group, 13 (21%) respondents belonged to 21,000-40,000 income group, and 6 (10%) respondents belonged to 41000-60000 income group while 9 (15%) belonged to income group of 61,000 and above per month. The results indicate that more women belonged to the low-income group than the upper.

Table 2 - Mean scores on different indicators of economic independence

N	Good Job	Owning Property	Mean
60	53	43	48

This table shows that Mean score on different indicators of economic independence is 48.

Table 3- Mean scores on different indicators of impact of Higher Education:

N	Respect	Empowering Women	Decision making ability	Boosting Confidence	Mean
60	50	51	52	56	52

This table shows that Mean score on different indicators of impact of Higher Education is 52.

Table 4- Mean scores on different indicators of self-esteem:

N	**Participation**	**in**	**Due Respect**	**Dependability**	**Mean**
	social events				
60	42		38	54	44

This table shows that Mean score on different indicators of self-esteem is 44.

Annexure- Mean scores on different indicators of Decision-making power:

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N	Making household decisions	Role in decision making	Feeling honored	Mean
60	40	48	59	49

This table shows that Mean score on different indicators of Decision-making power is 49.

Annexure - percentage of scores on different indicators of economic independence:

N	Good job	Owning property	Mean
60	89%	72%	81%

This table shows that the percentage of scores on different indicators of economic independence is 81%.

Annexure - Percentage of scores on different indicators of impact of Higher Education

N	Respect	Empowering women	Decision making ability	Boosting Confidence	Mean
60	83%	86%	87%	94	88%

This table shows that the percentage of scores on different indicators of impact of Higher Education is 88%.

Annexure- Percentage of scores on different indicators of self-esteem:

N	Participation in due	Respect	Dependability	Mean social events
60	67%	80%	99%	82%

This table shows that the percentage of scores on different indicators of self-esteem is 75%.

Annexure - Percentage of scores on different indicators of Decision-making power:

N	Making household	Role in decision making	Feeling honored	Mean

	decisions			
60	67%	80%	99%	82%

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This table shows that the percentage of scores on different indicators of Decision-making power is 82 %.

Results and Discussion

The results show that mean score on different indicators of economic independence is 48, on impact of higher education is 52, on self-esteem is 39, and on decision-making power is 49. Similarly, the percentage of scores on different indicators of economic independence is 81%, on impact of higher education is 88%, on self-esteem is 75 %, and on decision making power is 82%.

Mean scores on different indicators of economic independence were calculated which were: good job 53, and owning property 43. The mean scores on different indicators of impact of higher education were calculated which were: respect 50, empowering women 51, decision making ability 52, and boosting confidence 56. Moreover, mean scores on different indicators of self-esteem were also calculated which were: participation in social events 42, due respect 38, and dependability 54. Mean scores on different indicators of decision-making power calculated were: making household decisions 40, role in decision making 48, and feeling honored 59.

The percentages of mean scores on different indicators of economic independence were calculated which showed that 89% respondents agreed with good job and 72 % respondents agreed with owning property as elements which enhance women empowerment in Pakistani women.

The percentages of mean scores on different indicators of impact of higher education were calculated which showed that 83% respondents were agreed with respect, 86 % with empowering women, 87% with decision making ability, and 94% with boosting confidence as factors which increase women empowerment in Pakistani society.

The percentages of mean scores on different indicators of self-esteem were also calculated which showed that 71% respondents agreed with participation in social events, 63% with due respect, and 91% with dependability as indicators which enhance women empowerment in Pakistan.

The percentages of mean scores on different indicators of decision-making power were calculated which indicated that 67% respondents were agreed with making household decisions, 80% with role in decision making, and 99% with feeling honored on being consulted for decision making, as elements which contribute to enhance women empowerment in Pakistan.

Conclusion

From the findings it was concluded that the alternate hypothesis which stated:

H1: Higher Education has a significant effect on women empowerment was proved on the basis of results which showed that 88% respondents were agreed that higher Education increases women empowerment.
H2: Economic independence has a significant influence on women empowerment was proved on the basis of results which showed that 81% respondents were agreed that economic independence enhance women empowerment.
H3: Decision making power has a significant effect on women empowerment was proved on the basis of results which showed that 82% respondents were agreed that decision making power increases women empowerment.
H4: Self-esteem has a significant influence on women empowerment was proved on the basis of results which showed that 75% respondents were agreed that Self-esteem increases women empowerment.
From above discussion it was concluded that economic independence, higher education, self-esteem, and decision-making power play significant role in increasing women empowerment.

Implications

The higher education brings social change (Malik &Courtney, 2011). Socially and economically dependent women are not empowered. Higher education makes a woman well aware of her legal rights, financially strong, confident and increases self-esteem and respect in the society. Higher education enables her to take better decisions about herself and her family and live a respectable life.

In Pakistan many plans and policies had been formulated to uplift the status of women but practically less was done to achieve the goal. There are many hurdles in women empowerment such as gender discrimination, social and cultural barriers, lack of awareness, orthodox thoughts of society, poverty, lack of provisions of opportunities for getting education and access to financial resources and impropriate content in the curriculum. So much is needed to be done and it could be achieved through combined efforts of government and society. First of all, Government needs to establish new rules and policies to elevate inequalities regarding education and opportunities in economic participation. NGO’s also need to play active role in this connection and awareness campaigns regarding women empowerment should be launched specifically in rural areas in Islamic context, since Islamic teachings regarding women rights are not being practiced in the society. The content matter of the curriculum may be revised to enhance women empowerment.

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