

Women's Empowerment and Human Development in Pakistan: An Elaborative Study

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ABSTRACT

Women are the most significant part of our social structure, but despite this fact, they usually face a number of obstacles in their way to avail their rights. Power, prestige and status should be given to the women with their rights of jobs, skills, education, security, health, better standards of living etc. The current research paper has main focus on "empowerment of women and human development in Pakistan" and uses "agency approach" for measuring empowerment of women. This paper comprises of three parts. Part-1 explains the approach with modern aspects; part-2 elaborates a summary regarding hard works for women empowerment in Pakistan; in part-3, the degree of achieving empowerment is analyzed by using some social indicators. This paper is basically consisted of data of secondary type published by Pakistan Demographic Survey and World Economic Forum.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, Agency, Gender Gap, Human Development, Access to Resources, Control over Resources, Economic Participation and Opportunity

INTRODUCTION

"To Empower" is a historical concept of mid-17th century. Its legal meaning was considered as "to invest with authority". Afterwards, its meaning was changed into "to enable or permit". After 1980s, there was created a link among "human development", "political empowerment", and "women empowerment". During 1990s, it was argued by the economists that the aim of "standardized economy" cannot be achieved until women are placed at the center stage of our global society. To achieve the path of women empowerment, United Nations has anxiety in Millennium Development Goals (MDG).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several studies related to women's empowerment had been emerged during the last few decades. Among those, there are only few studies which examine the true concept of women's empowerment. Here, review of some of those significant studies is presented.

In the national and international perspectives, the basic concept of women's empowerment is elaborated with various important studies like Doepke and Tertilt (2010); Chaudhary, Nosheen and Lodhi (2012); Desai (2010); Sethuraman (2008); Malhotra and Schular (2005); Kabeer (2012); Sohail (2014); Khan (2007); Weiss (2001); Noureen (2011); Chaudhary, Chani and Pervaiz (2012); Mowla (2009). The studies mentioned above analyzed the women empowerment in different countries and regions, while some involved distinct indices with different variables.

Malhotra (2005) identified in his paper that the promotion of women empowerment as a development goal is based on a dual argument: social justice as an important aspect of human welfare and women's empowerment as a means to other ends.

Khan (2007) in her paper analyzed women and paid work with a view to identifying where there were changes underway in this area that may play a role in leading to equitable gender relations in Pakistan in the long-term. This paper was based on micro-studies which was based on larger quantitative surveys. It learnt to re-emphasize gender structures and systems in different parts of the country by pointing out diversity wherever possible.

Sethuraman (2008) in his research paper explored the relationship between women's empowerment, domestic violence, maternal nutritional status and growth over 6 months in children aged 6 to 24 months in a rural and tribal community. The data was analyzed by multivariate regression. This study examined that improved women's nutrition, gender equality, empowering women and ending violence against women could reduce the under nutrition.

Mowla (2009) in his study examined the association between education and economic empowerment of women in Egypt. Using the Egypt Labor Market Panel Survey (2006), by logistic regression, he analyzed the variations among women (15-64) with different levels of education and among women (15-29) with different types of education, concerning their presence and competitiveness in labor market. The study suggested a number of policy interventions needed to strengthen education as a path to enhance women's empowerment.

Desai (2010) in her paper addressed the conceptual and methodological issues related to women's empowerment over the last 20 years in key areas such as education, health, economic and political participation, and finally the best practices of state and non-state actors in empowering women.

Noureen (2011) had the purpose of her study to understand the importance of education for women in Pakistani society and to examine the barriers and obstacles to higher education for women in Pakistan. The data was collected through semi-structured interview schedule. The study also revealed that education can bring phenomenal changes in women's life by embracing their confidence, raising their status in the family and society.

Doepke and Tertilt (2011) in their research paper presented a debate on either the targeting transfers to women is good economic policy or not. For this purpose, they developed a series of non-cooperative family bargaining models to understand what kind of frictions can give rise to the observed empirical relationships.

Chaudhary, Chani and Pervaiz (2012) attempted to investigate how consciousness/sensitization of women about their rights can be helpful for achieving the goal of women's empowerment. Using the data for period 1996 to 2009 for Pakistan, they revealed that women's sensitivity about their rights and their overall development had positive and significant effect on women's empowerment as measured by Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) Index. A unidirectional causality existed between sensitization of women and women's empowerment.

Chaudhary, Nosheen and Lodhi (2012) made an attempt to remove the misconception that Islam as a religion hinders the way of women empowerment. They used regression analysis based on primary data from a district of Southern Punjab. The results showed that Islam advocates women's education, their access to media, health facilities along with no fear of violence.

Kabeer (2012) was of the view that there is fairly strong empirical support for the claim that gender equality has a positive impact on economic growth. This paper examined alternative theoretical approaches to labor market gender inequalities.

Sohail (2014) had point of view that women still have hindrances in getting their rights. She presented a debate on the issue that whether women empowerment could be responsible for economic development or not. For this purpose, questionnaires were completed by 30 female participants having higher positions in banking, education and transport sectors. It was found that empowering women is essential for development of the economy.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Approaches to Empowerment

It is generally known that women have still little place in the social order in contrast with men. Females have to face “the glass ceiling” especially in developing countries. A number of gender biases are created due to the differences between males and females. The main emphasis of global movement is to reduce such inequality which is discussed in all World Conferences. The World Bank has considered women empowerment as a key factor for eliminating poverty. Women empowerment goal serves dual purposes: social equality and human well-being. World Bank has as well explained sexual impartiality as a path to better governance. The techniques to achieve empowerment are development of public civilization and participatory magnification techniques at both national as well as international stages of economy.

The Modern Approach

In modern times, the term “empowerment” was meant as “powers”. According to this “powers approach”, process of empowerment must be separated into four planes such as ___ power over, power to, power with, and power within. It was explained that main purpose of progress is “extension of individual potentials” (Amartyasen, 1995). It was also declared that increase in individual potentials leads to decline in economic inequalities. Kabeer (1999) and England (2000) made efforts to construct models which split the gender and economic elements of empowerment as revealed by figure 1.

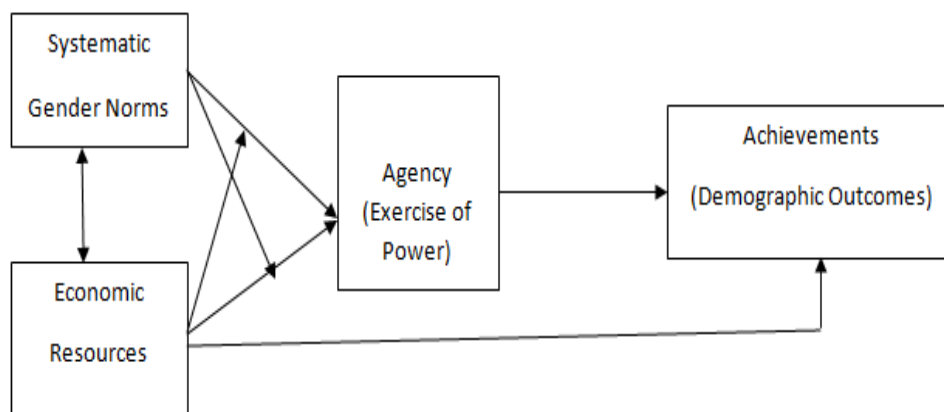


Figure 1. Theoretical Representation of Female Empowerment

Source: Jill Williams (2005) Measuring Gender and Women’s Empowerment Using Confirmatory Factor Analysis, IBS Working Paper, PAC- 2005-01.

According to this model, empowerment has three main elements: Firstly, the prerequisites of empowerment including economic as well as individual and societal reserves. Secondly,

achievements”. Gender norms and economic resources must proceed as prerequisites to implement the command that influence the demographic results positively. Third, does that social prospect furthermore comprise a control on these attainments? The World Economic Forum__ Global Gender Gap Report-2014 focused on three fundamental concepts: First, measurement of deviations between males and females rather than on intensities; on second, It confined gaps in outcome variables rather than in input variables. Third, it ranked countries with respect to gender equality.

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN PAKISTAN

According to Census_2011, population of Pakistan was 177.10 million, as in opposition to 33.78 million in 1951, out of which 15.61 million comprised of women. Pakistan’s population is reported for 2.57% of the population of whole world. The gender ratio was 1.14 in 1972 and it has been decreased to 1.07 in 2011. The women literacy rate boosted up to 45% male-female literacy gap decreased to 24% in 2011. Women empowerment in Pakistan depends on various variables such as age, social status (caste and class), educational status and geographical location (urban/rural). The following schemes and policies are intended for empowering women and equality of gender in Pakistan:

1. Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act (2010) .
2. Domestic Violence Bill (2008).
3. Hudood Ordinance (1979).
4. The Citizens Foundation.
5. The Kashf Foundation (1996).
6. The First Women Bank (1989).
7. Pakistan’s Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA).

In spite of such effective implication of all policies, there are considerable differences and differences between policy attainments and concrete performance at economic level. According to World Economic Forum (2014), the present condition of gender differences is frightening and Pakistan ranks after our neighboring country China, as publicized through Table.1.

Table 1. Features of Global Gender Gap Index 2014

<i>Gender Gap</i>	<i>Pakistan</i>		<i>China</i>	
	<i>Grade</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>Grade</i>	<i>Score</i>
<i>Sub-Indices</i>				
Eco Participation and Opportunity	141	0.3094	76	0.6555
Educational Attainment	132	0.8054	89	0.9855
Health and Survival	119	0.9666	140	0.9404
Political Empowerment	85	0.1273	72	0.1506
Overall Index	141	0.5522	87	0.6838

Source: World Economic Forum (2014) - Global Gender Gap Index-2014

The rankings and scores for Pakistan imply that it has inferior position in contrast with China in almost all indices of equality in gender. Pakistan lost seven spaces (from 134 ranks in 2012 to 141 rank in 2014) as a consequence of deficiencies into economic participation and attainment of education.

Evaluating Women Empowerment

Both global as well as national level reports have signified that Pakistan will have to take a lengthy time period for obtaining “organization” for females and to get them empowered on social as well as on economic grounds. Keeping in view the status of women in Pakistan, in the current paper, an effort is made to present some important factors determining gender gaps in our nation, so as to estimate the degree by which women are empowered in Pakistan.

Educational Attainments

For sure, Pakistan got considerable upgrading in female literacy rate up to 45% in 2011. Consequently, the men-women literacy hole has been contracted down to 24% in 2011.

In accordance with UNICEF Report 2013: Youth Literacy Rate (for age of 15-24 years) for Males = 79.1%

Youth Literacy Rate (for age of 15-24 years) for Females = 61.5%

Pre-Primary School Participation for Females = 83.3%

Pre-Primary School Participation for Males = 101.3%

Primary School Participation for Females = 65%

Primary School Participation for Males = 79%

Secondary School Participation for Females = 29.2%

Secondary School Participation for males = 39.7%

ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION AND OPPORTUNITY

Participation of females in labor force is considered like an indicator for contraction in gender inequality and enhancing women empowerment. In Pakistan, the figures illustrate that in together, rural and urban areas, Labor Force Participation Rate has been increased during 2010-11 in comparison with 2008-09, predominantly for women as described in table 2.

Table 2. Labor Force Participation of women and men in Pakistan in percentages (for population aged 15 years and above)

Sector	Men		Women		Total	
	2008-09	2010-11	2008-09	2010-11	2008-09	2010-11
Rural	49.2	48.6	18.5	19.4	34.3	34.3
Urban	50.4	50.6	7.6	8.1	29.9	30

Source: Labor Force Survey 2010-11

The data in table 2. reveals that in Pakistan, the female labor force participation rate has been increased from 18.5% to 19.4% and from 7.6% to 8.1% in rural and urban sectors respectively from 2008-09 to 2010-11. The final result is that in 2011 the rate of women labor force participation is 8.1% as against 50.6% for males. The main cause behind low female

labor force participation rate is that female work is less-detectable, non-monetary as well as related to survival and household area of production.

Women along with Employment

Another significant source of women empowerment can also be “Employment”. Employment and job security provides power, prestige, honor and status to the women and makes them financially independent. Table 3 shows the information regarding female and male employment to see the gender differential in employment.

Table 3. Percentage of Men and Women (of age 15-49 years) Employment for the period of 12 months

		<i>Pakistan</i>	
		<i>Females</i>	<i>Males</i>
Residence	Urban	10.9	14.5
	Rural	75.4	36.2
Age	15-19	19.6	51.6
	20-29	24.6	90.6
	30-39	27.5	98.3
	40-49	29.3	98.1

Source: Pakistan Labor Force Survey 2011- Federal Bureau of Statistics

The information that table 3 contains, elaborates that female employment rate in urban areas is lower than that of men, whereas, in rural areas it is higher than men’s employment rate. It is also analyzed that 75.4% of females have employment in rural areas (as compared to 36.2% of men). Employment by age also exhibits a severe gender gap. Employment is at peak in all the age groups for males. In each and every age group, the percentage of women’s employment is lower than that of their male counterparts.

Resource Availability

Resource availability is a significant feature for human freedom. Women’s access to resources has following main components:

1. Knowledge of loan programs.
2. Get loans.
3. Having bank saving accounts.
4. Freedom of working outside.

To identify female’s exposure to mass media, there are following key variables:

1. Read newspapers every day.
2. Listen radio every day.
3. Watch T.V. every day.
4. Knows about modern contraceptives.

The evidence shows that resource availability to women and their revelation to mass media is comparatively poor in our country.

Control Over Own Earnings

The meaning of “Empowerment” is “to invest with power”. Within framework of women empowerment, it refers to increased control over their own lives and environment. For this reason, decision making power is a bright signal of “agency”. The post-marriage period for women, decides their potential to get power over their earnings. In Pakistan, It is found that a majority of females are unable to make decisions alone about the use of their own earnings.

Spousal Violence

One of the most general types of gender-based violence practiced by females is household violence. It leads to economic and social costs and violation of fundamental human rights. It results in both short-term and long-term impacts on physical condition and wellbeing of females as well as their offspring's. In our country, domestic violence takes the shapes like emotional and physical violence by their husbands.

CONCLUSION

From the above discussion, it can be concluded that the concept like empowerment, agency and autonomy can differ from each other and have no reflection over each other. So, a requirement is to comprehend that empowerment and self-sufficiency are substantially diverse concepts. It is also a fact that though women empowerment and self-sufficiency have no connection with women's access to resources or welfare, it must be admitted that there is a multiplicity of connections among these variables. Hence, the question “Are women in Pakistan really empowered” is still begging an answer that probably be “Not yet to the desired scale”.

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