

## KNOWLEDGE ATTITUDE AND PRACTICE ABOUT WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN D.G KHAN REGION

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### Abstract

*Empowering women improves broader human, social, and economic outcomes. The sustainability of agriculture can empower rural households, and women constitute nearly half of Pakistan's population. This study adopted a descriptive school student writing improvement design. It was selected because it enabled the researcher to collect and analyze data without manipulating any variables in the field. Study was conducted in Region D.G Khan (Southern Punjab). There were 80 women in each of the four districts that made up the target population for the proposed study. A simple random sampling technique was used to select 320 respondents. In order to collect data from women, the researcher developed an adapted questionnaire. Analyzing processors requires converting human responses into numbers. The data were analyzed using SPSS (Statistic Package for Social Sciences). An important ceremonial focus on human rights and sustainable development is empowerment. The persistent patriarchal culture in the Southern Punjab region D.G Khan hampers women's participation in the workforce. Women have inherited much wealth from their families, but most of it has gone to men. To keep Pakistan's economy growing, women empowerment is crucial.*

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Women contribute to economies as producers, managers of natural resources, entrepreneurs, and workers. In addition to providing unpaid care and household work 2.6 times more than men, women also provide household and unpaid treatment in the world (Ferrant and Thim, 2019). Women in almost all societies have to take care of their children, work, and take care of their families. Women are responsible for managing animals, farming, and gathering water and fuel in most impoverished nations. Agricultural workers, housewives, and farmers all play critical roles in rural communities. A number of studies define empowerment across a range of processes and fields, such as agency and efficiency (Ameh et al., 2021) and the structure of resource management agencies and reward structures (Alsop et al., 2006). Various structures or domains contribute to women's empowerment, such as tools, organizations, and effects (Alsop et al., 2006). It can be argued that empowerment has three dimensions, namely capital (subjects), structure (processes), and outcomes (outcomes). Resources such as money, land, and skills, as well as support and education, are often necessary for empowerment, not just material ones. Women's economic empowerment refers to ensuring women have equal access to and control over financial resources, which they can utilize for greater control over various aspects of their lives (Bird, K. 2018).

Women's economic empowerment is the only way to combat poverty. A woman's role as an agent of change is as important as that of a man, as well. The economic empowerment of women in rural Pakistan faces a number of challenges. Women's empowerment is crucial to achieving sustainable growth in a country, according to numerous studies. Empowering

women increases a nation's quality and quantity of human resources available for development. There will be 10.5 million jobs created by women's empowerment in the EU by 2050, increasing the employment rate to almost 80%. Additionally, it will lead to a positive impact on the EU's per capita gross domestic product (GDP) by 2050. There is consensus that women empowerment initiatives improve the well-being of humans on all levels, including social, economic, and political. Due to the fact that women make up almost half of the population and have lower status in all aspects of their lives, agriculture can empower rural households in Pakistan. The Pakistani women have always been poorer than their male counterparts; they have less access to health care, education, or wages, and the disparity between men and women has increased even when overall poverty has decreased," as stated by "they have always been poorer than men." Violence, male dominance, polygamy, abuse, and harassment often affect women (Qaisrani et al., 2016).

Women have played an increasingly important role over the past decade. Women's empowerment is a top priority on the global development agenda. There are various factors that contribute to economic inequality between women and men, including poverty, healthcare facilities, employment opportunities, and literacy rates (Kandpal, Baylis, & Arends-Kuenning, 2013). The contribution of women to the labor market has been widely recognized as important for national socioeconomic development (UNDP, 2008). Shahbaz, Naz, Umber, & Amir, (2017) argue that women still have fewer rights and benefits than men, particularly in developing countries. Education is the fundamental right of every citizen (Awan & Iqbal, 2015), which empowers women and creates social change in communities. Women's participation in the workforce has therefore become a pressing concern for feminist scholars and activists (Lahoti & Swaminathan, 2016). Creating formations in society that can be held accountable for transformational processes is essential to achieving sustainable development for women. Women's empowerment involves enhancing their position with privileges based on social components such as norms, culture, and traditions to increase their well-being and recognition. Women are not treated equally with men in most societies. Women tend to have very limited economic opportunities and are restricted in their participation in social activities. It is even the relationship of a woman with her husband or other household members that determines her status within the household. In Pakistan, women's rights are violated due to the male dominance. Many aspects of Pakistani women's lives are subordinate, such as access to economic resources, technology, and knowledge, and their movement is limited. Women in such circumstances have difficulty making reproductive decisions for themselves, such as how many children to have, how to use contraceptives, and how to utilize maternal healthcare services (Kuhnt et al. 2017).

Abrar-ul-haq, Jali, and Islam (2017) highlight the difficulty women face in Pakistan in gaining their rights and fully participating in economic, social, and political life (Abrar-ul-haq, Jali, & Islam, 2017). The UNDP (2010) ranked Pakistan 120 based on the Gender Development Index (GDI) and 92 based on Gender Empowerment Measurement (GEM). Socioeconomic barriers prevent Pakistani women from accessing food, education, and health services since birth. The Pakistani government introduced many policies in 2004 to improve women's education and gender equality in Pakistan. Pakistan's maternal health care outcomes have improved over the years, but they are still not satisfactory. The maternal mortality rate (MMR) decreased from 533 per 100,000 in 1990-91 to 350 in 2000-01. According to the last available figure, the MMR in 2006-07 was 276.

The contraceptive prevalence rate (CPR) has also increased significantly. The CPR was only 12% in 1990-91, doubled after 10 years, and then reached 28% in 2001-02. In previous years, CRR growth slowed down, reaching 35.4% in 2012-13, and then declining to 34% in 2017-

18. Pakistan's fertility rate also decreased, from 5.4 in 1990-91 to 3.8 in 2012-13 and to 3.6 in 2017-18 (PDHS). India's fertility rate is 2.35, Sri Lanka's is 2.35, Bangladesh's is 2.21, and Nepal's is 2.39, which remains high compared with other developing countries in the region. The factors that affect fertility in Pakistan must be investigated in order to develop policies for fertility control. The present study attempts to address this issue. In Southern Punjab, female empowerment has been mainly influenced by job opportunities, education levels, and family structures, with education levels being the primary factor in enhancing women's freedom of movement and empowerment (Baig et al., 2018; Abrar-ul-haq et al., 2017). The problems women face in Northern Punjab are less severe than those in the south, especially discrimination, wage differentials, harassment, and social threats. One can attack cultural attitudes toward women's empowerment by drawing on Islamic values, including their emphasis on women's property rights (Chaudhry, Nosheen, & Lodhi, 2012). The empowerment of women affects a wide range of aspects, including family finances, family relations, children's education and socialization, and school-based gender discrimination.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The socioeconomic impact of women empowerment in rural areas remains a critical area of research. The impact of numerous initiatives and interventions aimed at empowering women in rural settings needs to be fully understood and evaluated. A multidimensional analysis of women empowerment and its implications for rural communities is presented in this statement of the problem.

There are often barriers to accessing resources such as education, healthcare, financial services, and markets for rural women. By preventing access, rural areas are perpetuated in cycles of poverty and marginalization. The traditional gender roles and norms prevalent in rural societies often place women in subordinate positions in decision-making processes, both at the household and community levels. This limits their influence on policies and practices affecting their lives and livelihoods. The empowerment of women economically through skills training, credit access, and entrepreneurship programs can enhance household incomes and economic productivity in rural areas. In spite of this, it remains unclear whether these programs result in sustainable livelihoods and poverty reduction.

Empowering women leads to improvements in maternal and child health, nutrition, and access to healthcare. The impact of women's empowerment initiatives on rural health indicators is essential for designing effective interventions. Sustainable development, social cohesion, and community resilience are often enhanced by empowered women. It is possible to gain insights into rural development's broader implications by exploring the social dynamics and community-level impacts of women's empowerment initiatives. Rural women often face intersecting forms of discrimination based on factors such as class, caste, ethnicity, and geography. For rural women from marginalized backgrounds to address their diverse needs and challenges, it is crucial to analyze the intersectional dimensions of women's empowerment.

### **Objectives of the Study**

- 1) To identify various socio-economic impacts of women's empowerment in the study area.
- 2) To identify the nature of family where women are empowered in different spheres of life.
- 3) To evaluate the key strategies' in women empowerment, their participation Business activities and challenges in rural areas of Region D.G Khan

### **Significance of the Study**

Women's empowerment in rural areas can be promoted through policies and programs based on the findings of this study. Providing stakeholders involved in development work with valuable insights and knowledge about the socioeconomic impacts of women's empowerment in rural areas is the goal of research on the socioeconomic impact of women's empowerment. Gender and development research gaps and priorities are addressed in this study. It contributes to filling knowledge gaps and advancing understanding of the complex dynamics underlying women's empowerment in rural areas by providing empirical evidence and analysis. Rural women, particularly those from marginalized backgrounds, often face intersecting forms of discrimination and exclusion.

### **Rational of the Study**

There are many gender disparities in rural areas in terms of access to resources, opportunities, and decision-making power. Multiple barriers to women's empowerment exist in rural communities, including limited access to education, healthcare, finance, and markets. A significant contribution to poverty alleviation and economic growth can be made by empowering women in rural areas. Research indicates that investing in women's education and economic empowerment reduces poverty and increases productivity. A woman's class, caste, ethnicity, and geographic location can all contribute to discrimination she faces in rural areas. Women's empowerment has a socioeconomic impact when these intersecting dimensions of social justice and inequality are considered. The socioeconomic impact of women's empowerment in rural areas is rooted in the need to eliminate gender disparities, advance transformative change, alleviate poverty, advance social justice, inform policy and practice, and contribute to knowledge generation and capacity building.

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Empowering women also impacts their fertility preferences, such as their desire to have more children. Women's desire for children decreases when their spouses communicate about fertility-related issues, according to Sobotka & Beaujouan (2014). Empowered women are better able to make fertility-related decisions. The study found that women who are empowered and want more children have a negative and significant relationship. Employed women have fewer children than unemployed women, according to Greulich et al (2016).

Women's autonomy enhances couples' discussions about the optimal size of their families, according to Wazir (2018). Family size discussions are not significantly affected by women who have limited or medium autonomy, according to the study. It is possible for women with a high degree of autonomy to make independent decisions about their family size, which reduces fertility. Children are not significantly affected by women's empowerment. According to the authors, women in Pakistan tend to have a larger family than they planned because of socio-cultural influences.

According to Ali and Fernando (2010), women who have power in household finances and mobility, live in urban areas, and are exposed to the media play a significant role in increasing their status, and improved access to contraceptives will reduce the fertility rate of women.

Enhanced empowerment of women can help to contain women's fertility desire, since empowered women have fewer ideal children than other women, according to Haque et al, (2021). The majority of Bangladeshi women expect to have 2-3 children over their lifetimes, according to Akram et al (2020). Despite that, 46% of women reported that their actual number of children exceeded their desired number. The study found that place of residence, religion, state of residence, wealth index, educational level, spouse's education level, and experiencing child death all have significant effects on fertility desires.



Family planning and abortion decisions are not directly affected by women's empowerment, according to Shrestha and Pokharel (2021). The use of family planning services is more likely to occur among empowered women. Despite the fact that Drioui and Bakass (2022) found that women's empowerment negatively correlated with the ideal number of Moroccan children, they concluded that women's empowerment would not reduce fertility due to constraints such as child sex preferences and contraceptive efficacy.

A study conducted by Khan et al. 2021 examined the socioeconomic empowerment of women in Gilgit-Baltistan. Women's rights should be emphasized by local supportive organizations in the area, which was one of the main points of contention. Women's independence can be boosted by putting these funds to work and increasing the family's income.

Women's employment and education have a significant influence on domestic decision-making and financial activities, according to Mahairshad and Arif (2016). In this study, 300 working women in Lahore, Pakistan, were surveyed. According to the findings, employed women can freely participate in household decision-making and manage household finances, whereas unemployed married women cannot.

Roy et.al (2017) examined the impact of women's earnings and their role in determining domestic standards. The majority of women are either housewives or perform domestic chores for no tangible reward or wage. Study results indicate that female earnings are significantly related to women's education and negatively related to their age, number of family members, and region.

According to Alonge (2017), there is a positive link between empowered women and their role in final decision-making at the household level. According to these studies, women are involved in decision-making at both the community and household levels. As a result of women empowerment, the socioeconomic status of women has improved, their ability to contribute to domestic earnings has increased, and they have become less dependent on their husbands. The working women can also make decisions on day-to-day purchases and freedom of movement independently as compared to the unemployed.

In recent years, numerous academics have examined women's empowerment in a local setting (Gunatilaka, 2021). Women's empowerment factors have not been studied in this depth in the local context of Central Punjab. Developing effective and amazing strategies for women's empowerment in rural areas as a means of improving their financial health requires relevant literature, especially in the local context.

In Kumari's (2020) opinion, Due to lack of gender equality and a failure to take into account the views and perspectives of about half of the population, Pakistan lacks opportunities to boost economic development. IMF data show that Pakistan's GDP could rise by about one-third if women's labor force participation rates were equal to men's. It is necessary to reduce female participation in order to close the gender gap. Increasing the involvement of women in economic activity will greatly contribute to achieving sustainable economic growth and inclusive development. To fully grasp the concept of economic independence for women, we must fill in the gaps in our understanding of the factors that hinder or promote their economic independence. In Pakistan, very little is known about the subject matter in a comprehensive manner.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

According to Amartya Sen (1989), the capacity approach is used in the study. Freedom of choice and capacity to function are important components of the capability approach. It is crucial for development to provide enabling environments for freedom,

according to Sen. People lose their capabilities when they lack freedom, according to Sen. It is critical to eliminate all barriers to development, including discrimination based on race, religion, social status, and gender, according to Sen (1989).

According to Rowland's theory of power (1997), power works and can be applied. According to this theory, power operates at four interconnected levels: "power over" refers to dominating others by using power, as seen in win-loss relationships; "power with" refers to mutual support and collaboration; "power to" refers to the unique and productive ability of a person to change his/her world; and "power within" refers to the sense of self-worth the individual has that fosters respect for others and acceptance of them (Rowland, 1997). It is imperative that women have access to, ownership over, and decision-making authority over their livelihood assets and resources in order to improve their standard of living.

### Research Methodology

#### Research Design

The study adopted descriptive school student writing improvement design. The design was chosen because through it, the researcher was able to collect and analyze data as it existed in the field without manipulating any variables.

#### Target Population

Study was conducted in District Layyah. The proposed study comprised a target population of women's Four Union Council of District Layyah which had 80 women's in each District making total respondents.

#### Sample Size

Simple random sample technique were used to 320 respondents .

#### Tools for Data Collection

Researcher develop adapted questionnaire for data collection from women's. Processor analysis usually required the human's answer to questions transformed into numbers.

#### Statistical Analysis

SPSS (Statically Package for Social Sciences) was used for analyzing the data

### DATA ANALYSIS

#### Distribution of Respondents on the Basis Of Selected Socio-Economic Factors

Indicator	Frequency	Parentage
<b>Age</b>		
Less Than 19	71	22.1
20-28	128	40.0
29-42	98	30.6
43 or above	23	7.3
<b>Education Level</b>		
Illiterate	69	21.5
Middle	54	16.8
Matric	88	27.5
Intermediate	71	22.1
Graduation or above	38	12.1
<b>Family Type</b>		
Nuclear	193	60.3
Joint	127	39.7
<b>Number of Children's</b>		
No Children	22	6.9
1-2	78	24.3
3-5	136	42.5

6 or above	84	25.3
<b>Facility with Electricity and Water</b>		
Yes	246	76.8
No	74	23.2
<b>Working Status</b>		
Working	191	59.6
Non-Working	129	40.4
<b>Choice of Life Partner</b>		
Personal Choice	69	21.6
Parent's Choice	251	78.4
<b>Knowledge about Women Protection Bill</b>		
Yes	97	20.3
No	223	79.7

**Women's perceptions about women Empowerment indicators**

Indicator	Agree	Disagree	Neutral
Women in our rural community have increased access to education and skill development opportunities	162 (50.7)	139 (43.4)	19 (5.9)
Women actively participate in decision-making processes at the household level	185 (57.8)	101 (31.5)	34 (10.7)
Women have greater access to healthcare services, including maternal and reproductive health, in our rural area	218 (68.1)	92 (28.7)	10 (3.2)
Women in our rural community are actively involved in income-generating activities such as agriculture, crafts, or small businesses	177 (53.3)	117 (36.5)	26 (18.2)
Women have access to resources and support networks for entrepreneurship and business development	86 (26.8)	212 (66.2)	22 (7.0)
Women's empowerment initiatives have led to an increase in women-owned businesses and enterprises in our rural area	138 (43.1)	169 (52.2)	13 (4.7)
Women's empowerment has positively impacted the overall well-being and social status of women in our rural community	247 (77.2)	67 (20.9)	06 (1.9)
Women's empowerment has contributed to the reduction of gender-based violence and discrimination in our rural area	219 (68.4)	83 (25.9)	18 (5.7)
Women-owned businesses and enterprises are thriving in our rural area.	115 (35.9)	181 (56.5)	24 (7.6)
Participation in various Activities	170 (53.1)	127 (39.6)	23 (7.3)
Child's Birth and Spacing	72 (22.5)	235 (73.4)	13 (4.1)
Political Awareness in Women	54 (16.8)	246 (76.8)	20 (6.4)
Shared decisions over property and other important things	89 (27.8)	190 (59.3)	41 (12.9)
Improvement in Living Standard	110	189	21

	(34.3)	(59.1)	(6.6)
Strengthening Family Finances	186	106	28
	(58.2)	(33.1)	(8.7)

There are a number of socioeconomic impacts associated with women's empowerment listed in Table II. A majority of respondents (50.7%) agreed that education and skill development opportunities have been increased for women in rural communities. In our rural community, most respondents (81%) agreed that education and skill development opportunities have been increased for women, while 43.4% disagreed. According to the majority of women (57.8%), women actively participate in household decision-making processes. It was found that 82% of women were politically aware; 85% showed participation in different activities, including weddings, betrothals, births, shopping, functions, excursions, etc.

### Discussion

The empowerment of women in rural areas of Southern Punjab can have a profound impact on the socioeconomic development of their communities. The contribution of women to household income and economic activities is often significant when women are empowered. A rural person may participate in agricultural work, livestock rearing, handcrafts, and small businesses. Economic productivity increases in a region when women have access to resources, training, and markets. Rural communities can benefit from empowerment of women. Food, education, and healthcare can be better provided for their families as women gain control over resources. The empowerment of women can also result in increased savings and investments in children's education and nutrition, breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty. Educating and improving women's health are closely associated with women's empowerment. The education of their children is more likely to be prioritized by empowered women, resulting in higher literacy rates and better attendance at school for their children. The health indicators of mothers and children improve when empowered women are better able to access healthcare services. Women's empowerment promotes gender equality within communities and social cohesion. Increasing decision-making power for women and participation in community activities challenges traditional gender norms. Women's rights can then be respected and men and women can cooperate to address the challenges rural communities face together.

It is also possible to increase political representation and participation of women in rural areas as a result of women's empowerment. A woman who is empowered economically and socially is more likely to be involved in civic activities, join local organizations, and participate in political processes. Consequently, rural women and their communities can benefit from more inclusive governance structures and policies. A crucial role is played by women in the management of natural resources and the conservation of the environment in rural areas. Women in rural communities in Southern Punjab can better adapt to environmental challenges like climate change and water scarcity if they are equipped with knowledge and skills related to sustainable agriculture, water management, and renewable energy.

In Rural Punjab Region D.G Khan, women's empowerment is contributing to sustainable development by improving livelihoods, strengthening communities, and promoting sustainable development. Women's empowerment requires concerted efforts from governments, NGOs, and other stakeholders to address structural barriers.

### Conclusion

Empowerment is one of the most important ceremonial aspects of human rights and sustainable development. Southern Punjab region's D.G Khan region has persistently



patriarchal culture and societal norms that prevent women from participating in the workforce. Women have inherited much wealth from their families, but most of it has gone to their male relatives. Pakistan's economy needs women empowerment to grow. This study surveyed 320 participants using a multistage cluster sampling method.

Developing more employment opportunities for women is recommended. Women can also be given employment opportunities close to their homes while providing them with employment opportunities. It should also be mandated that both public and private organizations create daycare centers. It is also important to improve urban transportation networks so that women do not have to worry about harassment on their way to work. Women who harass men at work should be sanctioned according to various rules that must be strictly enforced. A skill-based training program should be offered by the government and non-governmental organizations in Punjab to help women generate income on their own, which will also improve their socioeconomic status.

The financial situation of rural women will be improved by microcredit institutions that provide them with small loans. Men and women should share caregiving and housework duties in dramas and stories in textbooks to reduce gender stereotypes. Therefore, women's status and responsibilities need to be re-evaluated from a societal perspective. There is a need for government, nongovernmental organizations, and educational institutions to organize conferences, seminars, and symposiums aimed at educating the populace about women's issues, especially in rural areas, and improving the inheritance system. The victim's self-efficacy is undermined when domestic violence is perpetrated by an intimate partner, as well as their ability to function on a daily basis is negatively affected. It is increasingly difficult for women to seek treatment for domestic abuse because societal norms condone and tolerate it.

This study suggests that women empowerment can be measured by three dimensions, namely financial empowerment (using husband's earnings), health care empowerment, and household decision making (by making household purchases). The fertility indicators are significantly impacted by these factors. While social empowerment (measured as visiting family/relatives) does have an effect on fertility indicators, it is not significant. Women empowerment appears to be helpful in reducing the fertility rate since the more empowered women are, the fewer children they bear. An increased number of children is an indication of future fertility preferences, as is a longer birth interval.

Participation in the labor force by women is also beneficial in reducing the number of births and increasing the birth interval. A reduction in fertility can only be achieved through empowering women. Providing more job opportunities in Pakistan will improve women's status as well as reduce fertility rates.

The study also found that urbanization reduces the number of children born and ideal family size, as well as increasing birth intervals. It is important to note that this finding does not promote migration to cities, rather it suggests that better health, education, and transportation facilities should be provided in rural areas, so that rural areas may move closer to urban areas in terms of health and education, thereby reducing their fertility rate. Women with more education tend to have smaller families and longer birth intervals, making education an important factor in determining their fertility. Education does not affect both birth intervals and family sizes significantly. Education for girls is highly valued in Pakistan. Education will not only improve women's status and minimize gender inequality, but also contribute to other development goals.

Education plays a significant role in setting the ideal size of a family and the birth interval, just as awareness does. When women are aware of family planning, their families

tend to be smaller and their birth intervals are longer. There is a need for more family planning programs to be broadcast on television, radio, and in newspapers. According to the research, household wealth has a limited effect on fertility behavior. There seems to be a slight correlation between wealthier households having more children. The wealth of the household, on the other hand, does not have a significant effect on other aspects, such as ideal family size and birth intervals.

### Recommendations

After a woman gives birth to a son, she prefers to have a larger birth interval, however, as long as she has not given birth to a son, the birth interval is smaller. NGOs and multilateral organizations can play a significant role in providing communities with localized programs based on their needs. Women's self-help groups (SHGs) and organizations that provide women with a platform and access to low-interest credit are therefore necessary (since 25 percent of women were unable to start businesses). The policy should be shifted to reduce interest rates for micro-finance and credit schemes, and there should be a platform where they can highlight their problems, enhance their learning, develop political interest, and eventually raise their voices. The enhancement of knowledge and the development of capacity are effective tools for empowering women, so future programs and projects in women empowerment and poverty alleviation must include training and awareness programs aimed at building the capacity of women starting small businesses. These organizations also need to develop direct links with marginalized communities and women in particular in order to improve the effectiveness of their programs. It is necessary to conduct much research and fieldwork in this connection in order to understand women's issues and to educate them about their rights. It is recommended that male sensitization programs be conducted in least developed countries and marginalized communities as well, so that women's roles are better understood in household development and that men's dominance over women decreases. Therefore, it will make it easier for women to participate in socio-political and economic activities. A reduction in the gender gap and equal opportunity can enhance women's empowerment.

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