

**WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN CONTEXT OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC
ELEMENTS: A CONTEXTUAL INVESTIGATION OF CENTRAL PUNJAB,
PAKISTAN**

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Abstract

Women's empowerment is indispensable for attaining inclusive and sustainable development. The facts reveal a pitiful situation in terms of female empowerment in Pakistan. This research not only analyses the socio-economic, legal, demographic, and political determinants for empowering marginalized women in Central Punjab but also builds a cumulative women's empowerment index using the appropriate statistical methodology. The data is collected through well –a structured questionnaire by multi-stage stratified cluster sampling technique from 257 respondents. Polychoric principle component analysis creates a complete cumulative women empowerment index with six dimensions. These dimensions are household decision-making, social mobility, familial/interpersonal empowerment, access to formal financial institutions and saving mechanisms, political empowerment, and psychological empowerment. Age and work status of women, access to financial institutions for personal and family financial matters, access to better medical facilities, participation in social gatherings, knowledge of written contents of nikah-nama, knowledge about women protection bill, vote caste significantly positively, while unpaid domestic care work, fear of violence, area of residence, and joint family structure significantly negatively influence women empowerment in Central Punjab. The findings of the study and policy suggestions are exceptionally useful in increasing women empowerment in Central Punjab.

Keywords: Composite Women Empowerment Index; Household Decision Making; Social Empowerment; Familial Empowerment

JEL Classification: D63, I31, J16, P25

1. Introduction

As producers, natural resource managers, entrepreneurs, and workers, women are essential contributors to economies. Women are also the world's leading provider of household and unpaid treatment, women have unpaid care and household work 2.6 times the number of men (Ferrant and Thim, 2019). In almost all societies, women have to manage child schooling, care and family life. In most impoverished nations, women

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manage animals, farm, and collect water and fuel. Rural women are essential as farmers, workers, and housewives.

Additional studies are defining empowerment across various processes and fields, e.g. agency and efficiency (Ameh *et al.*, 2021), resource and agency management (Malhotra *et al.*, 2002), agency structure and reward structure (Alsop *et al.*, 2006). The various structures or domains in which female empowerment occurs are tools, organizations, and effects (Alsop *et al.*, 2006). It can be argued that empowerment incorporates three dimensions, i.e. capital (subjects), structure (process), and outcomes (outcomes). In this respect, the improvement of empowerment often requires a significant function not only for material resources, such as money, land, etc. but also for other social and human resources, e.g. skills, education and support.

The empowerment of women is women's ability to change social and economic development as they can fully participate in decisions affecting their lives by having the opportunities and leadership that women have in their communities.

Women's economic empowerment (WEE) is the process of ensuring that women have equal access to and control over financial resources and can utilise them to exert greater control over various elements of their lives (Bird, K. 2018). Empowering women economically is a primary objective in the fight against poverty. As with males, women should be recognised as both financial actors and obvious and fundamental change agents. As a developing country, Pakistan women in rural areas face numerous challenges in order to achieve economic empowerment. Numerous recent studies worldwide indicate that for a country to ensure sustainable growth, women empowerment is essential. Women's empowerment is critical to a nation's development as it improves the quality and number of available human resources for development. It has been shown that women's empowerment would produce 10.5 million employment opportunities by 2050, and the EU's rate of employment would be almost 80%. It will also positively influence the EU's per capita gross domestic product (GDP), which would hit nearly 10% by 2050.

Women have a lower opportunity of working on the job market, earn less for equivalent jobs than men and are worse off in poverty. Women spend nearly double the time on

homework, almost five times on childcare and about half the time on market work as men spend. As far as their rights are concerned, women in many countries still lack autonomous land rights, property management, business and even travel without the permission of their spouses. Of the 63 countries studied, 21 have unequal rights of inheritance for men and women. The substantial expense for them and their homes is implicit in the inequalities of gender. Not only material resources, such as capital, property, etc., play a significant and essential role in enhancing empowerment but also in skills, care and knowledge.

Women's empowerment is an essential aspect of equality for women and men. It includes growing femininity, decision-making skills, access to and control of opportunities and resources, power and change. Distinct research shows the multidimensional, complicated and interpretable mechanism of empowerment. Women empowerment can cover financial, human, physical, socio-culture, interpersonal, legal, political, psychological and agricultural dimensions in various aspects. Some studies indicate that 'the empowerment of women' happens at different stages, encompasses a range of dimensions and takes place through various processes.

There is a consensus that women empowerment initiatives improve broader human, social, and economic. Rural households can be empowered in agriculture by sustainability and revenues generated by Women constitute almost half of the share of the population of Pakistan and have lower status than men in all spheres of existence. "Women in Pakistan have always been poorer than men; more than half have a lack of wages, health and education opportunities and even when overall poverty has been decreasing, the differences between men and women have increased," according to "they have always been more impoverished than men. (Jafar, A. 2005). There are prevalent cases of violence against women, masculine domination, polygamy, abuse and harassment (Qaisrani *et al.*, 2016). The roles and responsibilities of gender in the past few decades have been remaining unchanged.

In Pakistan, women's economic participation is still far below levels in other countries with comparable incomes, despite rising by half over the past two decades (Easterly,

W.2001). Even amongst women with a high level of education, the participation of the working population is low, with only 25% of Pakistani women employed outside their home university. The presence of a low population of women contributes to a significant productivity loss.

In its Sustainable Development Agenda 2030, the United Nations Report on Gender Equality emphasizes Pakistan as one of the four countries to be addressed. The report found women's oppression in general and gave the nation a sad image. In four sustainable development goals linked dimensions including education, child marriage, health care and jobs, 12% of women in Pakistan (4.9 million) 18–49 are currently deprived. Pakistan is one of the poorest countries among the four Muslim nations, including Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Egypt, in terms of female marginal position.

Numerous academics have already attempted to examine women's empowerment in a local setting (Jayaweera et al., 2007). Gunatilaka, 2021; Gunewardena, 2015; Herath et al., 2016; Vithanagama R, 2016; Kumari 2020a). Nevertheless, they have not before attempted to identify the factors of women's empowerment in the local context of Central Punjab in such detail. Since there is a dearth of relevant literature, particularly in the local context, the gap must be filled if effective and amazing strategies are to be established to enhance women's empowerment in order to improve the financial health of rural women. As a result, Pakistan lacks opportunities to boost economic development because it cannot uphold gender equality and fails to incorporate the views and perspectives of about half of the population. Participation According to the IMF report, it has been projected that Pakistan's GDP can be increased by about one-third if the participation rate of the female labor force is equal to that of male participation. Everything to do is reduce the gender gap in female participation. This will contribute immensely to a nation's pursuit of sustainable economic and inclusive development in the more significant involvement of women in economic activity. In order to grasp this concept, we must fill in the gaps in our understanding of the factors that prevent and promote women's economic independence. To facilitate this, there is hardly any comprehensive study of the subject matter in the context of Pakistan.

To begin, there is a gap in the current literature on women's empowerment with regard to understanding the various aspects of women's empowerment and the elements that are associated with them. Numerous earlier research analyzed women's empowerment, but they often did it indirectly and with reliance on secondary data. Researchers have complained that the indirect methods used to study this crucial but context-dependent issue are inadequate. As a result, the current research will employ a developing cumulative index to directly quantify charge as a proxy for empowerment. The composite index of women's empowerment is a measurement of empowerment that is based on several different research (Sen, Rastogi *et al.*2006: Parveen *et al.*2005: Khan *et al.*2017). As a result, the current investigation will do more than simply develop a generalized measure of women's agency. Still, it will include all aspects of women's empowerment throughout the sociopolitical and psychological spectrum that have not been used in any earlier research. Hence, the current study will bridge a knowledge gap and conduct an in-depth analysis of this primary driver of long-term economic growth by developing a composite measure of women's empowerment.

Second, few studies have considered the role that unpaid domestic care work, awareness of legal rights (particularly the women's protection bill), a cosmopolitan outlook, the influence of a safe and clean environment, and access to financial institutions play in the empowerment of women in Pakistan. Thus, it is essential to organize such critical research. This empirical study is therefore primarily concerned with identifying the key factors that influence women's empowerment and making an effort to excavate the key factor among them. Since Central Punjab is a more developed area than Upper and Southern Punjab, analyzing the local elements that lead to the empowerment of women would hasten the rate of progress.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Researchers continue to focus on women's empowerment since it is an issue that has been of interest for a very long time. In the following, we provide a few of the research that seems to be most pertinent to this discussion. According to Kabeer's (2003) research,

women's empowerment entails a series of steps that begin with the option for the discarded ladies to reroute their life. Given this skill, it is clear that access to institutions where decisions are made and to communal and physical resources. In addition, she elaborates on the four steps that IFAD (1999) identifies as contributing to women's economic independence, changes in women's mobility and socialization, shifts in women's labor patterns, shifts in women's decision-making power and their ability to access and control over resources. Women's economic independence is viewed as both a fundamental human right and a necessary condition for growth that benefits the poor and does not compromise sustainability. When women have high incomes, more money is put into education for kids (OECD, 2012). Across the globe, Mehra (1997) reports, women are actively engaged in the low percentage of women working in the production sector to generate revenue, in comparison to men. Although despite the efforts of many non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the gender gap remains void persists. Focusing on women's participation and resolving fundamental human needs economic growth relies on people feeling like they have some control over their lives. Life expectancy, girls' enrollment in primary education, total fertility rate, and maternal mortality have all been cited as indicators of women's well-being. The findings reveal that interferences that boost women's agency do so by expanding their pool of available options. They are a bonus to employment that gives women more freedom of choice. In addition, it is said that investment in women's education and health has been shown to reduce the number of children born into poverty. Few resources are being invested in women's productive lives, despite the fact that here is where the greatest reduction in the reduction of poverty and the empowerment of women. The percentage of women in agricultural roles is higher in urban areas of developed countries than it is in rural parts of developing countries high rates of poverty, with a clear upward trend, are a common observation. Putting money into women's education and careers pays dividends, and supports kids' health and education without any middlemen.

The economic crisis is stated to have an effect on women's empowerment according to Floro, Tornquist, and Tas (2009) in short-term and long-term developing nations. The increase in the number of teenage girls who choose not to complete their formal

education, and raises the prevalence of violence against women and restricts their access to basic services like healthcare and emotional assistance. In addition, they suggested that despite the fact that the economic crisis is having a detrimental effect on women, empowerment might be a chance to change dominant structures, make economic and gender-sensitive social policies and programs. Those conditions allow businesses to detect and address the demands of female empowerment. Khan *et al.* 2021 conducted research on women's socioeconomic empowerment in Gilgit-Baltistan. The importance of local supportive organizations in the area emphasized that women should have equal rights was one of their main points of contention. Putting these funds to work can boost the family's income and have a salutary effect on women's independence.

When women can support themselves economically, they gain agency within the home in terms of their kid's right to an education, to marry, and to vote. In 2012, Murtaza also performed analogous research done in Gilgit, which argued that women's access to and success in higher education positions them to the goal of development should be to ensure women's autonomy (Niaz, Ali and Rukhsana, 2010). Furthermore, households with college graduates that are thought to be more supportive of women's economic independence and political participation home-based decision-making procedure. It is also observed that education and empowerment have a good effect. better participant in the community at large. In addition, it aids women in overcoming low self-esteem. Women's education robs them of their autonomy, forcing them to rely on their spouses. Women's economic participation is seen as crucial in family budgeting and for human development. The primary

Women with higher levels of education tend to have more developed minds and be more equipped to handle domestic concerns in contrast to other ladies. Equally important, education is often cited as a factor in women's increased agency. The basis for this According to data collected in Southern Punjab by Haq, Jali, and Islam (2017), educational initiatives on education a top priority because it is essential to empowering women. According to research by Sultana (2013), men in rural areas in Bangladesh hold more influence in family, with women relegated to the background and excluded from decision-making roles. A series of linear regressions were applied to the problem of

determining what factors contribute to women's decision-making and women's economic independence, and the results demonstrated that a person's degree of education, income, occupation, and sensitivity to issues of gender are all important that women should have a say in household decisions and that husbands and wives need to work together for the sake of their family's happiness

Also, participation in family decision-making is obligatory. Some research, including one by Parveen and Leonhäuser (2005), have defined the root causes of women's Individual, family, and community empowerment. Because personal factors have a role, numerous scientists have concluded that chronological age is a crucial and influential factor element favouring female autonomy (e.g., Khan & Awan, 2011; Nayak & Mahanta, 2009; Parveen Tareque, Haque, Mostofa, & Islam; 2007). Also, Khan *et al.* (2010) looked into what variables in Rawalpindi were most important in promoting women's empowerment. Pakistan established a base of 300 females aged 15 to 49. Political affiliation, and the extent to which Women's participation and having a waged job were identified as major variables in women's success empowerment.

Further, for the Cholistan Desert in Pakistan, the socioeconomic factors that contribute to women's empowerment were investigated factor analysis and major component analysis were used by Soharwardi, Khan, and Khalid (2014) to verify the fairness and accuracy of the tests used.

Chaudhry and Nosheen (2012) said that the claim that women have less power in Islamic countries is not true. Tried to get rid of this false idea by looking at a district in Southern Punjab, which is thought to be one of Pakistan's most backward areas. Some socioeconomic and other social factors determine what the Islamic view of women's rights. Based on the data, we can say that a woman's level of education, her employment status, and the women's education index of her household tend to have a positive and significant effect on her empowerment, while fear from her husband or father tends to have the opposite effect. Women's empowerment has been an issue for a long time, and according to the authors, the only way to empower women and give them their status in a country like Pakistan is to force them to follow Islamic law. Investing in women's education is also thought to help them learn about their rights, responsibilities, and

freedoms (Shoaiib, Saeed & Cheema, 2012). This study looked at how women are treated in the home and how much choice and freedom they have in how they spend money, vote, and go out and buy goods and services. At the household level, there is a link between how much women are educated and how much power they have.

Some studies looked at the social, socioeconomic, and socio-demographic factors that affect women's empowerment in the district of Punjab (Baig et al,2020; Awan ,2015). Fear of violence from the husband or father is a social factor. Socioeconomic factors include having access to the media, having a bank account, and having a job. Socio-demographic factors, on the other hand, include the family system. All of the variables were found to have a positive effect on women's empowerment. However, women's empowerment in rural areas has different needs, such as education in the home, awareness of opportunities in the community, the important role of the media, and knowledge of women's rights in Islamic education. Women in cities have access to everything they need, but women in rural areas don't have the same opportunities. In fact, only married women in rural areas have everything they need, according to research.

Here are some ways to say why this study is important:

First, contemporary literature on women's empowerment lacks knowledge of its numerous dimensions and complexities. Earlier study on women's empowerment employed secondary data and indirect methodologies. Academics have lamented the lack of direct techniques to study this context-dependent issue. In this study, empowerment will be quantified directly by operationalizing charge and evolving cumulative index to quantify charge. The composite index of women's empowerment combines numerous studies. Current research will develop more than a composite indicator of women's empowerment. It will incorporate all facets of women's empowerment across social, political, and psychological realms not used in the studies study.

Second, research on women's empowerment in Pakistan has rarely employed unpaid domestic care work, legal rights, especially women's protection law, cosmopolitan mentality, and a safe and clean environment.

Third, the post-2015 plan's sustainable development targets target 2030. This study will examine the determinants of women's empowerment which will help in achieving gender equality and all sustainable development goals.

The following are the specific goals of the current research.

- Identifying the key determinants that contribute to women's empowerment in Central Punjab.
- To construct the comprehensive cumulative index of women empowerment Central Punjab.
- To examine how gender roles and family dynamics shape women's empowerment.

The paper is divided into three parts. The second part is a review of the literature. The third part talks about data sources and sampling techniques, description of variables, and talks about how to do an empirical analysis. The fourth section is about the analysis and interpretation of the empirical results, and the last section is about the conclusion and policy implications.

3. DATA AND METHODS

This research is predicated on primary data. A questionnaire ($\alpha = 0.72$; Cronbach's alpha) was devised to collect data from women respondents in Central Punjab using multistage stratified cluster sampling techniques. Shekhupura, a district in Central Punjab with an average female literacy rate prevalence rate, has been chosen. Rural and urban areas are basic sample strata. Using a visualization technique, clusters from urban and rural areas are chosen to represent the features of the entire area. Using the quotient rule, households were picked in the next stage from the Bureau of Statistics (BOS) list of households. Around fifty households were picked from each cluster, taking into account numerous

factors, such as the low incidence of women's empowerment in the domestic domain, the budget, and the available time. The selection of households from selected clusters was proportional to the rural-urban ratio from the 2017 census, which was 37% for rural areas and 63% for urban areas. This study's core informant, the research unit, is ever-married women of reproductive age (17-49), single, divorced, separated, and widows were excluded because most questions about women's empowerment were only answered by married women. The Centre part of the province of Punjab is more a developed area as compared southern and Northern parts of Punjab. According to Irfan et al. 2019, access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities is better in Central Punjab. There was no research available that focused on Central Punjab. The adoption of policies in this region that are conducive to the empowerment of women has the potential to hasten the rate of development in this region.

Following formula is used to select sample size

$$n = \frac{Z^2 \cdot \partial^2}{\epsilon^2} \quad (1)$$

Where:

- $\partial^2 = P(1-P)$
- $P^* =$ prevalence rate (female literacy rate)
- $Z =$ 95% confidence interval
- $\epsilon =$ acceptable error 5%

3.1. Sampling Frame

Table 1: Sample Selection Criteria

Region	District	Households		Clusters	P* (%)	z-value
Central Punjab	Shekhupura	Rural	160	Wandala dial shah; NurpurWirkan; Ghazi Pur	78.9	95% (1.96)
		Urban	97	Sharqpur, Ferozwala		

With the help of six dimensions— women's economic empowerment, social empowerment, political empowerment, household decision making, familial/interpersonal empowerment, and psychological empowerment—cumulative women's empowerment index is constructed with the help of a polychoric principal component analysis .

$$CWEI = HHDM + SMOB + EEM + POLEM + FAMEM + PSYEM \dots \dots \dots (2)$$

CWEI = Household Decision making index + Mobility index + Economic Empowerment index + Political empowerment index + Familial empowerment index + Psychological Empowerment index

The applicability of PCA depends on types of data. The classical PCA assumes that variable is distributed normally which means that continual data works best. Polychoric Principal Component Analysis (PPCA) is a method of dimensionality reduction for categorical variables. Kolenikov and Angeles (2009) is used PPCA technique, which improves on the regular PCA is especially appropriate for discrete data (binary and ordinal). Since the variables in the present study were binary and ordinal, the matrix on which the PCA is based, Polychoric correlation.

The Kaiser-Meyer - Olkin test (KMO) measured the suitability of your data to the study of the factor, sphericity test by Bartlett. Blow Table-2 shows that the Kaiser Meyer-Olkin (KMO) sampling adequacy measure value is 0.782 this suggests that this study's sample size is sufficient for Principal Component Analysis. . The values of chi-square statistics are also statistically important in Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. It confirms that the selected women's empowerment metrics are inter-correlated. The PCA is therefore an effective technique for evaluating the significance of the selected variables in household-level assessment of women's empowerment.

Table 2: Results of KMO and Bartlett’s Test for Sample Adequacy for Factor Analysis of Women’s Empowerment at the Household Level in Central Punjab

KMO and Bartlett’s Test	Central Punjab
KMO for Sampling Adequacy	0.782

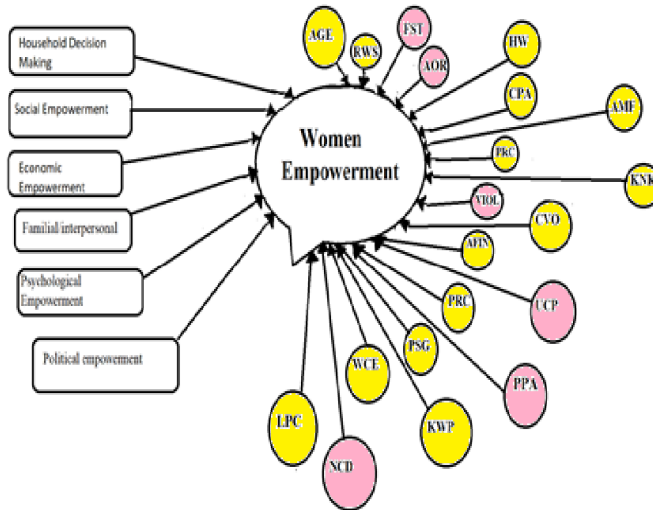
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity Approx.	Chi-Square	2561.86
	Df	406
	Sig	0.000

Finally, the weighted sum of components, where weights are calculated by dividing rotational loadings by the square root of Eigen value (variance explained by each component in the PPCA). Multiplying variables with PPCA-derived weights (see Appendix table 3A) yielded component scores.

3.2. Conceptual Framework

The study's dependent variable is women's empowerment, which is measured by a total of twenty-eight variables. These variables are broken down into six sub-indices. Economic empowerment includes access to formal financial institutions, saving methods, and control over the use of personal money. Socio-cultural empowerment is a proxy for women's freedom to visit various places, familial/interpersonal empowerment encompasses a variety of personal and child-related decisions, political participation entails the caste of vote with free will and participation in political activities, and psychological empowerment entails Generalized Self-Efficacy scale is used. Twenty socioeconomic, political, legal, and contextual variables were chosen as explanatory variables. In fig.1, variables shaded in pink are thought to have a negative effect on women's empowerment, while factors shaded in yellow are thought to have a positive effect on women's empowerment.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



For estimating socio-economic and demographic determinants of women empowerment the Ordinary Least Square Method is used (Baig et al., 2018: Meraj & Sadaqat, 2016) estimate a linear model with a constant term, using STATA version 13 and we also test the regression model for heteroscedasticity, multicollinearity, autocorrelation, and normality.

The formula for yield is:

$$Y_i = \alpha + I X_i + \epsilon \tag{3}$$

This is the dependent variable. Y_i is a measure of women's empowerment across time, X_i shows variables, ϵ is the error term, and I represents the current model's parameters.

This is the regression model using ordinary least squares:

$$CWEI = p_0 + p_1 AGE + p_2 AROR + p_3 FSTR + p_4 NCHLD + p_5 PHW + p_6 CSPA + p_7 RWST + p_8 EDU + p_9 PRCV + p_{10} WCONEL + p_{11} LOANB + p_{12} AFINST + p_{13} CVOT + p_{14} UPCW + p_{15} AMFC + p_{16} PSGT + p_{17} VIOIL + p_{18} LPCH + p_{19} KNKCN + p_{20} KWPB + \varepsilon^i \dots \quad (4)$$

4. Results and Discussion

Here, we summarize the frequency distribution of selected indicators of women residing in central Punjab key findings of polychoric PCA for women's empowerment at the household level, before diving into the descriptive statistics and regression estimations. The weights of indicators of women empowerment through PPCA are shown in Appendix.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents on the Basis Of Selected Socio-Economic Factors

Variable	Frequency Distribution	Variables	Frequency Distribution
women's age		Access to financial institutions	
Less than 21	21(8.2%)	Low	86 (33.5)
21-30	86(33.5%)	Medium	111 (43.2)
31-40	85(33.1%)	High	60 (23.3)
41-50	65(25.3%)	Unpaid domestic care work	
Female educational attainment		Less Than 4 Hour	108 (42.19)
Illiterate	72 (28.13)	More Than 4 But Less Than 8 Hours	102(39.84)
Primary	18 (7.00)	More Than 8 But Less Than 12 Hours	35 (13.67)
Middle	25 (9.73)	More Than 12 But Less Than 16hours	12 (4.7)
Matriculation	49 (19.14)	Access to Medical	
Intermediate	18 (7.03)	Yes	222 (86.4)
Graduation	24 (9.38)	No	35 (13.6)
Masters	32 (12.50)	Participation in Social Gatherings	
Above Masters	18 (7.03)	Low	39(15.2)
Family setup		Medium	169(65.8)

Nuclear	133(51.6)	High	49(19.1)
Joint	124(48.4)	Fear of violence	
Number of children		No	211(82.1)
No Child	11 (4.30)	Yes	46(17.9)
1-3	129 (50.19)	Choice of life partner	
4-6	97 (37.89)	Personal choice	12 (4.67)
above 6	20 (7.81)	Parents' choice	205 (79.77)
Facility with soap and water		You and your parents' choice	40 (15.56)
Yes	241 (93.77)	Knowledge about Written Contents of Nikah Nama	
No	16 (6.23)	No	93(36.2)
Cosmopolitan Attitude		Yes	164(68.8)
Yes	114(44.4)	Knowledge about women protection bill	
No	143(55.6)	No	64(24.9)
Work status of women		Yes	193(75.1)
Working	63(24.8)	Women should contest election	
Non-working	194(75.2)	No	60(23.3)
Inherited Property received from the parents		Yes	197(76.7)
Yes	61 (23.7)	Caste vote in election	
No	196 (76.3)	No	87(33.9)
		Yes	170(66.1)
Availed loan from the bank			
Yes	41 (16.0)		
No	216 (84.0)		

Author's calculations

Table 4: Empowerment of Women in Central Punjab: A Descriptive Analysis

CWEMI	Mean	Std. Dev.
Background characteristics of women		
Cumulative Index of Women's Empowerment	12.520	1.678
women's age	33.568	8.685
Female educational attainment	9.48	5.56
Area of residence	1.611	0.488
Composition of a Family	1.463	0.500
Number of children	1.669	0.803
Hand washing facility with soap and water	0.938	0.242
Cosmopolitan attitude of women	0.444	0.498
Economic Variables		
Work status of women	0.327	0.470
Property received from parents	0.237	0.426
Availed loan from bank for personal business	0.160	0.367
Access to financial institutions for personal/family financial matters	0.449	0.374
Social Variables		
Unpaid domestic care work	1.802	0.841
Visit to hospital in case of personal health problem	0.593	0.347
Socializing	0.519	0.293
Fear of violence from father or husband	0.163	0.370
Choice of life partner	2.113	0.433
Advertency of Legal Rights		
Knowledge of what is written in Nikah-Nama	0.630	0.484
Awareness concerning women's Protection Bill	0.712	0.454
Political Variables		
Women contest election	0.767	0.424
Vote cast	0.642	0.480

Author's calculations

Regression results are depicted in Table 4. These explanatory variables explain the fitness of the model shown with the R² value = 0.702, which implies 70 % of the variance in the cumulative female empowerment index is explained by selected variables in the model.

The coefficient of AGE shown is positive (0.02) and significant (P<.012) which implies that one year increase in age of women increases CWEI by 0.02 points. An age-expressed

experience of a women. Higher chronological age is an important predictor of women empowerment (e.g., Tareque *et al.*, 2007; Nayak and Mahanta, 2009; Wiklander and Thede, 2010; Acharya *et al.*, 2010, Khan and Awan, 2011; Sultana and Hossen, 2013). The empirical result confirmed the theoretical evidence for Central Punjab. The coefficient of AROR is negative (-0.384) and significant ($p < .003$). It means that women residing in urban areas are 0.382 points more empowered than women living in rural areas.

Women living in urban areas are significantly more empowered than women living in rural claimed that women's empowerment differs in context or place. The empirical results suggest that the rural population is less empowered than the urban population. Existing conditions imply an improvement in the socioeconomic and political standing of women in metropolitan regions. These disparities are made feasible by the intervening variable of higher educational facilities, better opportunities to acquire information and skills, and other urban facilities.

The regression coefficient value of family structure -0.288 at $P < .022$ represents that living in a joint family structure decreases women's empowerment (CWEI) by -0.288 points. Joint family structure leads to an increased family burden and less attention on women's empowerment. The empirical result confirmed that joint family structure decreases women's empowerment in Central Punjab.

With the current social and cultural climate in Pakistan, it is uncommon for women to work in male-dominated fields for pay. When women work for cash, their level of empowerment increases (Akram, 2018). The empirical results are consistent with those of numerous other investigations. Includes the research from Kabeer *et al.* (2011, 2013), and that women have greater control over resources when they earn more money, and the ability to use their income more freely and economic independence is a fundamental goal that contributes to lowering gender disparity. Reduced reliance on the economy boosts women's self-assurance, and consequently, their decision-making capacity. All these lead them towards more empowerment. The coefficient of RWST is positive 0.345 at $P < .033$. It means that changing the work status of women from housewives to working women

increases women’s empowerment (CWEI) by 0.345 points in Central Punjab. Women’s work status is imperative for women’s empowerment. Better opportunities or work status of women increases women empowerment as compared to low status work of a women.

Most of the women are enthusiastic and want to a personal business but have no provision of loans from banks or any other institutions. The coefficient of LOANB is positive (0.092) and insignificant. It means that one unit increase in availed loan from bank for personal business increases women’s empowerment (CWEI) by 0.092 points. The coefficient of access to financial institutions for personal/family financial matters is positive (0.341) and significant.

Present research has also investigated the impact of various important social factors on empowerment level women residing in Central Punjab. Women are unpaid in their domestic jobs. The GDP estimate does not contain this. The unpaid domestic care work coefficient is negative (-0.321) and significant ($P < 0.000$) in this analysis. This means that more unpaid household work reduces the empowerment of women (CWEI) by 0.32 points. Women in self-care are healthier. Unpaid domestic care work increases stress and leads towards poor health. You visit the hospital for better health if you caught any illness. The access to medical facilities in case of their personal health problems (AFMC) coefficient is positive and important in this analysis (0.992). It is to say, a growing unit of women's empowerment (CWEI) of 0.992 points in cases of women getting better access to medical facilities in case of their personal health problems. Women's social gathering increases their knowledge of upgrading and social standards in society and updating mode and other life facilities. PGST has a positive (1.177) and important coefficient in this analysis. This means that an increase of one unit in social participation raises the empowerment of women (CWEI) by 1.177 points.

Table 5: Women's Empowerment in Central Punjab: A Regression Analysis

CWEMI	Coef.	S.E	T	P> t
Background characteristics of women				
women's age	0.020	0.008	2.520	0.012
Female educational attainment	0.015	0.014	1.040	0.298

Area of residence	-0.384	0.128	-2.990	0.003
Composition of a Family	-0.288	0.125	-2.300	0.022
Number of children	-0.022	0.079	-0.270	0.784
Hand washing facility with soap and water	0.098	0.262	0.370	0.710
Cosmopolitan attitude of women	-0.028	0.125	-0.220	0.824
Economic Variables				
Work status of women	0.345	0.161	2.140	0.033
Property received from parents	-0.080	0.148	-0.540	0.587
Availed loan from bank for personal business	0.092	0.169	0.550	0.586
Access to financial institutions for personal/family financial matters	0.341	0.188	1.820	0.071
Social Variables				
Unpaid domestic care work	-0.321	0.086	-3.750	0.000
Visit to hospital in case of personal health problem	0.992	0.233	4.250	0.000
Socializing	1.177	0.263	4.470	0.000
Fear of violence from father or husband	-0.671	0.178	-3.770	0.000
Choice of life partner	-0.322	0.145	-2.220	0.028
Advertency of Legal Rights				
Knowledge of what is written in Nikah-Nama	0.434	0.151	2.880	0.004
Awareness concerning women's Protection Bill	0.433	0.157	2.750	0.006
Political Variables				
Women contest election (WCONEL)	0.059	0.154	0.390	0.699
Vote cast	0.318	0.135	2.350	0.019
Constant	11.798	0.653	18.060	0.000
Summary Statistics				
R-squared: 0.702		Adj-R-squar	0.677	

Source: Author's own Calculations

Threats and mental stress are created for women by the fear of domestic abuse from their husbands and fathers. It distresses women's empowerment. In this study, the coefficient of VIOIL is negative (-0.671) and significant. The empirical results favored these theoretical arguments. The choice of life partner is very important for women's empowerment. The women are self-determined for choosing their life partner. The advertency of legal rights dimension was highlighted in this study. The written content of Nikah-Name is imperative for women empowerment. Most of the women are unknown for conditions of Nikah-Nama. The women who are familiar with the conditions of Nikah-Name, they are self-confident and know their mortal rights from their husbands. It encourages women's empowerment. In this study, the coefficient of knowledge about the contents of nikah nama is positive (0.433) and significant. It means that women have the knowledge about written contents of Nikah-Nama increases are more empowered by 0.434 points. In Central Punjab, most of the women are not familiar about women protection bill passed by the state. The women, who are familiar about women protection bill are self-confident about their rights. It encourages women empowerment in the society. The coefficient of women protection bill (KWPB) is positive (0.433) and significant. It indicates that women who are aware of the women's protection act are 0.43 percentage points more empowered than those who are unaware.

Women's participation in politics promotes women's empowerment in society. The coefficient of women who vote in elections is positive and statistically significant (0.318). It indicates that a one-unit increase in votes cast boosts women's empowerment (CWEL) in the Central Punjab by 0.318% units. a number of earlier investigations discovered identical results (Kundu and Chakraborty, 2012; Chaudhry and Nosheen, 2009).

5. Conclusion and Policy Suggestions

An important ceremonial focus on human rights and sustainable development is empowerment. Women participation in the workforce in Pakistan is hampered by a variety of societal norms and the country persistently patriarchal culture. Yet much of the wealth that women have inherited has gone to the men in their families. To keep Pakistan's economy growing, women empowerment is crucial. A total of 257 participants

were surveyed utilizing a multistage cluster sampling technique for this investigation. The current study developed a cumulative index of women's empowerment using polychoric principal component analysis (CWEI) throughout six dimensions.

Selected dimensions of women empowerment are how families make decisions (i.e., regular household choice decision-making (both small and large-scale in the economy) and decisions in interpersonal matters, social mobility, economic, political, familial, and psychological empowerment. Twenty variables were examined, with the results indicating that there are 12 primary factors affected the CWEI in Central Punjab. Women's employment, legal matters awareness, and age, open-mindedness, use of medical services, and community involvement gatherings and women's attitudes toward running for office go together in hand sum of the indicators measuring the autonomy of women. Yet, uncompensated care giving, a negative connotation is attached to the concepts of domestic violence and living in a dangerous neighborhood on various levels of women's independence. As women paid, job involvement emerged as a significant factor in empowering women.

It is advised that more employment options be developed for women. Moreover, while providing women with employment, it can be ensured that these chances are as close to their homes as possible. Moreover, creation of day care centres should be mandated for both private and public organisations. Similarly, improvements should be made to urban transportation networks so that women can reach their workplaces without fear of harassment. Various rules should be enacted and strictly enforced to sanction both men and women who harass women in the workplace. Govt and non-government groups should give skill-based training to enable women in Punjab to generate money independently, which will also help to improve their socioeconomic standing. Moreover establishment of microcredit institutions to give small loans to women in rural areas will help them to bring better financial position of women and their households ultimately. Men and women should be encouraged to share caregiving and housework duties through dramas and stories in textbooks in order to reduce gender stereotypes. In this sense, it is vital to alter the societal perspective on the status and duties of women. Hence, the government, non-governmental organisations, and educational institutions should arrange

conferences, seminars, and symposia to educate the populace on women-related concerns, particularly in rural areas, and the system for delivering inherited property should be made effective. Domestic abuse perpetrated by an intimate partner not only diminishes a victim's sense of self-efficacy, but also instills fear, negatively affecting their ability to complete daily chores to their satisfaction. However, societal norms that condone and tolerate domestic abuse are pervasive in our society, and their prevalence inhibits women from seeking treatment.

To introduce in the real sense to get women out of a deplored circumstance, true implementation of legislation relating to violence against women is necessary. Women are changing their contact actions and becoming aware of what is happening around the world, to women need to be aware of their legal rights to improve themselves before they are set up to force reforms in society. Advertising of female legal rights is necessary if sexism is to be asserted. The research has shown that most women in the survey are ignorant of their legal rights and government programs. That is why women in selected studied regions have no equality. In order to give women free counsel on their rights, the government can create a legal cell integrated with the local governments. Various interventions, notably in rural areas, may be an effective tool for sensitizing women, thus facilitating the empowering of women, through electronic media, public forums, rallies and workshops. Women may form associations and social networks to exchange views and sentiments within the community. Knowledge of women on environmental issues is critical to fighting climate change in order to achieve successful grassroots management and preparation since childhood for future generations. Encourage capacity-building mechanisms in LDCs and SIDS, including women, young people, local and disadvantaged populations, for successful planning and management of climate change. Moreover, in traditional regions such as the Punjab, where many women are unaware of their identity, legal rights, and self-productive family responsibilities, the problem of empowering women is not straightforward but complex. In the end, it was determined that equality for women is only achievable if all participating organizations collaborate and comprehend the UNDP and SDGS 2030-defined factors discussed in this research.

The entire community must recognise women's potential and contribution to the process of growth.

Empowering and developing women are prerequisites for the potential development of society as a whole, both socially and conceptually, in order to guarantee sustainable progress in 2030. This empirical study has numerous policy ramifications that will be discussed below may end up being incredibly useful for women's liberation in developing countries specifically .Central Punjab in Pakistan. For the most part, women's work has been in the paid sector Women's empowerment, engagement has emerged as a crucial aspect. Female employment possibilities could emerge. Also, while serving, openings for women possibly, these possibilities are as close as convenient to their dwellings as is practicable. In addition, urban transportation networks need to make it easier for women to enter male-dominated fields without experiencing harassment. The harassment of women in the workplace should be illegal, and this includes harassment by both men and women. Training for government and non-government organizations to increase independently contribute to improving women's overall socioeconomic position in the Province of Punjab. Care giving and housework duties should be shared between Dramas and stories in textbooks should be used to encourage men and women to decrease negative gender role assumptions. Altering the collective mentality. Governments, non-profits, and universities should all get together and host conferences, meetings devoted to enlightening the public about women's problems through seminars and symposia in rural areas in particular. Consequences of intimate partner abuse include a decrease in self-efficacy but instead inspire terror, which has a detrimental influence on performance. Satisfaction with one's day-to-day activities and there are social standards that allow for and even encourage acknowledging that incidents of domestic abuse are all too common in our culture and adhering to prevents women from obtaining medical attention. Legislation pertaining to have to be strictly enforced in order to get women out of abusive relationships, violence against them must be implemented.

Women are more effective communicators because they consistently maintain their local communities and the world at large. It is imperative that women understand their rights as citizens and work to effect social change themselves before they go about demanding

changes from society at large. Women's legal rights must be clearly articulated in order to pursue claims of discrimination. The majority of women in the study's sample did not have a basic understanding of their legal rights legal protections and government programs that advocate on their behalf. It is because of this that the Empowerment of Women in a Study Region. The government ought to build a legal unit into the framework of the regional administration to provide pro bono legal services counseling for females on their legal rights. A wide range of electronic programming especially in remote areas, media, public gatherings, marches, and seminars could be powerful method of educating women and rallying their support for gender equality stimulating female agency. The economic and social infrastructure of Central Punjab Women's rights may be expanded as society progresses, and women may be given more freedom to pursue their own social networks in the community for talking about how they are feeling For the sake of argument, let's pretend that advancing women's equality is complex, rather than simple, especially in a place as common as Shekhupura zone where a sizable proportion of women continue to lack information about their own identities, their rights, and their ability to handle the stress.

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