SOCIO-CULTURAL MILIEU OF WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN DISTRICT FAISALABAD

Tariq Mahmood Khan[1] and Ashfaq Ahmad Maan[2]
[1]Department of Rural Sociology University of Agriculture, Faisalabad
[2]Department of Rural Sociology University of Agriculture, Faisalabad

Women empowerment is a matter of key concern in national and international policymaking and activities of social life. Nations cannot achieve their development goals if their women are discriminated. Significance of the issue provided impetus to conduct this study. For this purpose District Faisalabad; a centrally located typical district of Punjab (Pakistan) was selected and random sample of 340 married women of reproductive age (excluding widows and divorced) was taken. Main objective of study was to explore the underlying phenomena of women's empowerment in socio-cultural context of study area. It was concluded on the basis of different statistical tools with explanatory variables, family headship; paid job of women; observing veil; respondent's education; conjugal age; social networking; political participation; awareness about women rights; dowry and property given to respondent at the time of marriage; and husband cooperation have statistically significant effect on women's empowerment. Findings of the study suggested revolutionary changes in female education that endorse gender awareness and self esteem and legislation for developing enabling environment for women. Study urges GOs and NGOs for their active participation in mobilizing and organizing women groups in order to promote awareness, political interest, skill development and earning capabilities.

Keywords: Women's empowerment, socio-cultural milieu

INTRODUCTION

Women in most part of the world are not enjoying the fundamental human rights. They are less healthy, less nourished and more vulnerable than men. Patriarchal nature of society in Pakistan, provide women fewer chances to acquire property, low level of legal support for justice and few opportunities for political participation. They have to cross a number of socio-cultural barriers when they want to work for money. Women are considered as mean of producing children, caring family members and providing them emotional satisfaction. They have no time to think about themselves. Their identity is lost under the burden of responsibilities. In their routine life, most of the women do not have their own goals but they respond to the need and demands of others (Chodorow, 1978). A woman do not have power to make decision on how to behave or dress, whom to marry whether to have children and how many, contact with outside world, education, her health and so forth. All power are vested with the males of the family (Habib, 1996).Despite their long hours of work and sacrificing attitude towards their family and in-laws, their work is not recognized by their family as well as the society at large. Conversely in return most of the women receive unfair treatment of their near relatives and male family members. Their independent existence is denied and they are considered as subservient of man. Such stringent circumstances not only make women weak and dependant but also lower down their social status. How women can acquire their due status? How they can acquire freedom to speak for their rights? How they can protect them from unjust treatment? How their contribution to household activities can be recognized? How can they contribute to the well being of their family and the progress of country? Answer to all these question lies in the frame work of women's empowerment. In recent years question of women's empowerment is of key concern in national and international policy making and civil society activities. Different attempts have been made to define empowerment. Some of these attempts are given below.

Empowerment is the capacity to obtain information and make decisions about ones private concern and those of ones intimate (Dyson and Moore, 1983).It is the degree of access to control over material and social resources within family, commune and in society at large (Dixon Muller, 1978).First definition deals with the decision making while other definition cover the area of women access and control over resources. However Batliwala (1995) and Malhotra (2002) define empowerment as a process by which women gain greater control over material and intellectual resources which will assist them to increase their self reliance and enhance them to assert their independent rights and challenge the ideology of patriarchy and the gender based discrimination against women. This will also enable them to organize themselves to assert their autonomy to make decision and choices and ultimately eliminate their own subordination in all the institutions and structure of society.

There is no universal yard stick for measuring women empowerment because empowerment is a context specific construct that may vary from one socio-cultural scenario to other. Some authors used education and employment as proxy variables to measure empowerment. Women's empowerment is a multidimensional concept and one or two proxy variables may not cover all dimension of empowerment. Therefore it is necessary to identify the dimensions of empowerment and measure these dimensions.

Women's empowerment is necessary condition for socio-economic development of a country. Empowering women by increasing their status and autonomy within families is integral to many international health and development programs. One of the eight Millennium development goals calls for achieving gender equality and women's empowerment, Empowering women is also crucial to reach many of other goals including reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, achieving universal primary education, combating HIV/ AIDS and the prime goal of reducing by half the proportion of poor people by the year 2015 (Kabeer, 2003). Most of the prevailing social problems in Pakistan like poverty, malnutrition, illiteracy, environmental hazard, unhygienic living standard, high population growth rate, low economic productivity, less per capita income, lower household status, child mortality, lower health status of women, maternal mortality, gender inequality, and violence against women etc. are directly or indirectly associated with women that can be tackled effectively by social and economic empowerment of women. Therefore keeping in view the significance and relevance of the discourse, present study was designed. Main objective of this study was to reveal the different aspects of women's family affairs as well as socio-economic and cultural barriers that obstruct their empowerment.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted in District Faisalabad; almost centrally located typical district of the Punjab province of Pakistan. The City District Faisalabad with total population 5,429547 is divided into eight Town Municipal Administrations. The Towns are further divided into 289 Union Councils, with an average population slightly 25000 in each Union Council (Population Census Organization, 1998). All Married women between age 15-49 excluding widows and divorced in district Faisalabad constituted the population for the study. A sample of 340 women was selected using simple random sampling technique. Two Towns (Iqbal Town and Madina Town) were selected randomly out of 8 Towns of District Faisalabad initially. 4 Urban & 4 Rural Union Councils were selected from all the union councils of the selected Towns. Finally 340 households were selected from all the selected union councils and one respondent was selected from each household. Number of respondents from each union council was selected proportionate to population of the union council. For this purpose quantitative methods were used and cross-sectional study was designed. Data were collected by using comprehensive questionnaire consisting of both open and close ended questions relevant to research objectives. The enumerators were the female students of master level in Department of Rural Sociology of University of Agriculture Faisalabad. Description and measuring techniques of major variables on which questionnaire was based are given in following section.

Analysis

Response variable

The response variable empowerment of women was operationalized on the basis of four dimensions (constructs).

1. Women's control over household resources
2. Women's decision making within family.
3. Women's mobility
4. Women's participation in family discussions.

Measurement of response variable

Indices were developed for each of the above dimensions and Cumulative Empowerment Index (CEI) was constructed by adding indices of all four dimensions.

First dimension measuring 'control over economic resources' contained 7 items *i.e.* control over routine household purchase; purchases of expensive items; purchase of gifts; use of saving; purchasing of cloths and makeup articles; control over household valuable; and sale or exchange of property. It was measured on 4-point rating scale by using score -1 for 'control of other family member', 0 for 'complete control of husband', 1 for 'control of husband but wife is also involved', and 2 for 'total control of wife'.

Second dimension was about the women involvement in decision making also have 7 items *i.e.* decision about family health; making larger household purchases; visiting relatives; children education; family size; family planning services; and job of women. It was also measured on 4-point rating scale with score 1 used for 'the decision within family made by others', 0 represented 'decision made by husband without involving wife', 1 represented' decision made by husband by involving wife in decision', and 2 represented 'decision made by women independently'.

Third dimension mobility was sub divided into 3 categories. First category was about seeking permission to go to 6 different places *i.e.* local market; health centre; neighborhood; friend's or relative's home; other city: club, cinema etc. Two-point rating scale was used where 0 represented 'permission needed' and 1 represented 'permission is not needed.' Second category of mobility index was about, with whom respondent is allowed to go to aforementioned six places. For this purpose 4-point rating scale was used where -1 'represented not allowed to go', 0 represented 'allowed going with some adult', 1 represented 'permitted to go along with child', and 2 represented 'allowed to go alone'. Third category of mobility index was frequency of visits to the five different places 4-point rating scale was used where score 0 represented 'not at all,' 1 represented 'some time' and 2 represented 'often' go to the different places.

Last dimension of empowerment index was about the extent to which women are involved in family discussion. This dimension included five items *i.e.* discussion about politics; purchasing household items; household finance; family health; and children education. 4-point rating scale was used to measure this dimension where score -1 represented 'non involvement in discussions', 0 represented 'low involvement', 1 represented 'moderate involvement', and 2 represented 'high level involvement,' in family discussions.

Measurement of Explanatory variables

There were number of variables that explain the variation in the response variable women's empowerment. Operational definition and measuring techniques of these variables are given below.

Respondent's education was measured on ordinal scale by making three levels i.e. five or less classes, six to twelve classes and more than 12 classes. Variable 'observing veil' and 'respondent's participation in paid work' was considered as dummy variable by assigning score 1 for 'Yes' and 0 for 'No' answer. 'Family headship' variable was measured on 2-point scale using code 1 for 'husband', 2 for 'others (father in-law, mother in-law etc)'. 'Conjugal Age' was measured on ratio scale it was the difference between the respondent's present age and age at marriage. In other wards it was the total duration of marital life.

'Husband's cooperation' was another variable. Index variable was constructed on the basis of nine items related to husband attitude *i.e.* deals politely; helps in work; shares problems; respect your parents; appreciates your work; take care of you; give importance to your opinion; trust you and ignore your mistakes. 3-point rating scale was applied by using 2 for 'often' 1 for 'rarely' and 0 for 'not at all'. Political participation index variable contained five items i.e. casting your vote; casting vote on your own choice; knowledge of changing political situation; discussing problems of local people; and intentions to contest election. In this index score 1 represented 'Yes' and 0 represented 'No' answer. 'Social networking' means respondent's circle of female friends where they meet each other and share their problems. This variable included six items. First two items, group membership, and network of friends were considered as dichotomous where score 2 was used for 'Yes' and 0 for 'No' answer. Last four items *i.e.* sharing problems; feeling need for group; participation in social gathering; and involvement in social welfare activities were measured by using 4-point rating scale using 3 for 'Great extent', 2 for 'Average extent', 1 for 'some extent' and 0 for 'Not at all'. Index for 'household possession' was based on 16 household items and four facilities *i.e.* water, latrine, fuel for cooking, and conveyance. Scores were assigned to each item and facilities keeping in view its value in rupees and utility of facilities respectively. Index for 'Awareness about the right' was constructed on the bases of 5 questions i.e. Daughter's share in parents property; wives share in her husbands property; knowledge about women protection bill; knowledge about written contents of Nikah Naama; and intention to get share in parent's property. In first two questions score 1 was used for 'correct' answer and 0 for 'wrong' answer and for remaining 3 items. 1 was used for 'Yes' Answer and '0' for 'No' answer. Index for variable 'dowry and property received by respondent from her parents at the time of marriage' was constructed by considering 17 dowry and property items and assigning score to each item relative to their value in Rupees.

Techniques of analysis

Analysis started with Classification of data, percentages, measure of Central Tendency and Dispersion were used to study the different features of collected data (information).Somer's d, Chi square, and gamma statistics were used to find association between variables Student's t test, Analysis of variance technique, and Kruskal Wallis test were applied to test the significance difference in average empowerment scores among the categories of each explanatory variable. For the diagrammatic interpretation of the result bar charts were drawn, length of bars represented the level of empowerment of respondents, belong to particular category. Multiple linear regression model was applied to observe the contribution of each independent variable in explaining women's

empowerment for this purpose Cumulative Empowerment Index (CEI) was considered as response variable (dependent variable). Ten explanatory variables shown in table 3 were selected for the model. Mathematical formation of required multiple regression model was as follows

$$Y = \beta_0 + \left(\sum_{i=1}^{10} \beta_i X_i \right) + \epsilon$$

Y = Women's Cumulative Empowerment Index (CEI),
β_0 = Intercept
β_i = Regression coefficient associated with variable X_i.
Where
I = 1, 2, 3…10.
ϵ = Error term

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive analysis

As shown in the table 1, out of 340 respondents 173 (50.9%) were from urban area while 167 (49.1%) were the residents of rural area. 89.5% of the households were headed by males. This result is a representation of the strength of patriarchal society in Pakistan. Average age of respondent was 33.51 years. Average age difference of husband & wife was approximately 5 years. Nearly 25% of the respondents were at least 7 year younger than there husbands. 13.8% of the women were at least 10 year younger than their husbands. Women with greater age difference unfortunately has a potential for getting widow earlier in their life than the women having less age difference. Average age of respondent and her husband at marriage was 21.37 and 26.01 years, respectively that were close to the national figure 22.5 years for women and 26.4 years for male (Government of Pakistan 2005). In prevailing culture of Punjab marriage is universal and most of the decisions related to marriages are done by their close relation (Mahmood, 2005). In present study it was found that selection of husband for 82.9% of respondents were made by parents, without consulting them and selection of husband for 11.8% of respondents, was made by the parents with their consent. On the other hand only 5.3% of the respondents chose their husband independently. Study indicated that there were 3 children per women. On the average there are 3.8 children per women in Pakistan (Government of Pakistan, 2006-07). Average educational attainment was 7.44 years of schooling for respondents as compare to 9.3 years of schooling for their husbands. Average years of schooling for rural women were 5.47. Data on education indicated that women are lagged in education from their husbands and there is greater disparity in women's educational attainment level in

urban and rural setup. Study findings were supported by (population Census Organization, 1998). Average monthly income per household was 12016 Rupees. The income figure becomes consistent with the average national income of 9685 Rupees per month (Government of Pakistan, 2004-05) after making projection for year 2007-08. Women participation in paid work was found less acceptable in study area, because in present study only 8.24% of the respondents were involved in paid work. Above figurer is representation of women's level of dependency & lower economic status. Number of the women observed *purdha* (veil) by considering it as religious obligation and cultural practice. In this study 50.9% of respondents were *purdha* observer. Cumulative Empowerment Index (CEI.) was also partitioned into three categories for the purpose of cross tabulation. It was found that 43.9% of the respondent had lower level of empowerment. 39.3% of the respondent attained Medium level of empowerment and 17.8% of respondents were enjoying higher level of empowerment.

Bivariate analysis and Multivariate analysis
Family type and family headship

Type of family had greater influence on empowerment of women. Average empowerment score (average of CEI for each category of independent variables) for respondents belong to nuclear families was 33.48 and this average was just 23.58 for the respondents belong to joint family system. This is also indicated in table 1 and figure 1. The difference between means was found to be highly significant on the basis of t statistic. It was observed that in Pakistani social cultural context, it is difficult for women to excel in joint family system because they have less chance to enjoy freedom and have less chances of controlling the resources. Decisions about different matters are commonly made by family head, husband or mother in-law. In this way her lower order in the household hierarchy lower down her status and self esteem, while in nuclear family women has second position in the household hierarchy and gained comparatively more freedom and self esteem (Mahmood, 1992). Association between family type and women's empowerment were also found highly significant (table 2). Family head can play a vital role in empowering women. When a family head is husband, women is in better position to bargain with her husband on various issues but when family head is father in-law or others, then her position is more submissive and incapable (Roy and Niranjan, 2004). In present study, respondents having their husband as family head had Average empowerment score 32.48

Table1. Percentage distribution of socio-demographic characteristics of respondent, explanatory variables and Average empowerment score for each category of variable

Variable with category	Respondent (N = 340)		Average empowerment score
	Number	Percentage	
Family type			
Nuclear	152	44.7	33.48 ***
Joint	188	55.3	23.58
Family head			
Husband	207	60.88	32.26 ***
Other	133	39.12	21.39
Respondent's age			
Up to 25	57	16.8	17.35 ***
26 to 35	155	45.6	26.26
36 and above	128	37.6	36.9
Respondent's education (no. of grades/classes)			
Up to 5	140	41.2	26.71 ***
6 to 12	155	45.6	27.54
13 & above	45	13.2	33.66
Area			
Urban	173	50.9	30.07 ***
Rural	167	49.1	25.87
Household income (rupees)			
Up to 5,000	62	18.2	23.27 ***
5,001 to 15,000	186	54.7	28.32
15,001 to 30,000	79	23.0	30.41
30,001 & above	13	3.8	31.46
Household possessions			
Low	124	36.5	25.27 ***
Medium	179	52.6	28.48
High	37	10.9	34.92
Conjugal age			
Up to 5	97	27.1	19.38 ***
6 to 10	72	21.1	24.97
11 to 20	114	33.5	32.82
21 & above	62	18.2	35.48
Paid job involvement			
Yes	28	8.24	40.57 ***
No	312	91.76	26.88
Observing veil			
Yes	173	50.88	25.25 ***
No	167	49.12	30.86
Dowry and property given by parents			
Low	204	60.0	26.88 ***
Medium	102	30.0	28.04
High	34	10.0	34.70
Social networking & group participation			
Low	94	27.6	23.41 **
Medium	179	52.7	28.79
High	67	19.7	32.36
Political participation			
Low	247	72.6	25.86 ***
Medium	54	15.9	32.85
High	39	11.5	34.92
Awareness and practices of women rights			
Low	213	62.65	26.36 ***
Medium	109	32.06	29.58
High	18	5.29	38.00
Husband's cooperation			
Bad	26	7.6	24.00 **
Average	143	42.1	25.73
Good	171	50.3	30.53

** Significant at 5%: ***Significant at 1%
Average empowerment score was computed by taking average of Cumulative Empowerment Index (CEI) of the respondents within each category of variables

Table 2. Percentage of respondents (n=340) occurring in different levels of empowerment and results of association between socio-demographic, and explanatory variables with women's empowerment
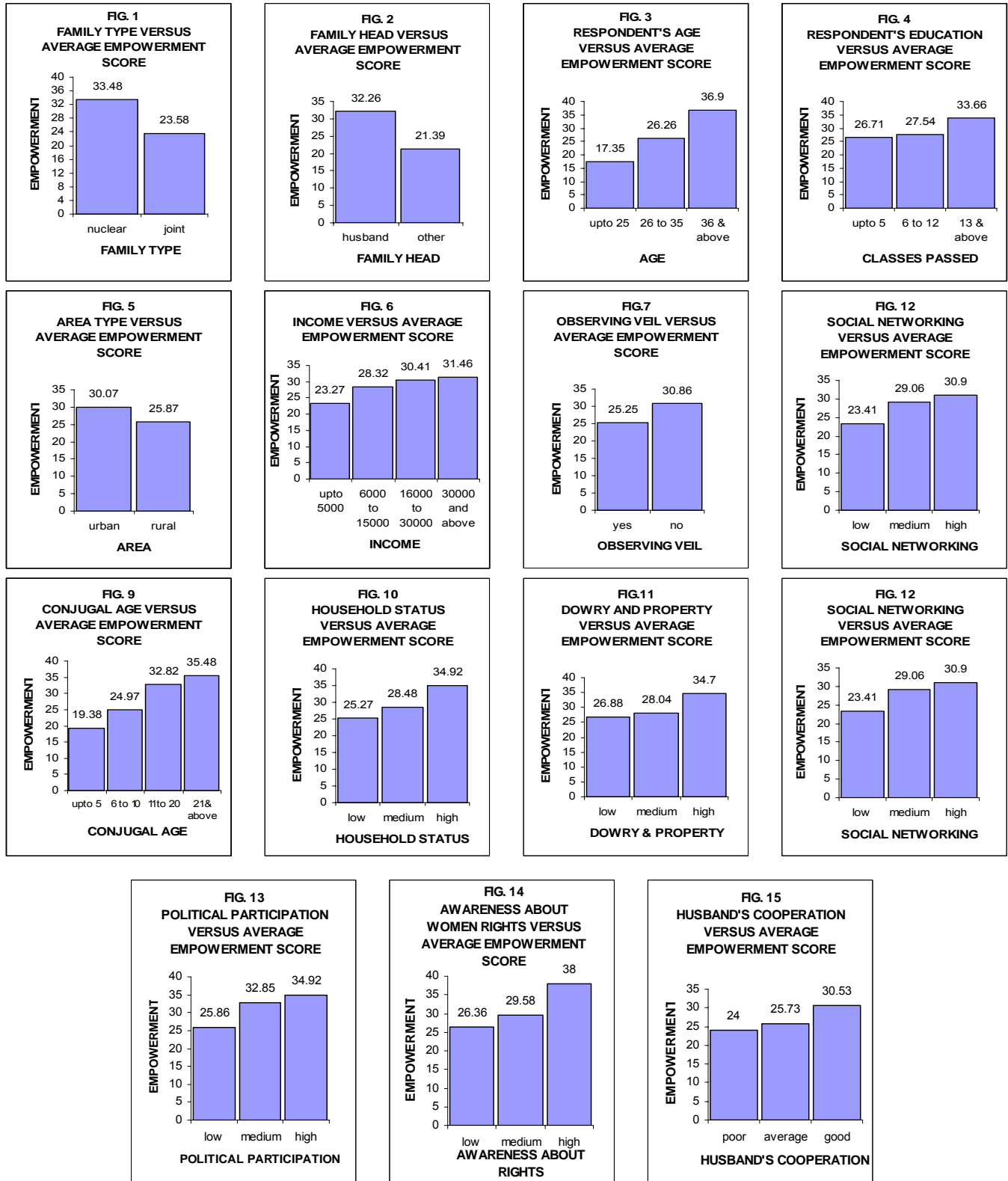
Variable with category	EMPOWERMENT			Total	Statistic
	Low	Moderate	High		
Family type					χ^2 = 49.46***
Nuclear	12.4	19.1	13.2	44.7	d = -0.386***
Joint	31.5	21.2	2.6	55.3	γ = -0.580***
Family head					χ^2 = 47.92***
Husband	18.8	27.1	15.0	60.9	d = 0.403***
Other	25.0	13.2	0.9	39.1	γ = 0.624***
Respondent's age					χ^2 = 89.29***
Up to 25	13.5	2.9	3.5	16.4	d = 0.462***
26 to 35	24.7	16.8	8.2	45.6	γ = 0.698***
36 and above	5.6	4.1	4.1	13.2	
Respondent's education (No. of grades/classes)					χ^2 = 18.94***
Up to 5	18.2	19.4	3.6	41.2	d = 0.110***
6 to 12	22.1	15.3	8.2	45.6	γ = 0.152 ***
13 & above	3.5	5.6	4.1	13.2	
Area					χ^2 = 10.81***
Urban	19.4	20.3	11.2	50.9	d = -0.134***
Rural	24.4	20.0	4.7	49.1	γ = -0.266***
Household income (rupees)					
Up to 5,000	11.2	6.2	0.9	18.2	χ^2 = 17.08***
5,001 to 15,000	23.5	22.4	8.8	54.7	d = 0.260***
15,001 to 30,000	8.2	9.4	5.6	23.2	γ = 0.292***
30,001 & above	0.9	2.4	0.6	3.8	
Household possessions			3.8	36.5	χ^2 = 22.57***
Low	20.3	12.4	8.2	52.6	d = 0.223***
Medium	21.5	22.9	3.8	10.9	γ = 0.352***
High	2.1	5.0			
Conjugal age					
Up to 5	20.0	5.9	1.2	27.1	χ^2 = 76.76***
6 to 10	12.4	6.5	2.4	21.1	d = 0.361***
11 to 20	7.9	18.5	7.1	33.5	γ = 0.555***
21 & above	3.5	9.4	5.3	18.2	
Paid job involvement					χ^2 = 36.67***
Yes	0.6	3.2	4.4	8.2	d =-0.576***
No	43.2	37.1	11.5	91.8	γ =-0.765***
Observing veil					χ^2 = 12.71***
Yes	26.5	19.1	5.3	50.9	d = 0.181***
No	17.4	21.2	10.6	49.1	γ = 0.321***
Dowry and property given by parents					
Low	27.9	24.7	7.4	60.0	χ^2 = 13.53***
Medium	13.5	11.5	5.0	30.0	d = 0.128**
High	2.4	4.1	3.5	10.0	γ = 0.202**
Social networking & group participation					
Low	15.9	9.1	2.6	27.6	χ^2 = 15.00 ***
Medium	22.4	21.8	8.5	52.6	d = 0.192***
High	5.6	9.4	4.7	19.7	γ = 0.308***
Political participation					χ^2 = 23.75***
Low	36.2	27.9	8.5	72.6	d = 0.177***
Medium	4.1	8.5	3.2	15.9	γ = 0.385***
High	3.5	3.8	4.1	11.5	
Awareness and practices of women rights					
Low	30.0	25.6	7.1	62.6	χ^2 = 13.96***
Medium	12.6	12.6	6.8	32.1	d = 0.135***
High	1.2	2.1	2.1	5.3	γ = 0.261***
Husband's cooperation					
Poor	4.4	2.4	0.9	7.6	χ^2 = 9.58**
Average	20.9	16.5	4.7	42.1	d = 0.155***
Good	18.2	21.5	10.3	50.3	γ = 0.255***

**Significant at 5%; ***significant at 1% level
Categories of empowerment were made on the basis of Cumulative Empowerment Index (CEI)

Figures presenting the comparison of average empowerment score of the various categories of explanatory variables

FIG. 1
FAMILY TYPE VERSUS AVERAGE EMPOWERMENT SCORE

Bar chart (FAMILY TYPE vs EMPOWERMENT): nuclear = 33.48, joint = 23.58

FIG. 2
FAMILY HEAD VERSUS AVERAGE EMPOWERMENT SCORE

Bar chart (FAMILY HEAD vs EMPOWERMENT): husband = 32.26, other = 21.39

FIG. 3
RESPONDENT'S AGE VERSUS AVERAGE EMPOWERMENT SCORE

Bar chart (AGE vs EMPOWERMENT): upto 25 = 17.35, 26 to 35 = 26.26, 36 & above = 36.9

FIG. 4
RESPONDENT'S EDUCATION VERSUS AVERAGE EMPOWERMENT SCORE

Bar chart (CLASSES PASSED vs EMPOWERMENT): upto 5 = 26.71, 6 to 12 = 27.54, 13 & above = 33.66

FIG. 5
AREA TYPE VERSUS AVERAGE EMPOWERMENT SCORE

Bar chart (AREA vs EMPOWERMENT): urban = 30.07, rural = 25.87

FIG. 6
INCOME VERSUS AVERAGE EMPOWERMENT SCORE

Bar chart (INCOME vs EMPOWERMENT): upto 5000 = 23.27, 6000 to 15000 = 28.32, 16000 to 30000 = 30.41, 30000 and above = 31.46

FIG.7
OBSERVING VEIL VERSUS AVERAGE EMPOWERMENT SCORE

Bar chart (OBSERVING VEIL vs EMPOWERMENT): yes = 25.25, no = 30.86

FIG. 12
SOCIAL NETWORKING VERSUS AVERAGE EMPOWERMENT SCORE

Bar chart (SOCIAL NETWORKING vs EMPOWERMENT): low = 23.41, medium = 29.06, high = 30.9

FIG. 9
CONJUGAL AGE VERSUS AVERAGE EMPOWERMENT SCORE

Bar chart (CONJUGAL AGE vs EMPOWERMENT): upto 5 = 19.38, 6 to 10 = 24.97, 11 to 20 = 32.82, 21 & above = 35.48

FIG. 10
HOUSEHOLD STATUS VERSUS AVERAGE EMPOWERMENT SCORE

Bar chart (HOUSEHOLD STATUS vs EMPOWERMENT): low = 25.27, medium = 28.48, high = 34.92

FIG.11
DOWRY AND PROPERTY VERSUS AVERAGE EMPOWERMENT SCORE

Bar chart (DOWRY & PROPERTY vs EMPOWERMENT): low = 26.88, medium = 28.04, high = 34.7

FIG. 12
SOCIAL NETWORKING VERSUS AVERAGE EMPOWERMENT SCORE

Bar chart (SOCIAL NETWORKING vs EMPOWERMENT): low = 23.41, medium = 29.06, high = 30.9

FIG. 13
POLITICAL PARTICIPATION VERSUS AVERAGE EMPOWERMENT SCORE

Bar chart (POLITICAL PARTICIPATION vs EMPOWERMENT): low = 25.86, medium = 32.85, high = 34.92

FIG. 14
AWARENESS ABOUT WOMEN RIGHTS VERSUS AVERAGE EMPOWERMENT SCORE

Bar chart (AWARENESS ABOUT RIGHTS vs EMPOWERMENT): low = 26.36, medium = 29.58, high = 38

FIG. 15
HUSBAND'S COOPERATION VERSUS AVERAGE EMPOWERMENT SCORE

Bar chart (HUSBAND'S COOPERATION vs EMPOWERMENT): poor = 24, average = 25.73, good = 30.53

and respondents belong to household where family head was not their husband; they had average empowerment score only 21.39. This difference was also proved highly significant on the basis of t-statistic (table 1, figure- 2). Chi square statistic also proved the highly significant association between family head and women empowerment. In Multivariate analysis highly significant value of Regression coefficient 3.719 (P<.001) indicated that when family headship shifted from 'other' family member to husband, cumulative empowerment index increased by 3.719 units. On the basis of these facts and figures it can be concluded that variables 'type of family' and 'family headship' are strong predictor of women empowerment.

Respondent's age

It was found in the study that empowerment level increases with the increase in age as shown in table 1 that average empowerment score up to age 25 was 17.35 and the score increased to 36.9 when age was above 35 years. Highly significant difference among Means was found on the basis of ANOVA. Diagrammatic representation of the result in figure 3 also clearly indicated the difference among the Means of three categories of age. Association between empowerment and age was also found highly significant on the basis of Chi square, Somer's d and Gamma statistics. all these statistics indicated that empowerment increases with the increase in age. On the other hand with regard to conjugal age, highly significant value of Regression coefficient 0.592 (P<.001) indicated that one year of increase in conjugal age caused 0.592 points increase in CEI. Reason is obvious that at the early years of their marriage women face some problem of adjustment with their husband or in- laws but with the passage of time most of them become able to cop with these problems. Heaton et al. (2005) and Ahmad and Sultan (2004) took age as independent variable and found significant relation between age and empowerment. It is therefore, concluded that age of respondent and her conjugal age are effective determinant of their empowerment.

Respondent's education

Education provides a person more knowledge and greater confidence. Soomro (2003) argued that education has been weakening the power of older persons over young persons and male over female. It was also observed in present study that women with lower education level had less Average empowerment score and women with better education showed relatively greater empowerment, table 1 indicated that up to class 5. The average empowerment score was 26.71 and this average increased to 33.66 when education level was high. Addition to that, averages empowerment score for different levels of education

can be compared in figure 4. Highly significant difference among these averages was also confirmed using Analysis of variance technique. Further more, association between educational attainment and women empowerment was found highly significant on the bases of Chi square, Somer's d and Gamma statistics. Education of the respondent had significant positive impact on women's empowerment. Regression coefficient (1.907) indicated that shift from lower educational category to upper category caused 1.907 units increase in Cumulative Empowerment Index (CEI). Heaton, et al (2005), Ahmad and Sultan (2004) and Jejeebhoy (2000) found in their independent studies that women's education is a strong predictor of women's empowerment. .Zhihong (2004) in Egypt reported that female education is an important mean to empower women not only in public sphere but also in private terrain. So it was concluded that higher the education greater will be the empowerment.

Residential area or locality

Like other variables 'area of residence' also influenced the women's empowerment. Kabeer (2001) argued that context or locality explained variation in women autonomy. It was concluded that, women agency was largely shaped by social context. In present study rural respondents showed relatively less average empowerment score than urban respondents table 1, table 2 and figure 5 provided sufficient evidences to conclude that women in urban area were likely to be more empowered than women in rural area. Better education, better opportunities of gaining knowledge, and other facilities in the cities act as intervening variable to make such difference.

Household income and household status

Household income represented the economic status of respondent's family and household. On the other hand, possession was used as proxy for household status. Better household status and relatively better income availability can be used as predictor of better education, self esteem, and media exposure that enhance their agency. In other words, household status also plays a vital role in empowering women. This study revealed that average empowerment score increased as the income increased. At lowest level of income, average empowerment score was 23.27 and at highest level of income this score was 31.46. Average empowerment score for lowest level of possession was 25.27 and for highest level of possession it was 34.92, which was a clear indication of upward trend of empowerment that increases with the increase in income as well as household possessions. Representation of the result is given in table 1, figure 6 and figure 10. Association among income and empowerment as well as possession and empowerment was conformed on the bases of Chi

square, Somer's d and Gamma statistics (table 2). On the basis of these evidences it was concluded that income and household status have positive impact on women empowerment. The Findings of Heaton et al. (2005) and Jejeebhoy (2000) also supported the result. However, on the basis of Multivariate analysis it was confirmed that household income and status do not influence the empowerment directly rather there are some intervening variables like education and awareness, etc. that may explain the relation between household status and empowerment

Observing veil

Wearing veil or *purdha* is religious obligation as well as cultural practice in prevailing society of Pakistan. It was explored in the study that women who observe *purdha* (veil) had relatively less Average empowerment score (25.25) than the women who had not observe *pardha* (30.86). It was proved by comparing means of both categories and applying statistical tests that veil keeping women were relatively less empowered. This result was also verified by applying test for association that presented highly significant results. True picture of findings is also depicted in table 1, table 2 and figure 7. Furthermore, Regression coefficient for this variable 4.784 highly significant (p<001) indicated that a shift from 'veil' to 'no veil' caused 4.784 points increase in women's empowerment score. Rationality of this relationship lies behind the fact that purdha is considered as a symbol of restriction on women's freedom of movement. Most of the purdha observer women are alienated from outer world and restricted in four walls of the house (Jones, et al., 2006) Their seclusion and confinement hinder their knowledge, confidence and dreams for desirable change and ultimately lead them towards disappointment and disempowerment (Desai, 1994). Conversely Ahmed (1992) defended veil in her study on university students in Egypt by considering it relatively safe way for middle and lower class women's mobility as it save them from undesirable stares of males and sexual harassment. In her views veil provided them opportunities to enter in universities for higher education. Therefore, it is concluded that *purdha* is not a hurdle for empowerment but it is the psyche behind the veil (*i.e.* considering veil as source of restriction of mobility, education and job) that prevent women to be empowered. It is concluded that for empowerment there is a need to change the mind set rather than getting rid of *purdha.*

Paid work involvement

In contemporary social cultural scenario of Pakistan, women's participation in paid work is limited. However, it was explored in present study that women who were involved in paid job had average empowerment score 40.57 while, the women who were not involved in paid job had their average empowerment score only 26.88. These results were further verified on the basis of t-statistic average empowerment score of working women and housewives. Results are shown in table 1 and in figure 8. Association between women's empowerment and their paid job participation was also computed on the basis of Chi square statistic, which was found highly significant (table 2). For this variable regression coefficient was 7.517 and found highly significant (P<.001). This inference indicated that shift in independent variable from 0 to 1 (as '0' for housewives and '1' is used for working women) caused 7.517 units increase in Cumulative Empowerment Index. In other words the income generating activities of women add 7.517 points to their empowerment score. Jones et al. (2006) argued that Business women's efforts were helpful in creating more equitable social structure for them and their families. Kabeer (1997) in her study on female factory workers in Bangladesh reported that women have greater status in household as result of factory work. Both studies supported the present study. In this connection, Blumberg (2005) also persuaded that when women earn money they gain greater control over resources and gain more freedom to use the earning. Their less economic dependency increases their self confidence that ultimately enhance their decision making ability. All these lead them towards more autonomy and empowerment. So it can be concluded that women's involvement in paid job is an important source of enhancing their empowerment

Dowry and property paid to the respondent by her parents at the time of her marriage

Along with socio-cultural and demographic variables some other independent variables were also included in the study. These variables are measured by developing indices and these indices were split into at least two categories in order to compare the means of empowerment score in each category of variables and developing bivariate tests for Association. Brief description of these variables is given below.

In existing culture of subcontinent heavy amount of dowry is perceived as symbol of good status of women in her husband's family. Women with relatively big amount of dowry and property were considered more secure and respectful in their in-Laws or in their husband's house (Rao and Bloch, 1993). It was also explored in present study that women who were paid less amount of dowry or property by their parents were relatively less empowered than women who were paid greater amount of dowry or property. It is represented in table 1 and figure 11 that average empowerment score for lower level of dowry was 26.88 and this average increased to 34.70 for higher level of dowry. In order to make this result more authenticated, ANOVA technique was applied to compare mean that indicated

highly significant difference among the mean of all three categories of variable. Validity of the inference was also confirmed by calculating Chi square Somer's d and Gamma statistic that indicated significant association between women empowerment and amount of dowry & property paid by parents to respondent at the time of marriage (table 2). In Multivariate analysis, Regression coefficient 4.784, highly significant with (P<.006) indicated that one unite increase in index variable dowry & property caused 0.145 units increase in women empowerment. Bates et al. (2004) in Bangladesh also revealed that women are highly vulnerable to maltreatment if economic resources they bring to their marriage- usually in form of dowry- are perceived meager. To researchers dowry can raise the bride's status and improve the security in her husband's home. Women with heavy dowry and property receive more respect from their in-laws and this respect provides them greater worth and self-esteem that lead them towards empowerment.

Social networking and group participation

Here social networking means women's participation in social activities, their circle of friends and tendency of sharing their problems with each others. It was found in the present study that women with low level of social networking showed low average empowerment score i.e. 23.41 and as contrast, women with high level of social network gained higher level of empowerment score *i.e.* 30.90. There was significant difference in average empowerment score among the categories of the variable. Furthermore, highly significant association was found between empowerment and social network, details can be seen in table 1, table 2 and in figure 12. Therefore, women's greater involvement in social activities help them to exchange views, share problems and attain supportive atmosphere that enhance their empowerment (Mosedate 2003) Highly significant value of regression coefficient 0.565 (p<.001) presented that one unit increase in index variable social networking caused .565 units increase in women empowerment. Cochran (1986) suggested that informal resource exchanging among individuals and families was a better strategy within the empowerment process that can be achieved by developing support groups and social network. Rogers (1995) referred sociological theories of diffusion that new ideas and practices often spread gradually without collective consciousness. This idea can be associated with the findings of present study that for rapid change in life of women, social networking and group participation is needed. In order to empower women, there is need of enhancement in women's ability to function collectively in their own interest (Agarwal, 1997). Findings of present study and corresponding supportive material indicated that social networking is a strong predictor of women's empowerment.

Political participation of respondent

It was found that majority of the respondents (72.6%) in study area had lower level of political participation and only 11.5 of the respondent had high level of participation. It was observed that women with lower level of political participation showed lower Average empowerment score (25.86). Conversely, the women with high level of political participation showed greater average empowerment score (34.92). Difference between the Means was tested by applying Kruskal Wallis Test which proved highly significant. Association was also observed on the bases of chi square, Somer's d and Gamma statistics that was also found highly significant. Results are also depicted in table 1, table 2 and figure 13. Highly significant value of regression coefficient 1.268 with (P<.001) indicated that one unit change in index variable political participation caused 1.268 Units change in empowerment. Political involvement enables women to directly participate in decision making at various levels from union council to parliament (Siddique, 1998). Thus political involvement leads women towards decision making that develops their empowerment. Findings of present study were also supported by Stromqist (1995) who argued that political involvement make women active and give them confidence for speaking for their rights. Such a vocal attitude provides them more power, strength and autonomy.

Awareness about the rights and their practices

It was revealed that of 62.65% of women had lower level of awareness. This lower level of awareness restricted their average empowerment score to 26.36 while only 5.29% of the respondents were found in high level of awareness category and this group of women had relatively higher level of empowerment score *i.e.* 38.00. Mean scores of all the categories of the variable were compared by applying analysis of variance technique and result was found highly significant. Table 1 and figure 14 can be viewed for better insight. Association of this predictor variable with women empowerment (response variable) was also found to be highly significant the results of tests are shown in table 2. Regression coefficient 1.539 significant at (P<.001) represented that one unit change in awareness score subjected to 1.539 units change in Cumulative Empowerment Index (CEI). Present findings were consistent with findings of Musokotwana and Siwata (2001) who argued that empowerment of women can be ensured, be increasing awareness of the women about their rights. Further more awareness rising can be helpful in controlling environment. Thus the knowledge of women about their rights is an important predictor of women empowerment. On the other hand, In Islam women has right to get share in her fathers property but the cultural

practices, revealed in present study, indicated that only 6.21% of women received property from their parents and only 17.6 percent of respondent were intended to get share from their fathers property. In this regard Rowland-Serdar and Schwartz-Shea (1991) argued that empowerment of women depend upon the extent to which cultural messages were internalized by them. In other words greater the belief on cultural messages, lesser would be level of empowerment. Therefore, in order to break the cultural barrier and lessen the intensity of cultural message, education knowledge and awareness about the rights is prerequisite.

Husband's cooperation

Husband can play a vital role in empowering his wife by developing confidence and by providing moral support in different matters of routine life. Present study also revealed that women with lower level of support of their husbands were found to be less empowered than women who had relatively higher level of support from their husbands. Result in table 1 show that average empowerment score for women who had to face awful attitude of their husband was 24.00 and women who relatively got good supportive attitude from there husband have greater average empowerment score i.e.30.53. More over the average empowerment scores among categories of variable were found highly significant on the bases of analysis of variance technique. Association between husband attitude and women empowerment was found significant on the basis of Chi square, Somer's d and Gamma statistics. Table 1 and table2 and figure 15 represent the true picture of the result. Regression coefficient =0.268 significant at (p<.015) indicated that one unit increase in husband's cooperation caused 0.268 points increase in women's Cumulative Empowerment Index. Husband's cooperation provides a woman good status, self confidence to women that lead them towards empowerment. On the other hand, Praveen (2005) reported that spousal alienation (poor cooperation of husband) lead to disharmony in conjugal life that reduces women's empowerment to great extent.

Summery of the above discussion is that back ground variable Family type, Household headship , Age, Conjugal age, Education, Involvement in paid job and Observing veil were found to be associated with empowerment. Addition to that, explanatory index variables Husband attitude, Social networking and awareness about rights, Political participation, and Dowry and property given by parents were also found significantly associated with women empowerment. Furthermore all the variables included in regression model explain 58% of the variation in dependent variable women's empowerment (table 3&4).

Table 3. Influence of independent variables on women's empowerment

Independent variables	Dependent variable Cumulative Empowerment Index (CEI)				
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	15.932	4.477		3.559	.000
Family headship	-3.791	0.666	-.218	-5.695	.000
Paid work involvement	-7.517	1.632	-.172	-4.605	.000
Veiling	4.784	0.844	.199	5.668	.000
Dowry and property	145	0.052	.113	2.792	.006
Social networking	565	0.139	.149	4.079	.000
Political participation	1.268	0.333	.149	3.807	.000
Conjugal age	592	0.059	.421	10.030	.000
Awareness about rights	1.539	0.364	.160	4.231	.000
Educational attainment level	1.907	0.777	.108	2.454	.015
Husband's cooperation	268	0.115	.085	2.328	.021

N=340; Adjusted R^2 = 0.588;

Table 4. Result of analysis of variance regarding goodness of fit of Multiple Linear Regression

Source of variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	29467.910	10	2946.791	49.310	.000
Residual	19661.063	329	59.760		
Total	49128.974	339			

RECOMMENDATIONS

Bivariate and regression analysis insured that education play a vital role in empowering women. Therefore there is a need to make some radical changes in existing education system that promote gender awareness. Adult education should be launched to educate married couple. Lack of property ownership is another cause of women's powerlessness. Therefore there is a need of legislation that must be supportive for women in acquiring and retaining the property. As the findings of the study showed that only 8.2% of the respondent involved in paid job therefore there is a need to enhance the labor force participation of women. Some incentives should be given to the women by government for enhancing their job participation. Most of the women said that their husband does not allow them to do paid work due to lack of security of women. Therefore there is a need to establish enabling environment for women and effort should be made to design such jobs or businesses that can be started within home there is need of motivators and facilitators for mobilizing and providing such services to women. In order to enhance political participation, awareness about rights, media should play active role especially TV. For developing political participation their social network can be made effective by organizing their groups. NGOs and local government can play a pivotal role in this regard.

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