

Dimensions of Women Empowerment: A case study of Pakistan

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Abstract

Introduction

Over the last three decades, gender equality and empowerment debates are being focused. It has been realized that policies and projects without concerning the female position in the society have adverse impact on development. United Nations International Conference on Women in 1995, held in Beijing, stressed on the need to reduce gender inequality and to increase women empowerment. The third target of Millennium Development Goal is regarding gender equality and women empowerment. Numerous countries, regions and International Development Organizations made commitments to reduce gender equality as a key for sustainable economic development.

The term women empowerment has different connotation which depends on social, economical, and political context in which it is used. World Bank (2001) defines "the expansion of the freedom of choices and action, which could increase women authority and control over resources and decision regarding their life." Similarly, Women empowerment is a process through which women achieve the ability to control, take ownership over resources and make strategies of life choices (Kabeer 2001). However, the process itself depends on women, through education, capacity building, skills and trainings and changes in legal and structural framework. Women empowerment covers many dimensions including social, economic, cultural, political, legal and psychological (Malhotra et al. 2002). This explains a broad variation in the concept of women empowerment. Although, these definitions are clear but there are some constraints to measure women empowerment due to lack of standardized ways. Moreover, many researchers tried to construct set of specific questions based on Population Based Primary Survey for measuring empowerment at individual level, (Kishor and Subaiya 2008).

Women empowerment is preferred not only for the development of a country but also required to minimize poverty and promotes economic growth. (Chaudry et al. 2012). According to United Nations Women Policy Division (2013), women empowerment need to be focused and all the development projects and policies need to be gender sensitized. In most of the developing countries, due to early marriages, high female unemployment rate along with limited investment in them compels females to depend on men. Early marriage is one of the crucial reasons of lower participation of females in the labor market compared as to developed nations [(World Bank 2007) , (Doepke et al. 2012)].

Plethora of literature demonstrates that women empowerment are directly associated with contraceptive use, lower fertility, and longer birth intervals [(Gwako 1997), (Schuler et al. 1997), (Balk 1994), (Woldemicael 2009), (Upadhyay and Hindin 2005)]. Furthermore, education is one of the determinants of empowerment of women which also lowers the fertility rate and improves the earnings. (Jejeebhoy 1995), (Mason 1987)]. For political empowerment, education plays a crucial role as well educated women are better informed about their legal rights and they can actively participate in political decision making process [(Moghadam 2003), (Rihani et al. 2006)].

In a patriarchal society like Pakistan, women empowerment is also very difficult to achieve as societies and communities are governed by strictly social and cultural norms. In a traditional society like Pakistan, the entire major as well as the minor decisions related to inside and outside the house are taken by the men. The worse situation has been reported for Pakistan in terms of gender equality and women empowerment. According to MDG Report (2013), Pakistan is still far away from the targets of 2015 MDGs in terms of access to education, gender equality and women empowerment which are reflected by child mortality, maternal health and nutrition (Government of Pakistan 2013). Pakistan ranks 121st as overall in the Gender Gap Index (GGI) 2014

out of 142 counties, and 146th out of 187 countries in Human Development Index (HDI) 2014, Furthermore, it stands 141st for economic participation and opportunity for women, in education attainment it ranks 132nd, in terms of health and survival 119th and 85th in terms of political empowerment in 2014.

Pakistan, Inequality Human Development Index (IHDI) value for 2013 is 0.375, Human Inequality coefficient was 28.7%, Inequality in Life Expectancy at Birth is 29.9%, Inequality in Education was 45.2% and Inequality in income is 11%. Pakistan GII value is 0.562 and rank is 126th out of 149 countries in the 2013 index. The Maternal Mortality Ratio is 260 per women 100,000 lives birth, Adolescent birth rate is 27.3, and female seats in parliament are 19.7%.

Population with at least Secondary education for male is 46.3% and for female is 19.3%.

The impediments of low level of women empowerment in Pakistan is due to regional disparities, social values, cultural norms and traditions, ethnic and political issues (Sustainable Development Policy Institute, 2008). Furthermore, the women's status and position is also different in terms of rural and urban. Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2012), reports female literacy rate is lower and unequal as compared to men in rural and urban areas. However, women in rural areas spend more hours at work as compared to females in urban areas. Mostly in developing countries like Pakistan, women are restricted to domestic activities like doing household chores and raising children (Mollel and Metenga, 2000) and women have less access to enjoy the opportunities, decision making, and basic resources. There is strong need of women empowerment especially on economics ground. The reason is that women are the majority of the population and represent majority of the poor. Moreover, the economic empowerment has significant impact on the livelihood of women, children at the household, but also at the community and national level (Singh (2006), Ogato (2013)).

According to Awan (2012) cultural issues have more or less same impact on women regarding upper or lower classes. She further explained that the upper class women are more educated with strong financial support and available resources. However, in some tribal areas women are the victims of injustice. The status and position of women in marginalized segment or unprivileged segment of population are vulnerable. Because they don't have any chance or resources against unfair treatment, especially domestic violence. Even these women are not aware regarding their basic rights. Pakistani women are bounded in a trap of dependency and subordination due to low economic, political and social position in the society. Moreover, majority of them suffers from all kinds of poverty (Social Policy Development Centre, 2009). In rural areas, women are expected to perform household chores as well as agriculture and farming activities, however their contribution is hardly appreciated and mostly taken as for granted because they are the unpaid family workers.

Later, when women become old then they are able to control over some domestic decision making, the situation is much better in urban areas due to exposure of education, electronic media. However, it cannot be stated that women are empowered in urban areas as the magnitude of women discrimination is different in urban and rural areas.

Although political empowerment condition is better in Pakistan as compared to China, India, and Iran, and its represent 22.2% seats in national assembly and in the Senate, women have 17 per cent of the parliamentary seat, however it cannot be explained overall women empowerment on household and community level. These women are needed to be more active for taking part in laws in order to raise women status in the society in reality they are not as much as active as they should be.

This paper comprises of IV sections. Section I is introduction followed by review of literature II. Section III highlights the data sources and methodology. Section IV identifies the different dimensions of women empowerment and the last section is the conclusion and policy options.

Review of literature

Nazneen et al (2011) investigate the women empowerment situation after post-independence era of Bangladesh. Several economic and social indicators show that the women empowerment has improved at significant level in the last 20 years. Although Bangladesh is a poor Muslim majority country however it had made extensive progress in increasing access to education and health for women and their participation in labor force. Women have a majority position in national politics and development. The authors have highlighted this concept of empowerment and identifies its use by different organizations donor agencies, development NGOs and political parties. This paper also explores the discussions and negotiations regarding this term which are used for women empowerment and how these observations and narratives about women's empowerment has changed in Bangladesh from 2000 to date.

Many studies have been conducting on Asian countries in the contexts of women power and contraceptive use, lower fertility rate, and longer birth interval. Upadhyay (2010) tries to fill this gap and attempt to study African countries, where fertility rate of women is still very high. This study tries to explore that how women empowerment and ability to work affect the number of children they want. This study employs combine data from recent Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) in sub-Saharan Africa. Guinea 2005, Mali 2006, Namibia 2006-2007, and Zambia 2007 were selected. Women participation in household decision making and

two indices of gender role has been used as measurement of women empowerment in sub Sahara Africa. The results show that two countries have egalitarian gender role attitudes which were associated with small number of children however household decision making was not consistently associated with smaller number of children. Moreover, in Namibia, number of women empowerment were less as compared to those women who have more children than they desired. The result reflects that women has dissatisfaction regarding empowerment whose fertility rate are high and social norms but personally they value small family.

Recently, a research has been conducted by Murtaza (2012) in GilgitBaltistan on women empowerment through Higher Education Programme, a scheme of AghaKhan Development Network (AKDN). Higher education will improve the self confidence and economic conditions of women and will significantly reduce their dependence on men on day to day works. While building their skills and abilities women can play an effective role in their society. Agha Khan Development Network helps not only women but also young girls to get higher education. Furthermore, this study highlights the current challenges while providing the education facilities for women in this region.

Aly(2009) examines the link between education of women with their economic empowerment by using Panel Survey of the Egypt Labor Market of 2006. The study estimates the role of education in improving their capability and capacity along with their earning capability. The study focuses young women with different categories of education. Results support that there is significant impact of education on women's labor market in Egypt. Even due to higher female education women are participating as work force with higher competitiveness in labor market. Further results reveal the gender gap reduction in the labor market. On the other hand, it was also discovered that increase female education level was not sufficient to improve economic empowerment among young women.

Chaudhary(2012) examines how awareness and sensitization about women rights can help to achieve overall development in the society and improve women status along with economic empowerment. The paper employs data from 1996 to 2009 for Pakistan. The findings show that consciousness or awareness of women about their rights, knowledge of the benefits of economic empowerment and overall development of women have positive and significant results on women's empowerment which was measured by Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) index. Furthermore Granger Causality Test proves that there is bi-directional causality between overall developments of women and women empowerment. However, there is unidirectional causality between women empowerment and sensitization of women.

Desai(2010) concentrates on the theoretical and practical issues of women's empowerment. Education, health, political and economic participation are the key areas which are being focused in empowering women for the last 20 years. Some short analysis of human development was discussed of the increasing theoretical agreement about empowerment for controlling over resources, a procedure and results. The practical issues is its measurement, how to measure women empowerment, particularly now gender empowerment index is being focused and it is being argued that reasonably this measurement is needs to change in term of its criteria regarding its urban, selected, and formal employment bias. The finding of the analysis shows that over last 20 years the condition of women in term of education enrollment in primary and secondary education, political participation in national level, in declining gender wage gap, declining in fertility rate, violence against women continue to be common and fluctuate across regions and countries. These areas are influenced according countries condition in term of urban and rural people, norms and traditions, young and older women. Moreover, a decline in gender gap did not interpret into gender equality and positive tendency were come with a negative trends resulting from unintentional cost of development. Finally, it highlighted various government policies for helping women, for intense, quotas in budgets, cash transfer plan, gender related budgeting, and microenterprises on community basis, society based plan to fight against violence and HIV/AIDS and international exchanges and joint movement for decent work for Women and corporate practices.

Eeshani Kandpal(2012) study shows the impact of community level female participation program in India. These programmes improved the women participation in physical mobility, political ground, and employment opportunities. These programs support groups of women on literacy camps and high education classes, even in professional training. They used truncation-corrected matching and instrumental variables on survey data to separate the mechanism of all programmes. It separately considered its result on two types of women, One who works, and who does not work. They also found imperative excess effects on non-participants as compared to those women who belong to in untouched districts.

In most of the developing countries, women are disempowered as compared to developed countries. The high rate of youth unemployment and early marriages are limiting investment on human capital and increasing their dependence on men.

Oriana Bandiera et al (2014) attempts to evaluate young women's empowerment in Uganda which is the world's second youngest country in the world. In this two-sided involvement, teenage girls were simultaneously offered professional training and knowledge on marriage and after marriage life issues. After two years of contribution increase in the probability that 72% income generating activities were increased by young

girls mostly due to participation in self-employment, their monthly expenditures raised by 41%. Teenage pregnancy rate was dropped by 26%, and marriage on early ages also declined by 58%. The results indicate that women social and economic empowerment can make better through the combined effect of professional and life skills knowledge.

Yahya Rashid (2013) women participation is important in corporate sector of Pakistan for the economic development because women population is more than men in Pakistan. But it was noticed that women empowerment was uncommon in corporate sector in Pakistan as compared to the other part of the world where women are participating along with men equally. Although there are many causes behind this however, women empowerment in corporate sector can be improved by adopting some imperative steps. He further explains that mostly women in rural areas are engaged in agricultural sector actively, (Sustainable Development Department (FAO), 2006) However, female participation is low in the urban areas. There are many barriers for women in corporate sector because the generally business environment depends on many factors which are economic, social, educational, cultural and psychological factors. He identifies causes for which women have some fear to be part of corporate sector, for instance low literacy rate in women, mostly women have lack of confidence in order to achieve senior managerial positions, different cultural obstacles, not much support from side of the family, females are mostly scared to taking the risks and disappointment, due to unavailability of formal credit system etc.

Maharaja (2013) mainly deals with women empowerment in India by analyzing three different perspectives. He analyzes the agency approach in order to measure women empowerment. First he explores the modern approach to empowerment. Then in second part of the study is consist on general idea which India is adopting for empowering women. In the part he studies the level of attainment of empowerment by implementing several of recent indicators. This paper is based on secondary sources of data which is related to India, and published by National Family Health Survey, National Sample Survey Organization. Now a day the link between women empowerment and sustainable economic development are major issues regardless of any country or society and policy maker tries to make policies while focusing female participation in economic activities. Although it is not sufficient but necessary condition for sustainable development process.

Omprakash Sridevi (2005) tries to attain a systematic measure of empowerment by characterizing the women empowerment. The current study uses qualitative and quantitative analysis, which makes sure the magnitude and the direction of every factor which influences the women empowerment. For qualitative analysis he applied a Logit model and for quantitative purpose he used Weighted Average Method To measure the degree of empowerment. According to him, for measuring women empowerment independence and the economics equality are the main indicators by which women status can evaluate easily, further he explained the role of society. That society should understand the ability and the skill of women and their contribution on sustainable development process.

Kabeer (1999) tries to construct the indicators by using three dimensional conceptual frameworks for measuring women empowerment. First he explains those resources, which are the elements of the requirement of empowerment, second he figure out the concept of 'agency' for explaining the aspect of process of women empowerment and in the last he mentioned those indicators which could explained the 'achievement' in order to measure the results measure of outcomes. The study illustrates the most feasible indicators of empowerment of women which are: family composition, marital benefit, financial independence, self-determination, and experience of participation in jobs and other economic activities in the sectors.

Malhotra et al (2002) provides the methodological approaches in determining and investigating women's empowerment. He mentions several indicators by which empowerment of women can measure. In his study he uses decision-making by female members. the decision of resource and finance distribution, matters related to social and domestic issues, children issues, access over resources, lack of restrictions for physical movement and so on,

Data, Variable and Methodology

The data used in this study for the period of 1975–2013. This data has been collected from the various issues of Social Policy and Development Centre and World Development Report, Labor Force Survey (various issues), Economic Survey of Pakistan (various issues) and Global Economy (online source). In this Paper we adapted the qualitative and quantitative approach in order to highlight the catalysts for empowerment. There are three dimensions of Women empowerment –viz social empowerment, economic empowerment and political empowerment.

Different Dimensions of Empowerment

I. Social Dimension

Table 1 Social Factor Effecting Women Empowerment

Year	Literacy rate of female	Mean year of schooling	Gross enrollment rate	Fertility rate
1975	12.6	0.59	27.8	6.61
1980	15.1	0.5	31	6.5
1985	18.3	0.8	35.8	6.4
1990	22.4	0.95	38.5	6
1995	27.5	1.13	41.3	5.3
2000	38.6	1.31	56.7	4.4
2005	40	1.98	72.4	3.7
2010	45.2	1.99	87.01	3.4
2012	46.3	N/A	86.3	3.35
2013	48	N/A	N/A	3.26

Social empowerment covers the various aspects of the social wellbeing of women like female literacy, health, equal opportunities and equal access to justice. There is a positive correlation between primary school education and women's wellbeing as female education minimizes gender differences and improves household earnings (HDR-2003 and Kabeer 2003). The importance of primary education is highlighted by its inclusion in the Millennium Development Goals as the second objective. In Pakistan, female primary literacy rate has increased from 12.5 in 1975 to 39.2% in 2004. And in 2012-13 it is 48%. Even the women's gross enrollment rate at the primary level has drastically improved to 70.%. This improvement reflected in their increased contribution in the labor market. Women's poor health status on the other can be seen from the maternal mortality rate, infant mortality rate, weight babies and multiple pregnancies. MMR was 230 in 2005, 190 in 2010 and 170 in 2013 per 100,000 live births and infant mortality rate was 80 in 2005, 73 in 2010 and 60 in 2013 per 1000 live birth (World Development indicators), whereas the fertility rate is seven per women during the last thirty years however it is declining. Hence the social factors are not playing their desired role in the women's health status as important as it leads to higher productivity, greater income potential and improves the social status of the household. As all these indicators improve over time economic and social development takes place.

II. Economic Dimension

Another dimension of women empowerment is economic empowerment that includes less poverty, access to credit, remunerated work and sustainable development. In Pakistan the current statistics reveal that women are among the less privileged segment of the society. This is being reflected in various pointers – for example in female labor force participation. Its rate was in 2003-2004 (LFS 2003-2004) Female labor force participation is extremely low because of early marriages, strong social and cultural influence on outside movement, low human capital, less opportunities, over burden of household work. Even after the inclusion of the new methodology adopted in the Labor Force Survey 1990-91 the labor force participation now includes fourteen specific agricultural and non agricultural activities which are classified as economically active work. Women participation in the formal sector is under 10%. However their employment rate in the informal sector is much greater which is almost around. In Pakistan, 60% of home-based workers belong to households that are below the poverty line (NCSW 2004). These home-based workers mainly include women and children in both urban and rural areas.

Table 2 Economic Factors Effecting Women Empowerment

Year	Labor force participation rate			Unemployment rate		
	Urban female	Rural female	Total	Urban female	Rural female	Total
1975	3.5	7.6	6.4	1.8	0.6	0.7
1979	5.3	14.3	11.8	14.6	6.4	7.6
1985	4.1	10.7	8.7	4.1	0.8	1.4
1991	8.6	14.8	12.8	27.7	13.7	16.8
1995	7	13.3	11.4	22.6	11.7	13.7
2000	8.8	16.1	13.7	29.6	14	17.3
2002	10	16.8	14.4	24.2	14.1	16.5
2004	9.4	19.51	15.9	15.9	10.9	12.1
2006	13.68	19.8	21	16.2	10.18	9.8
2010	10.65	27.5	24	20.65	6.44	8.8
2013	10.8	27.2	25	19.23	6.85	9.3

In Pakistan the female participation in the urban sector on an average remained around 4.0% during

1970S and 1980s a(Table-2) although it did improve in later years, reaching around 10.8% in 2013. In the unemployment attain the urban areas is approximately 19%. In the rural sector female participation is greater than that of male which is 67% as compare to 43% for men (UNDP report). Women, s involvement in the rural sector had, however, been invisible for many members without any remuneration. Rural female participation rate has averaged around 14.5% to 27.2% during 1974 to 2012-13. The total female unemployment rate is currently 6.8% indicating that more women want to enter the labor market while the available job opportunities are not adequate.

III. Political Dimension

Women's empowerment has been a major theme in Pakistan's national development policies ever since the inception of the country. The Constitution of Pakistan guarantees non-discrimination against women and advocates full participation of women in all spheres of national life. (Article 25 ,26 and 27 and 32 of Pakistan)¹ Political freedom is necessary for human development and is an integral part of empowerment. The purpose of women empowerment is to enlarge the scope of women's role in decision-making. The most fundamental basic right is the freedom to make decision rather than hand it over to someone else.

Political rights are as important as economic and social rights. The gender gap in women's political participation is the most visible phenomenon in Pakistan. In most developing countries small proportion of women are found in the legislative assemblies or other political institutions.

Men monopolize the political world. It is considered that politics demands masculine qualities like assertiveness, activeness, not feminine characteristics of passiveness and docility; hence women are kept out of the political field. The house of politics is built with the bricks of patriarchal norms; therefore, women are not allowed to enter in it. Like state and community levels, they are somehow, considered ineligible for the leadership of household as well.(*Farooq Muhammad,2002;*)

Political dimension of empowerment model is a vital facet of gender empowerment. The outcome of active and assertive participation by any group or class in politics would determine their role and influence in decision-making process that lead to political empowerment.

To assess the Pakistani women's level of political participation, two variables are used in this study: right to vote and representation in national, provincial legislatures as well as local levels.

Right to vote, as feminist suffragists perceive is the first step towards the greater political participation. All three constitutions of Pakistan (1956, 1962 and 1973) endowed women right to vote. It was expected that it would provide an opportunity to women to articulate their issues through this process. Though, it was not expected to eliminate the forces of oppression, it provided a channel through which the government could integrate women into existing political structures. Yet, women faced problems in exercising the right to vote. Region-specific and socio-cultural barriers determined women's participation in the electoral process and neutralized the gains which women otherwise could receive. However, it is common for political parties or rival candidates in some areas of Pakistan, particularly in the rural areas of NWFP and Baluchistan, to mutually agree not to let their women to vote.

women's representation

Representation in political parties and political institutions is another variable to measure the level of political participation of women. At the level of political parties and legislatures, the participation of women can be judged from their numbers at the ordinary membership level, their representation in decision-making bodies of the political parties and the number of tickets given to them in general elections and their representation in provincial and national legislatures. Since independence, women although were in few numbers have been consistently represented in federal and provincial legislature. (*Farooq Muhammad,2002;*)

Women representation in the political process determines their political empowerment. In the Parliament, 50% representation of women represents absolute gender equality.

Women are given reserved seats in all three constitution of Pakistan. Women gained political strength since when the law mandated that the National Assembly reserve 60 seats out of its 342 for women. Though many observers endorse the idea of setting aside seats, some would like to reform the system for assigning such seats.

The women representation in the National Assembly was on 4 % in 1997 , as compared to 21% in 2002 and it is 22.2% in 2012-13 .. The Senate and National Assembly have 17% seats reserved for women, while the local government has one third of the total seats.

¹Article 25 ,26 and 27 and 32 of constitution of Pakistan 1973
All citizens are equal before law and are entitled to equal protection of law
There shall be no discrimination on the basis of sex.

Table :3

year	Women in parliament percent
2003	21.6
2004	21.3
2005	21.3
2006	21.3
2007	21.1
2008	22.5
2009	22.2
2010	22.2
2011	22.5
2012	22.5
2013	22.5

Source: Global Economy.com

According to world economic forum report (2014) Pakistan rank is 85 in economic empowerment, women in parliament are 71, women in ministerial positions are 138, and year with females as head of the state is 23 years.

Conclusion

The study strongly supports the contribution of the economic, social and political factors in empowering women. In the era of globalization, there is a dire need to enhance the role of women in the economic development like Pakistan.

For this purpose, deliberate efforts are required to focus the social sectors specially health and education. As a healthy and educated has a high productivity both at home and outside the home. Education improves the earning power of women as well. Primary education must be compulsory for all girls. Future employment and even running a business definitely require that the women have at least the basic education.

In fact in Pakistan, women are not aware of what they are capable of and of the opportunities that exist for them. On the part of the government, there need to be coordination among different government departments like Women division/ ministries, local government, Rural Development institutions, which should provide adequate consultation to promote the micro and small enterprises. These institutions should realize the gender related challenges and try to accommodate or minimize these challenges.

Government should develop the gender sensitize policies which are more effective and encourage women to take part in the labor market. This includes media campaign through radio, television, and through workshops inviting and encouraging women to break off their stereotype image. Microfinance is the catalyst for the success of women. In Pakistan, the Khushali Bank, Kashf, The First Women Bank and Tameer Bank are already providing microfinance facilities particularly to women. They should become more active and improve their outreach on lines of the Grameen Bank which has changed the lives of many of the Bangladeshi women. The negligible political participation and representation is one of the key impediments in the way of gender inequality due to the patriarchal system. On the other hand, their representation in public offices is also nominal.

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