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IMPACT OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY OF MAZAFARGARH

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ABSTRACT

Women play an important role in development of a country. In Pakistan efforts are being made to empower women in almost every field of life but still in many fields of life especially in rural areas women are living in miserable conditions. They are not given rights according to Islam. Previous studies had shown that women are facing huge problems in rural areas. The present study is designed to see the impact of women empowerment on rural development in district Muzaffargarh. For this purpose data has been collected from 120 female respondents in district Muzaffargarh. OLS technique was used for the analysis. In the present study, different dimensions of women empowerment have been measured in order to see the impact of women empowerment on rural development. It has been found that self-esteem, power of decision making and mobility has statistically and economically significant impact on rural development whereas control over resources is found insignificant statistically. It has been suggested that adequate education and job opportunities may play a vital role in empowering women. Moreover access to media specifically TV can play a significant role to empower women.

Keyword: women empowerment, rural development, economically significant

INTRODUCTION

The empowerment of women remained a leading confront across the developing world since long, which is complex, multifaceted, fluid and emerging dilemma within the theory of feminism and development literature. The international community well accepted the role of women folk in the development activities. So, the dream of economic development cannot be materialized in the absence of women empowerment in the society. Thus, being a central development concern, it has been also highlighted as one of the core objective of the Millennium Development Goals (UNDP, 2008). Despite a multi-prong phenomenon, it appears that women are competent of empowering themselves, but the external actors and agencies are imperative to create the supportive environments in the society.

The word Empowerment shows enhancement of power. There are four kinds of autonomy that is to say "power within, power with, power to and power over". "Power within" indicates self-respect and confidence, "power with" indicates joint awareness, "power to" indicates aptitude construction whereas "power over" indicates difference between authoritative and unreliable (Rowland, 1997). Furthermore, Kabeer (2001) gave another definition of empowerment that enhances the capability of individuals of persons to take decisions about an in tensional life in this situation where this talent was not before used. Autonomy of women comprises of well-being, power, source, of emerging motivation and right to use resources (UNICEF, 1994). Bennett (2002) extended the definition of empowerment by giving the concept of "Social Inclusion".

Development is the name of bringing socio economic revolution which creates a positive impact on

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society. In the scenario of development, people utilize their full strength in several productive activities. The role of men and women are equally important in the development of their nations. Human rights should not be humiliated. Sustainable development can only be achieved if women are given their legal rights in all fields of life. Special importance should be given to lower income groups of women to attain economic prosperity. Women are the backbone of any country so they should be powerful and confident. In Pakistan women constitutes almost half of our population so they are given equally importance for the sake of economic development. Government should play a significant role to abolish the gender discrimination from our country. Women Development Issues (2011).

Women participate in household activities and also act as part of labor force in agriculture sector of Pakistan. They sow, reap and then harvest the crops (Furqan, 2012). Women in rural areas of Pakistan are living under feudal system where they have no value and they are not given rights according to Islam. The female literacy rate in rural areas is only 33 percent. Men in rural areas feel proud by suppressing the rights of women. Honor killing is also very common in rural areas. Government should take steps for proving education to rural women and should make vocational centers for their better lives (Nayyab, 2010). Due to lack of education rural women are unable to cope with socio-economic problems. Government should take firm steps in order to provide educational facilities for specially women in all rural areas of Pakistan for reducing gender inequality (Imran and Farhana, 2009).

The Government of Pakistan has made policies related to provoking issues like gender equality and the education of females. At the global level, it has been recognized that by increasing the level of education in females, development can be achieved. (Ministry of Education, 2004)

Furthermore government had started "Benazir Income Support Programme" for poor rural women in Pakistan. This programme was very beneficial in this way that poor women would be given Rs 1000 per month. (Furqan, 2012). The government has set 10 percent quota for females in government jobs which also enhanced the empowerment of women. Furthermore government was started free distribution of lands among poor rural women who are the heads of a family. Another policy which had been approved by the government is "The Prevention of Domestic Violence Act 2008" which was also a great step towards women empowerment (Ispahani, 2010).

Sridevi (2005) had investigated that higher level of education led to higher level of empowerment and women decision making power had been positively influenced by control over personal salary. Kandpalet *et al.*, (2013) had seen the impact of programme "MahilaSamakha" which had been initiated to enhance women empowerment. Educational and vocational training had been given through support groups to rural women. Through this programme women had been empowered on political, social, economic and at household level. Overall, this programme increased the employment level and freedom of mobility among rural women.

Muhammad *et al.*, (2012) had worked on the women empowerment on their families from socio-economic point of view by taking the case study of Hayatabad. It had been found that education gave autonomy to women who ultimately increased their family budget, increased the participation in various activities and it made reduction in family violence. Their children were well educated, obedient and had good personality traits. They suggested that education facilities should be made more convenient because education improved the standard of living of both men and women.

Shoaibet *et al.*, (2012) had studied women empowerment especially in rural areas considering the effect of education on it by taking the case study of Chiniot. It was concluded that education was

positively related with women empowerment at household level. Keeping all this in context, present study has been designed to focus the programmes and policies which show impact of women empowerment on rural development in District Muzaffargarh, Pakistan.

MATERIALS AND METHODS:

Data collection and sample size: Purposive random sampling technique was applied to collect the data for the study. District Muzaffargarh was selected as it ranked second having more rural population in all over Punjab. The annual growth rate of Muzaffargarh is 3.38% whereas specifically of females is 47.9% (census, 1998). There are four tehsils in Muzaffargarh i.e. Muzaffargarh, KotAdu, Alipur, Jatoi. Muzaffargarh and KotAdu were selected by using purposive random sampling technique because there are some industries for women especially in these areas like vocational centers etc. One union council was selected from each tehsils i.e. Rangpur and Patel Munda. Furthermore, from union council Rangpur villages Rangpur and ChabutraAdha were selected and from union council KotAdu villages Basti Shah Wala and Bilandi were selected then 30 females were selected from each village randomly. Sampling of married women respondents were selected through population framework of women from the voter lists. In case of missing married women in the list next woman was selected in sample. Randomly sampling was done for employed or unemployed married female correspondents. A total of 120 women were interviewed by using a comprehensive questionnaire. The collected data were rechecked, edited and coded accordingly.

Model specification and estimation: The OLS technique was used for the analysis of the impact of women empowerment on rural development.

The general form of the model is

$$Y = \alpha + \sum_{i=1}^n \beta_i X_i + \mu$$

Y= Rural development score

X_i= Women empowerment score

μ= Error term

Imran and Farhana (2009) had used this model for analysis by taking women empowerment as dependent variable and four indices as independent variables i.e. personal autonomy, family decision making, domestic economic decisions and political autonomy. For present study dependent variable is rural development score and women empowerment score is independent variable. There are four main dimensions of women empowerment score i.e self esteem, role in decision making, mobility and control over resources. (Mahmud *et al.* 2012).

After estimating the scale/score of four aspects of women empowerment, i.e. self-esteem, role in decision-making, mobility and control over resource, and verifying its internal reliability using the Cronbach's alpha method, four models were used to investigate the factors, which influence the above said aspects of women empowerment as it was done by Mahmud *et al.* (2012). For the present study different factors were taken for four main pillars of women empowerment.

$$SE = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \beta_6 X_6 + \beta_7 X_7 + \beta_8 X_8 + \beta_9 X_9 + \beta_{10} X_{10} + \mu \quad \text{Eq. 1}$$

$$RDM = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 X_1 + \alpha_2 X_2 + \alpha_3 X_3 + \alpha_4 X_4 + \alpha_5 X_5 + \alpha_6 X_6 + \alpha_7 X_7 + \alpha_8 X_8 + \alpha_9 X_9 + \alpha_{10} X_{10} + \varepsilon \quad \text{Eq. 2}$$

$$M = \gamma_0 + \gamma_1 X_1 + \gamma_2 X_2 + \gamma_3 X_3 + \gamma_4 X_4 + \gamma_5 X_5 + \gamma_6 X_6 + \gamma_7 X_7 + \gamma_8 X_8 + \gamma_9 X_9 + \gamma_{10} X_{10} + \varphi \quad \text{Eq. 3}$$

$$COR = \eta_0 + \eta_1 X_1 + \eta_2 X_2 + \eta_3 X_3 + \eta_4 X_4 + \eta_5 X_5 + \eta_6 X_6 + \eta_7 X_7 + \eta_8 X_8 + \eta_9 X_9 + \eta_{10} X_{10} + v \quad \text{Eq. 4}$$

Where;

SE = Score of women's self-esteem

RDM = Score of women's role in decision making

M = Score of mobility

COR = Score of control over resources

β , α , γ and η are respective coefficients of the models

Likewise;

μ , ε , φ and ν are respective error terms of the models

Whereas;

X_1 = Household head's education

X_2 = Family type

X_3 = Number of children

X_4 = Gender of Household head

X_5 = Job status

X_6 = Salary adequacy

X_7 = Access to print media

X_8 = Access to TV

X_9 = Access to radio

X_{10} = Social media

Rural Development Model: Rural development is a dynamic concept with medium to long term changes and adjustment. There are three components of rural development i.e. natural environment, social well-being and conditions for economic well-being. Likely to the rural development are territory with respect to population, economic structure and communications. The indicators at macro level are usually used in order to investigate rural development. As this study is based on primary data so some proxy variables were used like electricity, access to agricultural markets and access to higher education etc (Hosnet *al*, 2009)

Finally OLS technique has been used to find the impact of women empowerment on rural development. The final model to estimate the impact of Women Empowerment on Rural Development is:

$$RD = \beta_0 + \beta_1 SE + \beta_2 RDM + \beta_3 M + \beta_4 COR + \mu$$

Specification of the variables: specification of the variables of rural development model is as under:

RD= Rural Development Score

SE = Scores of women's self-esteem

RDM = Scores of women's role in decision making

M = Scores of mobility

COR = Scores of control over resources

RDI was constructed by using four dimensions i.e. demographic status, social well-being, business and investment, and agriculture (Kairytė and Meyers, 2010). RDI was also derived to analyze the major determinants in rural areas (Michalek and Zarnekow, 2011). For the present study four pillars of women empowerment were taken i.e. self-esteem, women decision-making power, mobility and control over resources.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

Descriptive statistics: The first dimension self-esteem showed the value which a woman reserved to herself. Women self-esteem was measured by taking five important factors i.e. buying furniture and livestock, spending family savings, taking a loan, visiting a doctor for herself and her visit outside home. In order to measure self-esteem, 97.5 percent women reported that they had visited doctor for themselves. 75 percent women were in the favor of self-esteem regarding visit outside home. 75.8

percent women were feeling self-esteem in taking a loan. 63.3 percent of women responded that they should be asked in spending family savings and 72.5 percent women showed a positive response regarding self-esteem in buying furniture and livestock. Women decision making power was further measured by taking six important factors i.e. decision of buying furniture and livestock, spending of family savings, taking a loan, visiting doctor herself, her visit outside home and her visit to her father's home (Mahmud, 2012). 95.8 percent women responded that her opinion was considered important regarding visit to doctor for herself. . 85 percent women's opinion had been given importance for her visit to father's home. 69.2 percent women's opinion was given importance in buying furniture and livestock. 69.2 percent women's opinion was given importance in taking a loan. Decision of 66.7 percent women was given importance for her visit outside home and decision of 57.5 percent was given importance in spending family savings at household level.

The factors of mobility were visiting friends outside the village, visited hospital or clinic, visited her father's home, visited her relatives, visited her children school, going for shopping and going for outing(Mahmud, 2012). 94.2 percent women took permission for visiting friends outside the village. 82.5 percent women took permission for outing. 80 percent women took permission for shopping. 66.7 percent women visited hospital or clinic by taking permission. 57.5 percent women visited her relatives by taking permission. 50.8 percent women took permission for visiting her father's home and only 7.5 percent women visited her children school by taking permission. Control over resources was also one of the dimensions of women empowerment. It was further measured by taking eight important factors such as spending money by her own wish in purchasing and selling the furniture; control over husband's salary; control over own salary; could purchase things of own wish; could sale her precious jewellery; could spend the saved money; giving loan to husband's family and relative and giving loan to her own family and relatives (Mahmud, 2012).

Interestingly it has been found that 75.8 percent of women could purchase things of own wish. 61.7 percent women could purchase or sell furniture by own wish. 54.2 percent employed women had controlled their own salary. 48.3 percent women had control over husband salary. 48.3 percent women could spend the saved money by own wish. 31.7 percent women could give loan to husband's family and relatives and 17.5 percent women could sale her precious jewellery by own wish.

Explaining the Factors of Self-Esteem of Women: For women's viewpoint that in making household decisions, the internal consistency (α) was found 0.86. The value of alpha (α) shows the internal consistency between variables taken in any model or it shows the reliability of variables on each other. Its value is between 0 and 1 (Bland & Altman, 1997). Among the factors, which were investigated for women's empowerment, household head's gender, job status and access to media specifically TV has shown statistically significant relationship as shown in table 2. Exposure to media has positive impact on women empowerment (Parveen, 2005).

In the case where household head was a woman, female members of that household would be more self-esteem compared to those households with male heads. Moreover, if the woman was employed or working somewhere she would more self-esteem as compared to the non-working and non-employed women. Total income of people had increased and their standard of living had been improved by giving training to women (Gull, 2010). Women empowerment had been improved due to their income generation activities and their decision making power also improves at household level due to microfinance loans (Noreen, 2011). Interestingly, the women who had easy access to television would be more self-esteem as shown in Table 3. Exposure to media has positive impact on women empowerment (Parveen, 2005). The factors such as family type, number of children, salary adequacy, and access to radio, print media and social media networks had not

shown statistically significant relationship with women's self-esteem.

Explaining Factors of Decision Making of Women: The internal consistency (α) of overall role of women in decision making score was 0.82 which was the aggregate of six different situations. Those situations had been discussed in detail in table 2. The factors, which were investigated for women empowerment, only access to media specifically TV had shown statistically significant relationship. In the case where women who has more access to TV had more decision making power as compared to women who had less access to media specifically TV as shown in Table 3. Factors such as education, family type, number of children, gender, job status, adequate salary, media access to print, media access to radio and social media had shown insignificant results.

Explaining Factors of Mobility of Women: The internal consistency of different factors of mobility score was found 0.79. Among the factors, which were investigated for women empowerment, education and household's head gender had shown statistically significant relationship. In the case, where women were more qualified were found more mobile as compared to women who were less qualified. Higher education led to higher level of women empowerment (Sridevi, 2005). Education and exposure to media has positive impact on women empowerment (Parveen, 2005). There is a positive relationship between education of women and women empowerment (Shoaibet *al*, 2012). Moreover, the women who were household heads had more freedom to move as compared to women whose household heads were men. Factors such as family type, number of children, job status, adequate salary, access to print media, access to media specifically TV, radio and social media had shown insignificant results.

Explaining Factors of Control over Resources of Women: The internal consistency (α) of the factors of control over resources score was found 0.87. Among the factors, which were investigated for women empowerment, household head's gender, job status and access to media specifically TV had shown statistically significant results. In the case where women were household heads had more control over resources as compared to women whose household heads were males. Moreover, working women had more control over resources as compared to non-working women. Also, the women who had more access to media specifically TV had more control over resources as compared to women who had less access to TV as shown in Table 3. Exposure to media has positive impact on women empowerment (Parveen, 2005). Factors such as education, family type, number of children, adequate salary, access to print media, media access to radio and social media were found statistically insignificant.

Table 2: Description of Independent Variables Used in Models

Variables	Description	Mean	Std. Dev.	Frequency (%)
Household head's Education	Number of schooling years	2.142	4.4670	
Family type	Joint family = 0 Independent = 1			45 55
No. Of children	Number	3.092	2.3371	
Gender of household head	Male = 0 Female = 1			9 5.8
Job Status	Unemployed = 0 Employed/working woman = 1			45.8 54.2

Salary adequacy	Inadequate = 0	60.9
	Adequate = 1	39.1
Access to Print	If the female members of the household do not have adequate access to print media = 0	92.5
	If they have adequate access = 1	7.5
Access to TV	If the female members of the household do not have adequate access to TV = 0	64.2
	If they have adequate access = 1	35.8
Access to Radio	If the female members of the household do not have adequate access to radio = 0	75.8
	If they have adequate access = 1	24.2
Access to Social media	If the female members of the household do not have adequate access to social media=0	75.8
	If they have access to it=1	24.2

Note: Number of observation =120

Table 3: Regression Results of Four Dimensions of Women Empowerment

Factors	Model 1 Self Esteem Score	Model 2 Decision Making Score	Model 3 Mobility Score	Model 4 Control Resources Score	over
Education	0.0037 (0.0178)	0.0184 (0.0168)	0.0427*** (0.0153)	0.0139 (0.0157)	
Family type	0.1304 (0.1498)	-0.0816 (0.1411)	-0.0741 (0.1282)	0.2072 (0.1316)	
No. Of children	-0.0084 (0.0304)	-0.0032 (0.0287)	0.0065 (0.0261)	-0.0177 (0.0267)	
Gender of house hold head	0.6382** (0.2998)	0.3013 (0.2823)	0.5357*** (0.2566)	0.5886** (0.2637)	
Job Status	0.5272*** (0.1814)	0.2393 (0.1709)	-0.0559 (0.1553)	0.4979** (0.1593)	
Salary adequate	-0.0182 (0.1953)	0.2418 (0.1839)	0.1832 (0.1672)	-0.0132 (0.1715)	
Access to media					
Print	0.2230 (0.3013)	-0.2705 (0.2838)	-0.1894 (0.2579)	-0.0540 (0.2648)	
TV	0.5220*** (0.1751)	0.3556** (0.1649)	-0.0002 (0.1499)	0.5382*** (0.1538)	
Radio	0.1198 (0.1663)	0.1314 (0.1567)	0.1686 (0.1424)	0.1142 (0.1461)	
Social media	0.1731 (0.3231)	-0.2069 (0.3043)	-0.1942 (0.2766)	0.0988 (0.2839)	
Constant	-0.7457*** (0.2644)	-0.2295 (0.2489)	-0.0523 (0.2263)	-0.8198*** (0.2323)	
Adj R ²	0.13	0.06	0.07	0.17	

*10 percent significance level

** 5 percent significance level

***1percent significance level

Explaining Women Empowerment over Rural Development: Cronbach's alpha technique was used to measure the score of rural development. The variables used in this regard were adequate food, access to electricity, access to mobile phones, adequate health services, access to higher education and access to agricultural markets. The internal consistency (α) in rural development model was 0.86. It means that these variables have very strong reliability among each other. Finally rural development score was regressed on the four main pillars of women empowerment i.e. self-esteem, women decision-making power, mobility and control over resources as shown in table 4.

Table 4: Regression results of women empowerment score on rural development score

Factors	Coefficient (Standard error)
SE Score	0.2446** (0.1186)
DM Score	0.2701** (0.1095)
MOBILITY Score	0.2335** (0.0974)
COR Score	-0.559 (0.1303)
Constant	-7.4313 (0.6332)
Adj R ²	0.17
** 5 percent significance level	

Conclusion:

The findings revealed that self-esteem, mobility and decision-making positively influenced the process of rural development. However, the effect of the dimension 'controls over resources' did not show statistically significant influence on the rural development due to some social barriers. Gender of household head (i.e. if female), job status (i.e. if woman is employed) and access to media (TV) positively and significantly influenced the self-esteem of the women. Likewise, only one factor, access to media (TV), significantly affected the decision making dimension. However, the dimension of mobility was significantly influenced by education status and gender of household head. The fourth dimension 'control over resources' was affected significantly by education, job status and access to media (TV). It is suggested that improved access to TV in rural areas with special emphasis on women capacity building may create awareness among the women about their basic rights. Providing job opportunities to women by increasing women quota in government sector or through introducing microfinance schemes may also influence positively the dimensions of self-esteem and control over resources. Providing adequate education to women by opening new schools and educational institutions may have significant and positive impacts on the dimension of mobility.

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