



## Impact of Education on Women Empowerment: Key to Sustainable Development in Pakistan

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### Abstract

*Education plays a pivotal role in the empowerment and sustainable development of the women. This research study examines the impact of education on women empowerment: Key to sustainable development in Pakistan. The objectives of the study were to identify the factors of women empowerment for sustainable development. Another objective was to examine the perception of respondents regarding their empowerment through education. The said study initiated in the Islamabad and women across Pakistan working in the ambit of Federal Directorate of Education, were taken as the population of the present study. The stratified random sampling technique was used for the collection of the respondents. A total of 1055 women were selected as population and the sample of 650 was taken as the sample of the study. The mix method technique was used for the collection of responses. The questionnaire and interview were used for the collection of data. This tool kit was developed based on theoretical framework and four major factors of the women empowerment was taken as: individual empowerment, psychological empowerment, Economic empowerment and Social Empowerment. There was a sub theme of all these factors, those were also analyzed through data analysis. The data was analyzed, based on the univariate and multivariate analysis. The findings of the study driven from the data analysis and based on that, conclusions were drawn. It was concluded that, the education of women is significantly affected for their empowerment and sustainable development in a country like Pakistan.*

**Keywords:** Women Empowerment, Education, Sustainable Development, Women Contribution, Development Indicators.



## **Introduction**

Education is a transformative force in the lives of women, empowering them to achieve personal success, self-realization, and contribute meaningfully to society. This is also suggested by Qazi et al., (2021), that education helps women navigate various life challenges and prepares them for unforeseen circumstances. In addition of all these, the Ahmed et al., (2020) also highlighted the importance of education, especially the education of the women for the community development. Education, both formal and informal, is a lifelong process that influences personal and societal growth. In Pakistan, the 18th Amendment to the Constitution emphasizes that education is a fundamental right for all citizens, underscoring the importance of equal access to education for women (Ali et al., 2017)

Empowerment involves the redistribution of power and resources among individuals without discrimination, ensuring equal opportunities regardless of gender, class, or creed (Zhang et al., 2023). Education plays a vital role in promoting empowerment, as it enables women to make informed decisions, achieve financial independence, and contribute to the socio-economic development of the country. As highlighted by Desai (2020), disparities in literacy between men and women are a significant barrier to achieving sustainable development goals (SDGs) in Pakistan. Agha et al., (2022) also highlight that the education serves the as critical enabler for the women education in the Pakistan or any other, country of the world.

Furthermore, sustainable development (SD) is defined as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (UNESCO, 2013). Education not only equips women with knowledge but also fosters confidence, self-realization, and social connections (World Bank, 2018). However, the current education system in Pakistan is still struggling to meet the demands for gender-inclusive education, which is essential for empowering women and achieving sustainable development.

This study aims to examine the contribution of education to women's empowerment and its role in fostering sustainable development in Pakistan. It will explore the gaps in the existing educational system and provide recommendations for improving access to education for women, thereby enhancing their role in national development.

## **Background of Study**

In recent decades, there has been a significant expansion of educational institutions in Pakistan, particularly in the private and public sectors, to meet the increasing demand for education (Aslam, 2009). The National Plan of Action (NPA) for Women, launched in 1998, emphasizes gender equality and women's empowerment through access to education. Despite these efforts, Pakistan allocates only 2.9% of its GDP to education, which is low compared to other countries (UNICEF, 2020)

The study is motivated by the growing recognition of the need for empowering women through education. The expansion of educational opportunities for women, particularly in rural and



underserved areas, has the potential to improve their socio-economic status (Rao and Kelleher, 2020). However, barriers such as early marriages, job-related responsibilities, and social taboos continue to limit women's educational attainment. This research will examine the challenges and opportunities for women's empowerment through education and contribute to the development of policies that can enhance their role in sustainable development.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Historically, women in Pakistan have faced socio-cultural barriers that have limited their access to education and economic participation (Ali et al., 2017). Despite efforts to increase access to education, women continue to face challenges such as early marriages, social taboos, and limited job opportunities. However, women who are empowered through education have the potential to contribute significantly to the development of the country (UN Women, 2021). This research seeks to explore the impact of education on women's empowerment and its role in fostering sustainable development in Pakistan.

### **Significance of Study**

This study has immense significance and is important for education, policy makers and the state, for more investment in education. The findings of this study are the eye opener for the policy maker for the development of the policy for the women education. This study also motivates the women to focus on the education, so that they can contribute to the society in the various ways. It also inspires the women for the education in future as well to the new generation, so that they can contribute with better ways for the sustainable development of the society. This study may also me immense interest for the policy makers as well as for the academia community working on the women education. This can also help the non-governmental organization working in the field of education of the women the country like Pakistan.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study were as:

- To identify the factors of women empowerment that contribute to sustainable.
- development.
- To examine the perception of women regarding their empowerment through education.
- To investigate the contribution of educated women to sustainable development.
- To analyze the impact of education on women's empowerment in Pakistan.

### **Review Literature**

Education is associated with women's personality, decision-making capability, versatility, and directly contributes to the socio-economic improvement of families, societies, and nations as described by the (Mehmood et al, 2024). It is also evident from the several studies that



education plays a vital role in the generation of employment and influences their contribution to decision making. he household affairs.

In Pakistan, Women literacy rate is worse than men. The educated women play pivotal role in tads to anti-women practices, violence, honor killings, and other violations of women's rights. The low level of literacy rate in Pakistan has several other negative impacts on women's lives which include the socioeconomic and cultural development of society. In Pakistan it's the need of the hour to be focused on women education and empowering them where education is perceived as a prominent indicator to elevate the status of women and social change and empowering them in all facets of life. This also evident form the multi case, where women help their spouse and other family members in case of disabilities as well, these educated women give empowerment to take decisions in the time of hardship. (Siddique et al., 2022).

Women empowerment is the need of the society, as it has been realized by the world. Many of the NGOs, Government and individual, steps are taken for the growth and progress of the women. Moreover, the UN, also continuously working on it and developing different framework for the growth of the women. However, a particular community group is still opposing the women education and supports their statement in the perspective of religion. Any of the world religion, give equal right to men and women in the society. The phenomena behind it are that the growth of society is only possible with equal contributions from society members, apart from their gender. This is mainly because of the male domination imbedded in the culture of Asian especially south Asian region (Women division, 2015).

Education helps the women for the following four ways of their sustainable development as (psychologically, Socially, economically and environmentally). The attributes as describe by the Sharma et al., (2022) that educated women for the sustainable development which she obtains from the education and empower herself are includes; Individual recognition, Disciplined, Negotiate with logic, Confident, Useful citizen, Awareness about their rights, Self-esteem, Mobility, Socialization, Social, Opening career opportunities, Better upbringing of the children , Reducing their dependency, Increasing their self-efficacy, Removal of poverty, Raising their status family and society and Contribution in the national income.

Poor literacy, lack of skills, poor employment opportunities in newly emerging area, male dominant society, massive household jobs, economics dependence are main causes for the lower status of women in general. Women live as beast burden and to die without having lived one moment for them. Another important factor for their lower status is having poor decision-making power. The status of rural women as "life of rural women has been full hardship, menial jobs, deprivation, exclusive burden of managing the home and they also have multiple stress, and they also have the job stress, if they are working as describe by the Chaudhry et al., (2017)

Empowerment is a blanket term that presages several meanings but for the current research purpose used the definition of European Institute for Gender Equality (2020) "process by which women gain power and control over their own lives and acquire the ability to make strategic choices." Empowerment is a process which enables people to take specific actions in the way they like to do. It can help individuals to revitalize their thinking and imagining capabilities for their future life passage.

Education can make a great change in the life of individuals. One can gain control over the future course of life with the help of education. Women's education can play a pivotal role not for the



individuals who acquire it but for the country as well- as women contribute to the country's economy by participating as a skilled labor force. Thus, education could result in improved quality of life for the individuals and their families (British Council, 2017).

Sustainable development depends on an equitable distribution of resources for today and for the future. It cannot be achieved without gender equality. Women's empowerment is a key factor for achieving sustainable economic growth, social development and environmental sustainability. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) approved by the UN General assembly in 2015, presents a vision of "The World We Want". The SDGs aim to transform development by taking on key challenges such as poverty, inequality, and care for our common planet. The 2030 Agenda offers a real opportunity to drive lasting changes for women's rights and equality, and to bring transformative changes in women's and men's lives. Gender equality, reducing inequalities and ensuring 'no one left behind' are considered as distinct but linked to the core principles of the SDGs.

It was also concluded, from the literature and many other references presented in the above content, that the major target of the SDGs Goal 5 target is as given below.

1. End discrimination against women.
2. End violence against women.
3. Eliminate force/ early marriage in the community.
4. Ensure women participation and leadership in decision making.
5. Universal access to rights and reproductive health.
6. Equal rights of property and ownership.

All these, above targets only be achieved with the help of education, so that the said study helps to know the impact of education on the sustainable development of the women through education.

The conceptual framework, annex at the end of the study for more clarity of the women education, empowerment and sustainable development.

### **Research Methodology**

The present study is descriptive in nature and the survey method was used for the conduct of this study. However, the followings technique and steps were followed in the completion of this research. A mixed-methods approach was used in this study, combining qualitative and quantitative research methods. Data were collected through surveys and interviews.

The population for this study includes female teachers and administrative staff working in the educational institutions under the Federal Directorate of Education (FDE). The population are recruited in the FDE, based on positions allocated from all the provinces, including AJK and GB. The total population was as follows:

1. Principals (BS-20): 04
2. Principals (BS-19): 67
3. Vice Principals (BS-18): 156
4. Secondary School Teachers (BS-17): 1143



5. Senior Elementary Teachers (BS-16): 1837
6. Elementary School Teachers (BS-14): 972

However, the stratified random sampling was used to select a sample that is representative of the population. A total of 1055 female educators were selected for participation and questioners were distributed in the sample of 1055. After careful analysis the 650 complete questionnaires were used for the final data.

The data was collected with the help of questionnaire and interview were used for the collection of the data from the women working in the FDE, were respondents of the said study. There were four major indicators of the women empowerment as: Individual empower, psychological empowerment, Economic Empowerment and Social empowerment. Moreover, these four also have the sub theme of the empowerment as: Self Confidence, Self-Respect, Autonomy in Work, Awareness about Rights, Health Care Management, Power in Decisions Making, Information Exposure, Freedom of Expression, Self Esteem, Self-Actualization, Self-Worth, Psychological Wellbeing, Individual Recognition, Respect of others, Control of Resources, Opening of Career Opportunities, Poverty Alleviation, Contribution in National Income, Equitable Economic Resources, Independent Income, Social Inclusions, Social network, Productive Citizen, Awareness of mass media socialization, Environment Protections and Freedom in Mobility. The data was collected from via google from, with a brief as researcher is also working in the same setup of FDE.

The experts and women working on the top tier position, were taken on board for the validity of the instrument's items wise. The inclusions and exclusions approach were also opted as per the opinion of the experts on the questionnaire. The coefficient of the scale was also calculated, and it was also pointed out that the reliability of the sub scale is also satisfactory. The Cronbach alpha of the said study is more than .75 which was acceptable in case of self-explanatory study.

### **Analysis and Discussion**

The current study was delimited only for the capital territory, with the inclusion of the Federal Directorate of Education (FDE). The female teaching staff and administrative staff were included in the study, however, it is evident that, the female working in the FDE, are selected across all provinces, as per the decided quota of the provinces. Furthermore, the respondent of the populations was communicated, and all the sample population were approached for data collection. However, after careful consideration 650 respondents were considered for the population. The three types of data analysis were used, as univariate, bivariate and multivariate. The details of the results:

The data was analyzed based on univariate analysis, and all the major theme as; Individual empowerment, psychological empowerment, Economic empowerment and social empowerment result of items wise supported that education empower the women for sustainable development. Furthermore, bivariate analysis of the demographic factors linked with the above factors also



supported through results. The results of the women working on the senior position in the FDE, as principal, and their responses, collected thorough interview are also supported the key idea of the women empowerment through education for the sustainable development. They also shared their own success story for the said study, how they benefited from the education for their, economic empowerment, psychological empowerment, individual and social empowerment as well. The result is presented in numerical form, so the graphs are not presented in this study, but the actual study reflected the comprehensive details.

### Multiple Regression Analysis

Once the validation of the assumption of the model is done, then the next step was to develop the regression model for the study. Therefore, to observe the influence of explanatory variable on education for empowerment for sustainable development. The results of this analysis are presented as below:

Table No.1

Summary of regression analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.6715	0.4531	0.4149	0.0417

This table value of  $R^2 = 0.47$  which indicates the Goodness of fit test of the model of It means the forty seven percent of the variation is explained by the explanatory variables in education for empowerment. The values of R square up to 41 % are acceptable for social science. This value supported the result of the present study test of Goodness of fit test.

Table No-2

ANOVA of Educated women

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	28.518	16	1.91	26.377	.000
1	Residual	16.412	216	0.071		
	Total	45.020	231			

The table ANOVA shows the F value **26.377** is highly significant **.000<sup>a</sup>** which means that variables are highly impact on the empowerment for sustainable development.

### Multiple Regression Analysis of Female Teaching

After assumption of the validation of the factors, the next step is to develop the regression model, for the impact of education on women empowerment for the sustainable development. However,



for measuring the impact of education on women empowerment for the sustainable development, the regression model develops. After the validation of the assumption of the model the next step was to develop the regression model for the present study Whereas, the F value 26.377 is highly significant .000 which means that variables are highly significant. It means the model reflect the significant impact of the education on women empowerment as the many of the sub variables effect on the dependent variable. It means at least one of the explanatory variables in the below model has a significant influence on the dependent variable. Furthermore,  $R^2=.47$  also indicates the Goodness of the fit test of the model of education, empowerment and sustainable development.

Table No-3

Influence of education on the women empowerment indicators for sustainable development: A multiple linear regression analysis

Model Indicator		Coefficients			t	P. Value
				Standardized Coefficients		
B	Std. Error	Beta				
1(Constant)	3.879	.568		6.593	0.000	
Self Confidence (SC)	.451	.144	.187	1.860	0.005	
Self-Respect (SR)	.345	.240	.167	1.370	0.005	
Autonomy in Work (AW)	.401	.204	.157	1.840	0.005	
Awareness About Right (AAR)	.453	.144	.1870	1.870	0.005	
Health Care Management (HCM)	.325	.214	.140	1.516	0.006	
Power of Decision Making (PDM)	.235	.124	.217	1.670	0.005	
Information Exposure (IE)	.286	.147	.057	2.475	0.007	
Freedom of Expression (FE)	.133	.141	.069	3.33	0.005	
Self Esteem (SE)	.152	.155	.037	2.772	0.002	
Self-Actualization (SA)	.147	.203	.084	1.97	0.00	
Self-Worth (SW)	.413	.173	.286	2.394	0.017	





Psychological Well Being (PWB)	.354	.143	.303	2.478	0.024
Individual Recognition (IR)	.412	.155	.026	2.260	0.014
Respect for Others (RFO)	.212	.134	.015	3.123	0.041
Control of Resources (CR)	.228	.164	.136	2.396	0.027
Opening of Career Opportunists (OCO)	.222	.137	.081	1.99	0.110
Poverty Alleviation (PA)	.150	.149	.111	2.006	0.025
Contribution to National Income (CNI)	.176	.154	.060	3.049	0.001
Equitable Economic Resources (EER)	.428	.122	.372	-3.501	0.010
Independent Income (II)	.210	.162	.111	2.086	0.021
Social Inclusions (SI)	.232	.153	.121	2.185	0.011
Social Networking (SN)	.233	.175	.132	2.106	0.020
Productive Citizen (PC)	.231	.154	.130	2.173	0.031
Awareness of Mass Media (AMM)	.232	.153	.131	2.106	0.024
Socialization (S)	.221	.167	.180	2.122	0.011
Environmental Protection (EP)	.203	.175	.176	2.123	0.041
Freedom in Mobility (FM)	.205	.108	.196	2.112	0.011
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> = 0.36			F=27.48, Sig, at P< 0.05		

The above regression analysis indicates the impact of education on the women empowerment for the sustainable development in Pakistan. In the said model the Education is an independent variable and the empowerment is dependent variable. In the above table the first column presents the significant variables of the empowerment and their sub theme. The next column indicates the values of the regression coefficient. Whereas the third column is indicating the standardized error, and the fourth column is indicating the standardized coefficient of each variable. The greater value of the standardized coefficient shows greater influence and smaller shows less influence on the explanatory variable. The fifth column shows the static t values, and the last columns show the P values.



In this model of education, empowerment and sustainable development model the P values of all variables were less than 0.05 which mean all have significant impact This means all the dimensions of the individual empowerment, psychological empowerment, Economic empowerment and social empowerment have influence due to education. It was revealed from the results of the above table of the regression model. It was found that impact of education leads towards the individual empowerment, psychological empowerment, social empowerment and economic empowerment in the women for their sustainable development.

## **Conclusion and Discussion**

### **Discussion**

The present study aligns with existing literature that underscores the critical role of education in breaking socio-cultural barriers and enabling women to achieve personal and professional growth for their sustainable development. The findings and conclusions of the study highlight that education not only enhances individual capacities but also fosters psychological resilience, economic independence, and social inclusion. These elements are essential for achieving gender equality and sustainable development goals (SDGs) in Pakistan.

Although there are multiple evident benefits of education, challenges such as limited access to quality education, socio-cultural constraints, and inadequate policy implementation persist. These barriers hinder the full realization of women's potential and, consequently, their contributions to national development and for their sustainable development. The study findings conclude that the urgent need for targeted interventions to address these challenges and create an enabling environment for women's education and empowerment. The educated women are contributing in the country in the perspective of their individual growth, overall economic growth of the country as well as for the social wellbeing in the country, through decision making, involving in the family income contribution, as well as aware about the right for taking rational decisions about their family as well as for the community to. It was concluded from the literature, relevant studies and results of this study, the educated women are contributing for the sustainable development of the country, through their empowerment.

### **Conclusions and Recommendation**

The findings of this study unequivocally demonstrate that education plays a pivotal role in empowering women and fostering sustainable development in Pakistan. The research, which utilized a mixed-methods approach, highlighted that education significantly impacts various dimensions of women's empowerment, including individual, psychological, economic, and social aspects. The results revealed that through education, women gain self-confidence, autonomy, awareness of their rights, and the ability to make informed decisions, all of which contribute to their overall empowerment.

Moreover, the key indicators such as self-esteem, self-actualization, and psychological well-being were found to be significantly influenced by education, enhancing women's ability to contribute to national development as well as the sustainable development of the women in the community like Pakistan. Further, the major indicators are economic empowerment, including



control over resources, poverty alleviation, and independent income generation, were also positively affected, showcasing the importance of equitable access to education in reducing gender disparities and promoting economic growth. Social empowerment factors such as social inclusion, networking, productive citizenship, and environmental awareness further underscore the transformative impact of education on women's societal roles.

Whereas the regression analysis underscored the significant relationships between educational attainment and empowerment indicators. The adjusted  $R^2$  value of 0.36 and highly significant F-value demonstrate the robustness of the model, affirming the hypothesis that education significantly contributes to women's empowerment and sustainable development. Moreover, the item wise, univariate analysis also supported the major theme of the research as well as the sub theme of the study. Furthermore, all three types of the result of the sub items analysis, bivariate and multivariate analysis indicated that, education, empower the women for the sustainable development for the economic growth of the individual, family and country as well.

The recommendations of the study are based on the findings and conclusions:

1. At national level, need to develop and implement gender-inclusive education policies that prioritize access to quality education for women, especially in underserved and rural areas.
2. There is dire need to allocate increased resources to the education sector, focusing on infrastructure, teacher training, and curriculum development to address the specific needs of women for their sustainable development.
3. Moreover, the conduction of the campaigns of national level are required for the removal of the taboo for the women education in the society like Pakistan.
4. A comprehensive promotion of the values of the women education is required for the social progress and women empowerment in the country like Pakistan with aligned of the SDGs.
5. There is dire need of the vocational training and skill development programs to enhance women's employability and economic independence that will lead toward the women sustainable development, as proposed in the SGDs.
6. Establish mentorship and leadership programs to encourage women's participation in decision-making processes.
7. Implement robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the impact of educational initiatives on women's empowerment and sustainable development.
8. Regularly review and update policies based on feedback from stakeholders and evolving socio-economic contexts.
9. Foster partnerships with community organizations, NGOs, and private sectors to create supportive networks for women's education and empowerment.
10. Encourage male involvement and support in promoting gender equality and challenging traditional gender roles.



The above recommendations are aligned with the sustainable development goals. In nutshell education is a powerful tool for empowering women and achieving sustainable development of the women of any country, and it's more important in a country like Pakistan, where population of the women are more than a male. By addressing the identified challenges and implementing the recommended strategies, policymakers and stakeholders can create a more inclusive and equitable society where women can fully contribute to national development and its dire need for the country like Pakistan.

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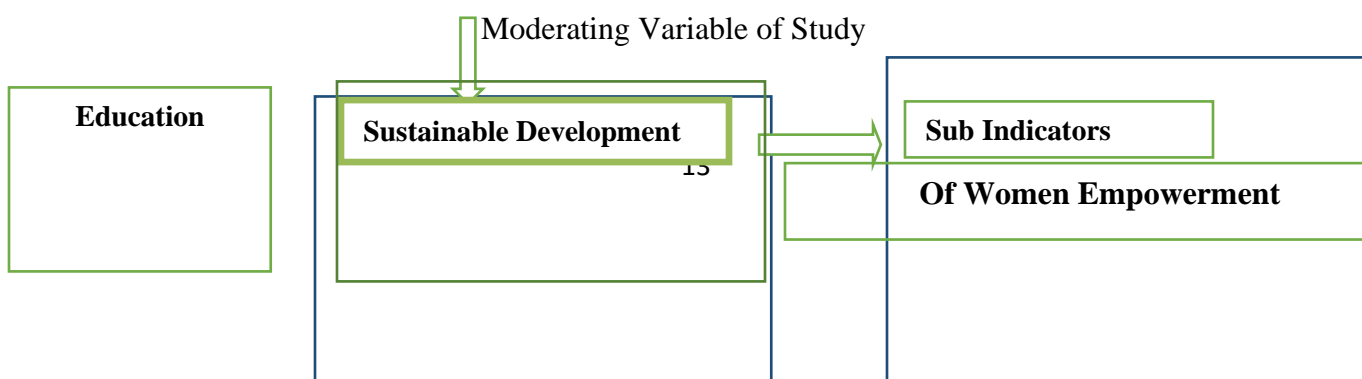
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Annex-A

### Conceptual Framework of the Study





## Indicators of Sustainable Development

