

DETERMINANTS OF WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND POVERTY REDUCTION: A CASE STUDY OF RURAL FAISALABAD, PUNJAB

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In the rural areas of Pakistan, women have limited access to credit, property, education, skill, paid job and land. There are many hindrances in women empowerment in the rural areas such as socio-economic and cultural values, norms, and patriarchal structure of society etc. In this context, this research was planned to analyze different determinants of empowerment of rural women for poverty reduction in agrarian communities by taking the case study of rural Faisalabad. Multistage random sampling technique was used for data collection at different stages. Two tehsils from district Faisalabad were selected through simple random sampling technique and four rural union councils and then eight villages were selected randomly. Twenty five (25) from each village were selected through convenient sampling technique thereby making total sample size of 200 women. Most important finding of the study is that the households where women have higher decision making authority are better-off and in other words women empowerment is likely to reduce poverty and increase household wellbeing. The results also revealed significantly positive relationship between women age, education, decision making authority and paid work involvement with empowerment and poverty reduction. It is also concluded that education is the most important factor in empowerment but majority (64.5%) of respondents had only up to 5 year education. In the study area most respondents had very limited decision making authority and control over economic resources mostly significant and important decisions and resources are controlled by the male members. Similarly majority of the respondents (65%) said that decisions regarding family size were taken by both husband and wife. Freedom of mobility is one of the pillars of empowerment and helpful in poverty reduction but the results showed that very small percentage of respondents had full freedom of mobility to go outside the house and more than 80% of the respondents needed permission from their family to go to the local market. Though rural women have great contribution in poverty reduction but majority of them were facing the problems of low education, wages, less control over resources, freedom of mobility and lack of decision making authority.

Keywords: Women empowerment, socio-economic determinants, Punjab, poverty, food insecurity.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of 'women empowerment' has now become one of the most debated and researched issues among development researchers. It is generally argued that women empowerment is crucial for sustainable economic growth and reduction in poverty in the developing countries (Klasen and Lamanna, 2009). World Bank (2008) defines empowerment as the process of enhancing capabilities and capacity of social groups or individuals to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. In this perspective Elliot (2008) mentioned that empowerment has both objective and subjective dimensions. Women empowerment is a process of encouraging participation of females in developmental activities, giving them freedom of mobility and power of speech. Awan and Iqbal (2015) narrated that women empowerment means making women self-dependent, giving them freedom, and access to the economic

opportunities. Women empowerment is enhancing their position in power structure of the society.

Women empowerment is a process of change in which women rebuilt or acquire the capability of taking decisions and support themselves and their family members financially and morally (UNDP, 2014). Some researchers recognize women empowerment as participatory process through which they achieve equity and equality. Malhotra *et al.* (2002) described the dimensions of empowerment as different indicators: economic security, legal and political awareness, authority of sale and purchases, participation in decision making, freedom of mobility, not treated as subordinate, participation in political and social activities and self-esteem. Phenomena of empowerment are defined in very narrow perspective it should be defined without thinking about boundaries. It is a universal phenomenon and it should be explained with feminine and masculine forces instead of gender. Thus women's empowerment mean women lived a

socially active life and participate in development activities. Economic empowerment of women is first step towards empowerment. The research in Pakistan shows that rural women who are economically empowered, their household income is increased and their household members were healthier and children got better education in good schools (Tariq, 2013).

Bali (2006) claimed that women empowerment is a practice providing enabling environment to women against prevailing norms, culture and traditions to increase their well-being. He further narrated that woman empowerment results in the direct and visible improvement in household's income and reduction of vulnerabilities. For instance provision of micro finance facilities to women has significant positive impact on women self-confidence, decision making power and management abilities.

Form the above discussion it can be argued that poverty and women empowerment are interconnected terms. Poverty is a multi-faceted phenomenon which negatively affects not only the ability of households to buy goods, but also increase vulnerability towards various risks and pressures that may prohibit a household or individual from enjoying quality life. Poverty can be explained in terms of the lack of basic capacities to participate effectively in society and enjoying decent living, violation of human dignity, not having enough to feed and clothing for family, not having access to credit, not having the productive land to grow food or a good job to earn money, not being able to access education, powerlessness, insecurity and exclusion (Adams *et al.*, 2008). Moreover, women are also having many health related hazards specifically due to their bad working conditions (Farah and Khan, 2015). These issues get more serious form when these are related to the health of mothers' of disabled children as such children need more attention from their mothers' side which can't be possible if the mother herself is sick (Iqbal *et al.*, 2014).

Pakistan is a developing country and is basically an agro-based economy where poverty issue is increasing day by day. Gender empowerment which is a decisive factor in the alleviation of poverty is one of the lowest in the rural areas (Usman, 2009). According to the government of Pakistan estimate more than 22% of the population is living under the line of poverty i.e. \$1.25 per day (Government of Pakistan, 2013-14). Similarly according to UNDP Human Development Index (HDI), Pakistan's HDI is 0.562 which ranks it 139th out of 179 countries of the world. Likewise human poverty index is 33.7% and GEM (Gender Empowerment Measure) is 0.392 which ranks it 98th out of 108 countries around the globe. Pakistan ranked 146 among 186 countries in (GDI) Gender Development Index and ranks 123 out of 148 countries in gender inequality index (Human development report, UNDP, 2014) though 51 percent of the country's population consists of female yet Pakistan ranked

99 among 109 countries on Gender Empowerment Measure (UNDP, 2014).

Limited or no access to livelihood assets like education, credit facilities, land, infrastructure, health facilities, and lack of nutritious food, save drinking water, poor sanitation, and nominal contribution to household decision making make rural women of Pakistan more vulnerable. Poverty also compels rural females into condition in which they become susceptible to exploitation (Usman, 2009). Likewise Baha (2012) stated that the rural women in agrarian societies have low wages, restricted right to access to education and health services, low job security and almost no or limited inheritance and land rights.

In addition to the deep- rooted patterns of social discrimination, unsustainable agricultural practices, domestic violence and climate change etc. exaggerate the burden on rural women and their families. Women also face several socio-cultural barriers in employment opportunities, education, political participation, decision making, control over resources etc. status of women in the family and society of Pakistan is not satisfactory, women are discriminated in every field of life (Tisdell, 2002). Morrison *et al.* (2007) narrated that there is significant relationship between gender equality and poverty reduction and growth. If rural females are economically empowered they can ultimately become empowered in political, social and institutional aspects of life. In other words women social status greatly affects procedure of empowerment. Rural Women actively participate in household and production activities and sacrifice for families but their work is not recognized by the society.

It has been an established fact that rural women empowerment is vital for the progress of a country. Afzal *et al.* (2009) stated that low literacy rate, local norms and power relations, household responsibilities, lack of access in controlling the resources and severe poverty were the reasons of low empowerment rate in women. Empowerment of women from grass root level is demand of modern era to fight against poverty, malnutrition and food insecurity. Keeping in view the importance of women empowerment and its link with poverty, this research paper intends to investigate socio-economic determinants of women empowerment and poverty in the rural areas of Faisalabad district of the Punjab, Pakistan. More specifically the paper explores the state of women empowerment and linkage between empowerment, socio-economic characteristics and poverty reduction in the study area.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study area for this research was Faisalabad district of the Punjab province. Faisalabad is the 2nd largest city of the Punjab and is a mix of rural-urban landscape as it is the hub of agriculture as well as textile industry. Administratively

district Faisalabad is divided into 5 tehsils viz. Faisalabad, Jhumra, Sumandri, Tandlianwala and Jaranwala. Multistage random sampling technique was used for the purpose of data collection. At first stage, two Tehsils (Faisalabad and Jhumra) were chosen by using simple random sampling technique. At second stage, four union councils (UC-49, UC-157, UC-44, UC-14) were selected through simple random sampling technique. At third stage, eight villages (Chak No- 225 RB, Chak No-129 RB, Chak No-186 RB, Chak No-217 RB, Chak No-218 RB, Chak No-61 JB, Chak No-122 RB, and Chak No-119 RB) were selected randomly. A sample of 200 respondents (women) was selected through convenient sampling technique by taking twenty five respondent from each selected village. The variables studied for this research project included, demographic characteristics of the respondents (age, education, income, family type etc.), control over economic resources, participation in decision making and mobility. Interview schedule was designed in the light of research objectives. The interview schedule was tested for its content and face validity before using it in the field. Both Univariate and Bi-variate statistical investigation were performed. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for data analysis

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results regarding univariate and bi-variate statistical analysis are presented and discussed in this section.

Univariate Analysis:

Socio-economic characteristics: Determination of demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the population is important for any social research. The respondents were asked about different demographic characteristics and the results in this regard are presented in Table 1.

The data presented in Table 1 indicates that 29% of the respondents in the sample were up to 25 years of age, 38.5% respondents were of age 26 to 35 years and more than one fourth (32.5%) respondents were more than 36 year of age. Overall mean value for age was 32 years which indicates that most of the respondents were middle aged. Previous researchers agreed that age is an important factor as far as empowerment is concerned. For instance Ahmad and Sultan (2004) argued that in women's empowerment age is a major factor to be considered. They concluded that with the increase in age women make progress in their understanding and expand self confidence to successfully handle everyday activities. Shahida *et al.* (2014) stated that as compared to the older wives; young wives were more in control of their husbands and had less freedom of mobility. In the same vein, Mostofa *et al.* (2008) studied that women below 20 year of age were less empowered as compare to women aged 40-44 years. Elderly women had a better understanding of their household and had closer relationship with their husbands,

because they had more opportunities to correspond with their husbands and family. Solomon and Adekoya (2006) stated that within families' generally older women participate more in decision-making process and control over economic resources. It has been observed that middle aged women have comparatively more ability to make proper household decisions and deal with family affairs.

Table 1. Distribution of the respondent's according to socio-economic characteristics.

Respondents' age	Frequency	Percentage
up to 25	58	29.0
26-35	77	38.5
36 and above	65	32.5
Education		
Up to class 5	129	64.5
6-11	41	20.5
12 and above	30	15.0
Family size		
up to 5	72	36.0
6-10	110	55.0
11 +	18	9.0
Household income		
up to 15000	115	57.5
15001-30000	56	28.0
30001+	29	14.5
Respondents' income		
up to 5000	31	15.5
50001-10000	14	7.0
100001 and above	5	2.5
No income	150	75.0
Involvement in paid work		
Yes	50	25
No	150	75
Family type		
Nuclear family	136	68
Joint family	64	32

Source: Primary data: 2015

Education is another important variable and it is essential for women's empowerment. It helps them to acquire, analyze information and control the circumstances (Schultz, 1988). Table 1 indicates that majority (64.5%) of the respondents had up to 5 year education, less than one fourth (20.5%) of the respondents had six to eleven year of education while 15% had twelve and above education. It has been reported by Rahman *et al.* (2008) that there is a considerable association between women's education and empowerment, and they argued that education enhances their understanding and create awareness. Heaton *et al.* (2005) studied the difference between educated and illiterate women; educated women had greater opportunity to access to resources and information and understanding that enlarge their probability to avail for better

paid jobs and more benefits and resources. Evidence shows that increase in education of women boost their salaries/wages to improve human development outcomes such as child survival, household food nutrition security, children health and education etc. The returns of education from women are often greater than the returns to education for men (Schultz, 1988). It can be interpreted from the above discussion that educated women possess better abilities and skill to make decisions and their opinion also matters at the household level.

The results regarding family size indicate that that 36% of the respondents had up to 5 family members, while majority (55%) had 6 to 10 family members and less than one fifth (9%) respondents had 11+ family members. The overall mean for family size is 6.4 members per household. Family size in Pakistan in general and rural areas in particular is large and this is because of the prevalence of joint family system where father, mother and families of their sons usually live together under one roof and share common kitchen.

Income of the household is also one of the important indicators of household status. It can be seen from the Table-1 that majority (57.5%) of the household were earning up to 15,000 Rupees per month., 28% of the household earn from 15,001 to 30,000 Rupees per month and 14.5% of the respondents belonged to the households that were earning more than 30,000 Rupees. The overall mean was calculated as 14580 rupees per month. Information pertaining to income revealed that most of the respondents belonged to low-income households but there was representation of other income groups in the sample.

The results regarding personal income of the respondents presented in Table 1 show that 15.5% respondents were earning up to five thousand rupees per month, 7% respondents were earnings 50001-10000 rupees and only 2.5% of the respondents were earning 100001 and above, three forth (75%) respondents were earning nothing. One quarter (25%) of the respondents were involved in paid work and earned income and 75% were not only housewives. FAO (2013) reported that rural women participation in different income generating activities depend on diverse cultural, economic

and social variables, such as employment opportunities, health, mobility, education, decision making, work place distance, structure of family, transportation, family size etc. However, Economic Empowerment may be hampered by the cultural barriers. Batliwala (2004) argued that women's economic dependence was the main reason for their weakness and economically productive women can improve their own and household status. According to Ali and Sultan (1999) narrated that women's involvement in paid job plays a vibrant role in decreasing their economic dependency and accordingly improving their status. Paid job provides women a source of income that reduces their economic dependency and enhances their control over resources that lead them towards empowerment and link with poverty reduction.

Table 1 also shows that majority (68%) of the respondents belonged to nuclear family; while more than one fifth (32%) belonged to joint family system. Jejeebhoy (2000) argued that nuclear family had strong positive impact on the empowerment of women. From extended to nuclear family and with changing the gender hierarchy, it changes the status of women within family.

The data presented in Table 2 indicate that 27.5% of the respondents had full control over household spending. Only 5.5% had control over purchase or sale of jewelry/bonds/shares, only 7% of the respondents held full control on the purchases of gifts for relatives. It was also found that 12.5% of the respondents had full control over household savings. It can also be seen in Table 2 that less than half (46%) of the respondents had full control over the purchases of clothes and makeup articles. It was found that 8.5% of the respondents had full control over household valuables; only 4% of the respondent had control over the sale and purchase of land, house and livestock etc. Kamla (2008) narrated that women equal access to and control over economic and financial resources was crucial to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and for equitable and sustainable economic growth and development. Gender equality in the distribution and control of economic and financial resources had positive multiplier effects, including poverty reduction and welfare of children in

Table 2. Distribution of the respondents according to their control over economic resources.

Control over economic resources	Wife		Husband		Both		Other		Total
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Control routine household spending	55	27.5	39	19.5	76	38.0	30	15.0	200
Purchase jewelry	11	5.5	93	46.5	65	32.5	31	15.5	200
Purchasing gifts	14	7.0	62	31.0	93	46.5	31	15.5	200
Control over saving for use	25	12.5	93	46.5	51	25.5	31	15.5	200
Purchasing clothes make up	92	46.0	39	19.5	38	19.0	31	15.5	200
Own control household valuable	17	8.5	92	46.0	60	30.0	31	15.5	200
Sale exchange land/ livestock / house	8	4.0	90	45.0	71	35.5	31	15.5	200

Source: Primary Data 2015

developing countries. In a previous study Bali (2006) argued that female empowerment is a practice providing enabling environment to women against prevailing norms, culture and traditions to increase their well-being. It was further noted that female empowerment results in the direct and visible improvement in household's income and reduction of vulnerabilities. For example provision of micro finance facilities to women has significant positive impact on women self-confidence, decision making power and management abilities.

Table 3 indicates that more than half (62.5%) of the decisions regarding family health care were made by both (husband and wife). Only 2.5% of the respondents had complete decision making authority regarding expensive household purchases; less than one fourth (20%) of the respondents had full influence in purchasing routine household items. Poor representation was observed regarding their independent decisions about education of their children by respondents. More than half (65%) of decisions regarding the family size were taken by both, husband wife. It was also noticed that less than three fourth 64% of the decisions regarding family planning methods to be used, were made by both, respondents and their husbands. In a study Rathirane (2013) argued that decision making authority is one of the most important factors in women's empowerment. There was a positive relationship between women empowerment and decision making power at household level. Likewise, Solomon and Adekoya (2006)

stated that women normally had control over the income earned by them. Their income was positively and significantly interlinked with the control over resources and decision making. According to UNDP (2014), women empowerment is a process of change in which females rebuilt or acquire the competence of taking decisions and support themselves and their household family members monetarily and morally.

Mobility means movement of women from one place to another place outside homes. Table 4 shows that majority (81.5%) of the respondents needed permission from their family to go to the local market for shopping while 18.5% of the respondents did not need any consent. It was further examined that only 21.5% of the respondents could go alone, 78.5% were allowed to go with a family member. In order to go to health centre 82% of the respondents needed consent. 18% of the respondents were allowed to go alone, 82% of the respondents could go with a family member. In order to go to neighborhood for gossip, 79.5% of the respondents had to look for consent of their family; only 19.5% were allowed to go alone to their neighborhood for gossip. It was also indicated that almost 92% of the respondents needed permission to go to their relatives or friends and majority of the respondents (91%) were allowed to go with family member. Furthermore, 93.5% of the respondents needed permission to go to other cities and majority of the respondents (93%) were allowed to go with family member. Ahmad and Sultan (2004) argued that freedom of mobility is

Table 3. Distribution of the respondents according to their participation in decision making.

Decision making	Wife		Husband		Both		Other		Total
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Family health care	12	6.0	36	18.0	125	62.5	27	13.5	200
Large household purchase	5	2.5	57	28.5	104	52.0	34	17.0	200
Routine household purchase	40	20.0	29	14.5	98	49.0	33	16.5	200
Children education	8	4.0	35	17.5	132	66.0	25	12.5	200
Family size	5	2.5	41	20.5	129	64.5	25	12.5	200
Family planning services	6	3.0	41	20.5	128	64.0	25	12.5	200
Job of women	6	3.0	123	61.5	44	22.0	27	13.5	200
Food allocation	69	34.5	20	10.0	84	42.0	27	13.5	200
Making which type of food	75	37.5	21	10.5	77	38.5	27	13.5	200
Supervision of house	58	29.0	22	11.0	87	43.5	33	16.5	200
Marriage of children	10	5.0	48	24.0	112	56.0	30	15.0	200

Table 4. Distribution of the respondents according to their mobility.

Mobility	Permission needed				Mobility				Total
	Yes		No		Yes		No		
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Local market	163	81.5	37	18.5	43	21.5	157	78.5	200
local health center	164	82.0	36	18.0	36	18.0	164	82.0	200
Neighborhood	159	79.5	41	20.5	39	19.5	160	80.0	200
home of relative friends	184	92.0	16	8.0	17	8.5	183	91.5	200
other city village	187	93.5	13	6.5	13	6.5	187	93.0	200
Festival fair	187	93.5	13	6.5	12	6.0	188	94.0	200

also one of the significant determinants in empowerment. Women who can go outside the four walls of house freely were more empowered and involved in paid work that had major impact on their household income and poverty. Women's empowerment designates that females may live a socially active life and participate in development activities. Economic empowerment of women is first step towards empowerment. The research in Pakistan revealed that rural women who are economically empowered, their household income is increased and their household members were healthier and children got better education in good schools (Tariq, 2013).

Bivariate analysis: Bivariate analysis was conducted to find association between different socio-economic/ demographic characteristics and women role in poverty reduction and empowerment. The results in this regards are presented in the following sections.

Table 5. Association between age of the respondents and role in poverty reduction.

Age of respondent	Role in poverty reduction			Total
	Low	Medium	High	
up to 25	38	15	5	58
	65.5%	25.9%	8.6%	100.0%
26-35	48	19	11	78
	61.5%	24.4%	14.1%	100.0%
36 and above	35	17	12	64
	54.7%	26.6%	18.8%	100.0%
Total	121	51	28	200
	60.5%	25.5%	14%	100.0%

Chi-square = 9.44; d.f. = 4; P-value = 0.051; Gamma = 0.261

Table 5 presents the association between age of the respondents and their perceived role in poverty reduction. Chi-square value shows a significant association between age of the respondents and their role in poverty reduction. Gamma value shows a positive relationship between the variables. It means majority of the aged respondents had more likely to have role in poverty reduction as compared to less aged respondents. Above table also shows that low age respondents (up to 25) had low (65.5%), medium (25.9%) and high (8.6%) role in poverty reduction. While age (26-35) respondents had low (61.5%), medium (24.4%) and high (14.1%) role in poverty reduction. Whereas in high age group (36 and above) had low (57.7%), medium (26.6%) and high (18.8%) role in household poverty reduction. So the hypothesis "Higher the age of the women, higher will be the role in household poverty reduction" is accepted.

Different dimensions of empowerment have been identified by the previous researchers (see for example Malhotra *et al.* 2002). Some of the indicators in this regards are economic security, legal and political awareness, authority of sale and purchases, participation in decision making, freedom of

mobility, not treated as subordinate, participation in political and social activities and self-esteem. Incidences of empowerment are defined in very narrow perspective it should be defined without thinking about boundaries. It is a universal phenomenon and it should be explained with feminine and masculine forces instead of gender. In the study area it was observed that elderly women were respected by the household members, this is attributed to the local cultural values which emphasize the respect for elders.

Table 6. Association between education of the respondents and role in poverty reduction.

Education of respondent	Role in poverty reduction			Total
	Low	Medium	High	
Up to primary	102	21	6	129
	79.1%	16.3%	4.7%	100.0%
Middle to	16	18	7	41
Matric	39.0%	43.9%	17.1%	100.0%
FA and above	7	12	11	30
	23.3%	40.0%	36.7%	100.0%
Total	125	51	24	200
	62.5%	25.5%	12.0%	100.0%

*Chi-square = 50.76; d.f. = 4; P-value = 0.000**;*
Gamma = 0.692

Table 6 presents the association between education of the respondents and their role in poverty reduction. Chi-square value shows a significant association between education of the respondents and their role in poverty reduction. Gamma value shows a positive relationship between the variables. It means majority of the educated respondents had higher role in poverty reduction as compared to less educated respondents. So the hypothesis "Higher the education of the women, higher will be the role in household poverty reduction" is accepted.

Several researchers have argued that poverty and women empowerment are interconnected concepts. Poverty is a multi-faceted phenomenon which adversely affects not only the ability of people to purchase goods, but also increase vulnerability towards various risks and pressures that may prohibit a household or individual from enjoying quality life. According to Adams *et al.* (2008) poverty can be elucidated in terms of the lack of basic capacities to participate effectively in society and enjoying decent living, violation of human dignity, not having enough to feed and clothing for family, not having access to credit, not having the productive land to grow food or a good job to earn money, not being able to access education and health facilities, powerlessness, insecurity and exclusion. In the context of present study, the importance of education particularly in women is evident. The educated women are generally considered as wiser in the rural areas and because of low literacy level in villages such (educated) women have better role in household decision making than those of illiterate women.

Table 7. Association between women involvement in paid work and role in poverty reduction.

Women work	Role in poverty reduction			Total
	Low	Medium	High	
Paid work	23	17	10	50
	46.0%	34.0%	20.0%	100.0%
Non paid work	92	39	19	150
	61.3%	26.0%	12.7%	100.0%
Total	115	56	29	200
	57.5%	28.0%	14.5%	100.0%

Chi-square = 33.209 ; *d.f.* = 2; *P-value* = 0.000**; *Gamma* = 0.185

Table 7 presents the association between respondent's involvement in paid work and their role in poverty reduction. Chi-square value shows a significant association between respondents paid work involvement and their role in poverty reduction. Gamma value shows a positive relationship between the variables. It means majority of the respondents involved in paid work had more role in poverty reduction as compared to other respondents. Above table also shows that respondents involved in paid work had (low (46.0%), medium (34.0%) and high (20.0%) role in poverty reduction. While respondents involved in non paid work had low (61.3%), medium (26.0%) and high (12.7%) role in poverty reduction. So the hypothesis "Higher the women involvement in paid work, higher will be the role in household poverty reduction" is accepted.

Pakistan like many other developing countries of Asia and Africa has poor record of gender empowerment which is a decisive factor in the alleviation of poverty (Usman, 2009). Pakistan has low Human Development Index (HDI), i.e. 0.562 which ranks it 139th out of 179 countries of the world. Likewise, human poverty index is about 34% and Gender Empowerment Measure is 0.392 which ranks it 98th out of 108 countries around the globe (UNDP, 2014). Inadequate or no access to important components of livelihood like education, credit facilities, land, infrastructure, health facilities, and lack of nutritious food, save drinking water, poor sanitation, and nominal contribution to household decision making make rural women of Pakistan more vulnerable. Baha (2012) stated that the rural women in agrarian societies have low wages, restricted right to access to education and health services, low job security and almost no or limited inheritance and land rights.

Table 8 presents the association between respondent's participation in decision making and their role in poverty reduction. Chi-square value shows a significant association between respondent's participation in decision making and their role in poverty reduction. Gamma value shows a positive relationship between the variables. It means majority of the respondents who had more participation in decision making had more role in poverty reduction as compared to respondents with low decision making power. So the

hypothesis "Higher the women participation in decision making, higher will be the role in poverty reduction" is accepted.

Table 8. Association between women participation in decision making and role in poverty reduction.

Decision making	Role in poverty reduction			Total
	Low	Medium	High	
Low	28	10	7	45
	62.2%	22.2%	15.6%	100.0%
Medium	78	32	16	126
	61.9%	25.4%	12.7%	100.0%
High	9	14	6	29
	31.0%	48.3%	20.7%	100.0%
Total	115	56	29	200
	57.5%	28.0%	14.5%	100.0%

Chi-square = 10.314; *d.f.* = 4; *P-value* = 0.03; *Gamma* = 0.224

In the rural areas of Pakistan women face many socio-cultural and economic barriers regarding access to education, employment opportunities, political participation, control over resources decision making at household level. The overall status of women in the family and society of Pakistan is not reasonable, and women are discriminated in many fields of life. In a previous study Morrison *et al.* (2007) reported that there is substantial relationship between gender equality and poverty reduction and rural development. If rural females are empowered economically they can eventually become empowered in social, political and institutional aspects. In other words, their social status greatly affects access of empowerment. Generally rural women actively participate in household and agricultural production activities and sacrifice for their families but their work is not recognized by the society. In this perspective Elliot (2008) mentioned that empowerment has both objective and subjective dimensions. Women empowerment is a process of encouraging participation of females in developmental activities, giving them freedom of mobility and power of speech. According to Awan and Iqbal (2015) women empowerment means making females self-dependent, giving them freedom, and access to the economic opportunities. Women empowerment is enhancing their position in power structure of rural society and this is an crucial step towards poverty reduction in the rural areas.

Conclusions: The results of this study indicated a strong relationship between different socio-economic determinants related to women's empowerment and poverty reduction. The results regarding empowerment indicate that majority of the respondents do not have control/decision making power over household spending (jewelry, valuable items etc.); however almost half of the respondents have control over the purchase of clothes and make-up articles. There were only 4% of the

respondents who had control over the sale and purchase and sale of land, house and livestock. Similarly, decision regarding job of females are also made by males. Overwhelming majority of the respondents need permission of their husbands for moving outside of the home and most of them have to take one accompanying family member with them. Similarly, age, education and employment of women also have positive relationship with poverty reduction. The results regarding linkage of socio-economic variable and poverty indicate that the households where women have greater role in decision making likely to be better-off and there is positive link of empowerment and poverty reduction.

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