

Role of Contextual Factors in Women's Empowerment

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Abstract

The present study was an attempt to examine the role of contextual factors (viz., locality, paid job, age, and education) in determining women's empowerment. A sample of 1000 ever married women, aged between 21 and 49 years ($M_{age}=35.55$, $SD=7.80$) was conveniently selected from two city districts of Pakistan (Multan and Lahore). Women's empowerment was measured by Composite Women's Empowerment Index (CWEI: Batool, 2017), and contextual factors were measured by demographic data sheet. The results of t-test revealed that women living in Lahore were significantly more empowered as compared with those living in Multan, and similarly women in paid jobs were significantly more empowered as compared with those not in paid jobs. Likewise, one way ANOVA revealed significant group differences on women's empowerment and it appeared that women of older age, and women with higher level of education scored significantly higher on women's empowerment as compared to their comparison groups. The limitations of the study and suggestions were also discussed.

Keywords: Women's empowerment, age, paid job, education-test, ANOVA.

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Introduction

Empowerment is "the expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them" (Kabeer, 2001:19). Whereas, women's empowerment embraces the expansion in choices of women, and progression of competence to implement their choices (Human Development Report, 1995). There exists strict inter-relationship between economic development and women's empowerment (Duflo, 2012). It is a

two way process: women's empowerment is the outcome of economic development and if

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women are empowered, alterations in decision making is observed, which will certainly cast its tangible impact on the economic development of a country. This helps in bringing about equity among men and women. It is settled that unless development is engendered, it would be endangered. It is useless to discuss about human development in a true sense unless we liberally realize the potential of all human beings (Human Development Report, 1995). Robust associations of human and economic development with empowerment are found. The core target of development is to advance the living standards (e.g., hygiene, better opportunities of education, better health facilities, and other rudimentary necessities) of masses regardless of caste, gender, color or creed. In order to accelerate the process of development, both men and women should participate alike in the duties and practices that may help them shape their lives. However, women are considered as marginalized segment of population all over the world because they do not add a considerable share in the process of development.

In a situation where women belong to marginalized groups of any society, one of the strategies that can support women to contribute equally and more resourcefully in development process is the participatory empowerment approach (development policy through sharing of the stakeholders e.g., government, beneficiaries, donor agencies, and non-government organizations). The policy agenda like this is considered as a sustainable strategy for women's participation in the development process (Khan & Bibi, 2011). In line with the sustainable development, documenting the vitality of women's participation in economic activities, Sen (2000) proclaims that in case women share economic activities, the whole society enjoys its benefits. Societal paybacks are accomplished through boosted women's status and liberty.

According to international development agencies, women's empowerment is a source of moving forward the sustainable development and mitigating poverty (World Bank, 2001). The

deliberation of women's empowerment as an objective of development is grounded in twofold arguments: social justice is a remarkable aspect of the well-being of individuals and hence essentially apt to be chased, and additional objectives are attained by women when they are empowered (Malhotra, Schuler,&Boender, 2002). Still, the connotations and approaches associated to the notion of empowerment differ, and the methods to scientifically measure and to track modifications in levels of empowerment are prone to flaws (Malhotra et al., 2002).

The issue of gender inequality is a common feature of developing countries. The inherent economic and cultural factors of developing economies do not give space to women to raise their voice. Women in developing countries face various types of helplessness in economic and societal spheres of life. The disempowerment of women is returned in their lower status and prospects in attaining education, earning incomes, controlling personal incomes, and bargaining power to market their labor and products, to contribute in decision-taking, to have right to use resources, and paid job prospects in comparison with men.

When we go through the annals of history, we find the status of women in subcontinent to be helpless and dependent. The most prominent outcomes stayed seclusion, subservience, and denial of self, which brought crucial consequences for women's power over their fate, vis-a-vis their reproduction choices (Jejeebhoy, 1994). Though such customs were rooted in greater communal institutions, their impact on the individuals' performance (both women and men) occurred within families, and near relationship linkages. Pakistan is ruled by Islamic laws, but discernment against women in Pakistan is exposed by the facts of demographic data (Alavi,1991), and sufferings of women can be observed in numerous ways as individual and institutional vehemence are common practice throughout Pakistan (United Nations Women,2011). In a typical traditional society of Pakistan, 'patriarchy' comes out as one of the root

causes of general disregarded position of women (Ibrahim, 2005). In case a woman is failed to follow the patriarchal rule, she is inflicted physical punishment by floggings, sensual abuse, burnings, and in some cases even killed in the name of honor (Noor, 2004). Men identify women as second-rate and delicate both bodily and mentally. So it is required that perception of men on roles of women should be altered (Isran&Isran, 2012). Another reason of severe resentment towards women in Pakistani society is caused by its feudal system (Ali &Gavino, 2008). Demonstration of gender violence is also witnessed in the form of involuntary weddings, murders in the name of honor, early age marriages, burning of brides, and acid attacks (Critelli,2010).

During 1980s, Pakistani society underwent drastic changes due to a powerful movement that brought vivid change in Pakistani politics, as women raised up to protect their rights. Such environment introduced better scenario for women in both urban and rural parts of Pakistan equally (Alavi, 1991). But it is due to highly immersed feudal and patriarchal systems prevalent all over Pakistan, the economic and socio-cultural status of women is still found low.

The rate of adult literacy of females was 45 percent and women's representation in national assembly was 21 percent in the year 2002 (Government of Pakistan, 2013). According to Gender Gap Index (GGI), rank of Pakistan amongst 134 countries remained 132 in year 2009(Mehar, 2009). In order to combat the challenges of existent world, we are required to guarantee the involvement of our women in the course of sustainable development. Such steps can be taken only by dint of the policy of women's participating empowerment approach than any top down approach (Khan & Bibi, 2011).

Despite various efforts and steps initiated by Pakistani government to raise the status of women, a large gap still exists between policy and practice. So it becomes incumbent to explore and assess such factors that may help our women to be empowered. Scientific inquiry to study the prerequisites to empower women has been observed in the past three decades to increase equity in societal, political, and economic spheres, and wider access to vital human rights, upgrading in diet, fundamental health, and schooling(Lopez-Claros &Zahidi, 2005). The present study is an effort to assess the significant group differences in women's empowerment with reference to contextual factors (e.g., age groups, education levels, job status, and residential area: Lahore and Multan districts).

Literature Review

It is not true that women's empowerment is a stagnant phenomenon; rather it keeps on changing in different phases of life due to their changed status within their families (Jejeebhoy, 2000). Chronological age of women is found to significantly and positively determine women's empowerment by many researchers. Ethiopian Democratic and Health Survey (2005) documented the women of older age to be supposed to enjoy better status, rights and duties in contrast to their younger counterparts. Tijani and Yano (2007) assessed the current status of women farmers in two prefectures of Japan: Hiroshima and Shimane. A stratified random sample of 130 women was selected. Status of women farmers was found to be enhanced in the present time in contrast to the last year. It means with increasing age, women become more empowered. Mostofa, Tareque, Haque, and Islam (2008) used data of Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey (2004) of 11,440 women of aged 10-49 years. The indicators of women's empowerment used included: women's power of economic decision-making, household decision-making, and autonomy of mobility. Mean scores of women's empowerment index on demographic variables demonstrated that women's empowerment enlarged as the chronological age of women increased. The outcomes showed that women below 20 years of age were less Empowered in contrast with the women whose age group was 40-44 year. Nayak and Mahanta (2009) found that women's control over cash earnings (monetary empowerment) improved with more age. Acharya, Bell, Simkhada, van Teijlingen, and Regmi(2010) found older age of women as a strong determinant of women's decision making ability. Khan and Awan(2011) analyzed the factors that influenced the decision making power (economic decision making of women within family and family planning) of married women aged 15-49 years in Pakistan. The outcomes taken by using ordinal logistic regression indicated that women belonging to different categories of age depicted diverse results in contexts of family planning and economic decision making of women's empowerment. It was declared that context of family planning was more inclined to be male-controlled whereas, with more years of age, a woman extended additional empowerment in the context of economic decision making within the family. Haque, Islam, Tareque, and Most of a (2011) via multiple linear regression analysis showed age as a life cycle feature that affected a woman. The results confirmed that empowerment in all three dimensions (economic decision making, decision making within family, and physical mobility) were found higher for the respondents who were comparatively older. Sheikh, Meraj,andSadaqat (2015) found women's own higher 'age' as a strong and positive determining factor of their economic empowerment.

Education is a strong impetus in motivating gender equality in numerous fruitful outcomes (Aslam, 2013). Rise in the level of education is cited as a very effective recommendation to empower women (Ethiopian Democratic and Health Survey, 2005). Motivating role of education in the women's empowerment process has been reinforced by many researchers. In this respect, a study was conducted by Ahmad and Sultan (2004) which found that at lower level of education empowerment indicators (empowerment, communication with husband and physical mobility) were found lower, and higher level of education were found resilient positive determinant of women's empowerment, and mobility. The role of education, no matter what its level is, appeared very much important to empower women in India. In pursuit of this view point, a study in India conducted by Roy and Niranjana (2004) pointed out that a high percentage of women who finished at least middle level of education was given priority to take their opinions regarding family decision making, had freedom of mobility, and had right to use cash as compared to the uneducated women. Sridevi (2005) in a study using sample of post graduate teachers in Chennai: a district of India, sustained the hypothesis that with higher level of education, the level of women's empowerment was augmented. Parveen and Leonhauser (2005) revealed formal and informal education to positively and significantly influence women's empowerment in rural Bangladesh. Rahman, Karmaker, and Mia (2009) explained the determinants of women empowerment in Bangladesh by using a sample of 500 women who were ever-married and belonged to reproductive age (15-49 years) group. A parallel increase in level of education of women, and their decision making authority was found. Higher level of education not only positively moved women's decision making authority related to casting votes, but also the style of their families, their liberty of mobility, day-to-day household expenditure, decision for domestic matters and their contribution as representatives.

Nayak and Mahanta (2009) found that women's empowerment increased with higher levels of education. Wiklander and Thede (2010) found negative marginal impact of the level of education on women's physical mobility in Tamil Nadu. Khan and Awan (2011) supported women's education level as an advancing element in their empowerment in context of decision making. Acharya et al. (2010) found that educated women in Nepal had considerable 'say' in reproductive concerns, allocated main chunk of time on familial and economic activities, and got wedded at mature age. Aslam (2013) found that education diminished gender difference in incomes among classes and hence contributed conspicuously in lessening gender inequality in labor market. Gholipour, Rahimian, Mirzamani, and Zehtabi (2010) acclaimed higher education and profession as functioning instrument to empower women. Haque et al. (2011) declared that highly educated women in Bangladesh were found highly empowered in decision-making regarding economic and household domains. Higher level of empowerment in economic sphere was witnessed among those women in Pakistan, who were educated (Sheikh et al., 2015).

Attainment of education alone cannot empower women to great extent unless they are reasonably engaged in paid jobs. A paid job is expected to have positive association with empowerment. In many cultures, though women are permitted to attain education yet, they are banned to do paid job as it is supposed to be a societal off-limits that women leave homes and intermingle with the men. Arguing in favor of women's freedom of social mobility, Sen (2000) proclaimed that in case women were deprived of such liberty to find jobs, it would be a tangible desecration of their choices and gender justice. Due to this barrier, women's economic empowerment was deteriorated. Wiklander and Thede (2010) concluded that paid job would impact women's status within their families and intra-household allocations. Paid jobs bring incomes that reduce women's economic dependence and improve their grasp over the assets that support in empowering them (e.g., Heaton, Huntsman, & Flake, 2005). When women's personal incomes increase, other benefits for example, health, better status, better

education facilities , expansion of income, decreasing vehemence, increasing confidence, and self-esteem etc. are also observed (AL-Amin & Chowdhury, 2008). Khan and Maan (2008) asserted that an educated woman was more likely to be conscious of her rights and to get a paid job, which further assists her to augment her empowerment. Nayak and Mahanta (2009) contended that women who were engaged in paid jobs were found more empowered as compared with those not in paid jobs. However, having access to jobs did not mean that women were financially autonomous as in certain cases women did not have control over their incomes. Control of women over their earnings enhanced as their age grew, with urban area, and education. Khan and Awan (2011) resolved that among other factors women's paid job played a significant decisive role to empower women in Pakistan. Women's paid job proves to be a dynamic factor to help them attain empowerment in economic sphere as it enhances the labor force participation rate. Women engaged in paid jobs are observed to be empowered in economic sphere in contrast to house wives (Sheikh et al., 2015). Women's paid job contribution is reduced due to greater share of their time dedicated to the services at homes that remained unpaid. The opportunity cost by dipping themselves in domestic unrewarded chores is pretty high. Stine and Karina (2003) underscored that the economic aspect of empowerment, denoted mainly to the earning competence. The lower average earnings of women were caused by their irregular involvement in labor force; an outcome of their time allocation to unpaid domestic work for instance, food cooking, and child rearing. Some researchers demonstrate divergent outcomes and have established education and paid jobs not to guarantee women that they would be empowered. Mason and Smith(2003) disclosed that women who got education and engaged in paid jobs, faced unwanted circumstances as compare to illiterate and housewives in certain economies. Nayak and Mahanta (2009) examined the determinants of women empowerment in India. The descriptive analysis showed that women's jobs and earnings were expected to empower them in decision making regarding spending their incomes independently or at least together with their spouses. Gholipour et al. (2010) in a study selected random sample of 600 women of diverse educational backgrounds. Formal education and income were found too positively and significantly influence women's empowerment in Tehran, Iran. The value of the

coefficient of education was noticed lower as compare to the value of the coefficient of income. It was justified by women's low expectations for searching jobs. Khan and Awan (2011) reinforced the bargaining theory of households and recommended that a rise in income was certainly followed by an increased bargaining power of women. It is embedded in literature that a woman who is active in economic domain (i.e., keeps her personal savings and earns handsome income, and adds monetary share in income of family) is said to be empowered in the economic sphere. This gives larger familial bargaining authority by augmenting her empowerment. Women of this type are expected to be in a position to challenge the leading traditions which restrain their capability to make their own choices (Blumberg, 2005; Sheikh et al., 2015; Swain & Wallentin, 2008).

The living locality sketches the convinced opportunities available to women (Ethiopian Democratic and Health Survey, 2005). Women's power (agency) is mainly shaped by social background rather than individual traits (Kabeer, 2001). Shifting of locality may modify the societal surrounding of individuals hence, this new environment may influence the lives of the dwellers; distinctive locality structures may also carry molding capacity to empower women (Khan & Maan, 2008). In a view point of Zareen and Labna, (2002), the residential area in Pakistan counts very much. People cannot go in contradiction of these backgrounds despite the fact that they are equipped with education and have additional associated exposures. Urban women are found to have greater say in decision-making when compared with their rural counterparts (Mahmood, 2002). According to Roy and Niranjana (2004), women residing in urban areas confronted lesser of constraints as compared with their counterparts in rural locality. Wiklander and Thede (2010) undertook a study on women's empowerment in India (two provinces) and found diverse outcomes. Women living in comparatively more developed district

were simply found to be more empowered in familial decision-making. The outcome of Wald test showed that women's social mobility in Uttar Pradesh was swayed by their residential locality. In a study, Acharya et al. (2010) used demographic Health Survey (2006) Nepal data of married women aged 15-49 years (N=825). Diverse contextual factors were used in logistic regression models to perceive the relationship of four types of decision making. The women who belonged to rural and Terai regions were found least autonomous in all types of decision making, and in developed area there was combination of difference in autonomy of women. Women of western zone were found to decide about their own health care whereas; it was less likely for them to purchase everyday household goods. According to Khan and Awan (2011), geographical split within Pakistan also predicts women's empowerment. It was found that women living in the province of NWFP depicted higher empowerment in contrast to women living in other three provinces. Parallel results were established in the urban and rural area of NWFP in contrast to regional stratification of Punjab, Sindh, and Baluchistan. Contrarily, women living in Punjab demonstrated higher empowerment in economic decision-making as compared to other three provinces. Khan and Awan found that women's living locality had significant and positive impact on three dimensions of women's empowerment: decision making in economic and household domains, and social mobility.

We may conclude that women's demographics: their locality, paid jobs, age, and education are contributing factors in empowering women. The present study was designed to see the group differences in women's empowerment in Pakistani women.

Hypotheses

In order to achieve the objectives of the present study the set of hypotheses is as follows:

H1: There are significant differences between women of Multan and Lahore on women's empowerment;

H2: There are significant differences between women in 'paid job' and women 'not in paid job' on women's empowerment;

H3: There are significant differences among women belonging to different age groups on women's empowerment;

H4: There are significant differences among women belonging to different education levels on women's empowerment;

Material and Method

Sample

In the present study, two city districts of Punjab, Pakistan: Lahore and Multan were purposively selected. Lahore from upper Punjab: comparatively more developed district than Multan: a district of southern Punjab. Different levels of Human Development Index (HDI) were used as criterion of development. The HDI score of Lahore is .806, and the HDI score of Multan is 0.644 (“The info list-List of Districts of Pakistan by Human Development Index”, 2012). A mixed sample technique was used. Two districts were purposively selected, and then four towns from each city were randomly selected. From Multan out of six 4 towns: Shah Rukan- e- Alam, Cantonment, Jalalpur Pirwala, and Bosan were randomly selected, and from Lahore out of nine, four towns: Gulberg, Data GanjBaksh, Samanabad, and cantonment were randomly selected. Finally, technique of disproportionate convenient sample was selected. Keeping in view the criteria given by Nachmias & Nachmias (1992) and Roscoe (1975) it was settled to take a sample of 500 women from each district. Sample of this study consisted of ever married women of reproductive age (21-49) years ($M_{age} = 35.55$, $SD = 7.80$) excluding divorced, and widows. The participants with different levels of education and with different living set ups: joint and nuclear family systems, employees from dissimilar organization (government & Private) and house wives, were included in the final sample. Women who were divorced, widows, married more than once, and never married were not included in the study.

Measures

Demographic data sheet. Demographic data sheet was used to collect contextual information. Primarily, question about age was asked(in years), and then it was grouped into 3 for the suitability of the later analysis: 21-30 years=1, 31-40 years=2, and 41-49

years=3. Education was the years of education of the respondents. Later it was divided into three categories: 5- 8 = 1, 10-12= 2, 14 and above = 3, 18 and above= 4. Paid job included the working status of the women. The participants were asked about their involvement in paid job with the option given as: 'yes' or 'no'. Yes was coded 1 and no was coded 0. Districts Lahore and Multan were coded 1 and 0 respectively.

Composite Women's Empowerment Index (Batool, 2017). In order to measure women's empowerment, the Composite Women's Empowerment Index (CWEI: Batool, 2017) was used with 4 sub-indices: familial empowerment (viz., decision making within family, and participation in family discussion), economic empowerment (viz. Control over economic resources), psychological empowerment (viz., meaningfulness, impact, self-efficacy, self-determination, and problem focused coping), and socio-cultural empowerment (viz., social mobility). It is a Likert type scale with 5 options (1= *rarely* to 5=*always*) and has 33 items. Higher the score, the greater would be women's empowerment and vice versa. The Cronbach's alpha for the CWEI for the present study was .79. All the measures were used in the national language of Pakistan: Urdu.

Procedure

Data were collected through survey method. Before taking the consent of the participants, briefing was given to them regarding the objective of the study. The respondents were guided about the relevant response format to complete the questionnaires. Out of sample of 1100 that was initially approached, questionnaires of 1000 participants were found complete in all dimensions were retained to carry out the final analyses.

Analyses and Results

To examine the fore mentioned hypotheses, t-test, and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were applied. Independent sample t-test was used to calculate the significant group difference between women residing in Lahore and Multan on women's empowerment, and to find out the significant group difference of women in 'paid job' and those 'not in paid job' on women's empowerment. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to compare the mean scores of different age groups and education levels on women's empowerment.

Table 1

Group differences on Women's Empowerment with Reference to District and Job Status (N =1000).

Variable	N	M	SD	t(998)	(95 % CI)		Cohen's d
					LL	UL	
District							
Multan	500	97.19	16.99	2.67*	-5.25	-.799	.18
Lahore	500	100.21	18.81				
Job status							
Not in paid job	338	95.22	17.49	4.41**	-5.87	-1.17	.51
In paid job	662	104.47	18.05				

Note. *** $p < .001$, * $p < .01$ *d.f.* = 998.

Results in Table 1 show that there is significant difference between the scores of women of Multan ($M= 97.19$, $SD= 16.99$) and Lahore ($M= 100.21$, $SD= 18.81$) on women's empowerment, $t(998) = 2.67$, $p<.01$. So it is evident that women living in Multan are lesser empowered as compared to the women who live in Lahore.

Table 1 also shows that there are significant differences between the scores of women in paid job ($M= 95.22$, $SD= 18.05$) and those not in paid job ($M=104.47$, $SD= 17.49$) on overall women's empowerment, $t(998)= 4.41$, $p<.001$. It is evident that women who are engaged in paid jobs are tangibly more empowered as compared to the women who are not engaged in paid jobs.

Table 2

ANOVA for Significant Mean Differences of Three Age Groups on Women's Empowerment (N =1000)

Age Groups	21-30 year		31-40 years		41-49 years		F
	(n=335)		(n=355)		(n=310)		
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
	94.47	17.20	98.90	17.67	100.88	18.89	4.93*

Note: * $p<.01$

Table 2 shows significant differences on women's empowerment on the basis of three age groups, $F(998)= 4.93$, $p=.007$. There is significant mean difference between age group of 21-30 years and age group of 40-49 years ($Mean_{diff} =-4.4182$, $p< .005$), the mean scores show that women in age group of 40-49 years scored significantly higher than women in 21-30 age group.

Table 3

ANOVA for Significant Mean Differences of Three Levels of Education on Women's Empowerment (N = 1000)

Education Levels	Primary to Middle		Matric to FA		B.A & above		
	(n=298)		(n=382)		(n=320)		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>
	94.96	17.05	97.85	17.27	103.17	18.73	17.27**

Note: ** $p < .001$

Table 3 shows significant differences on women's empowerment on the basis of three education levels, $F(998) = 17.27$, $p = .001$. There is significant mean difference between (Primary to Middle) = level 1 and (BA and above) = level 3 ($Mean_{diff} = -8.20$, $p < .001$), the mean scores show that women of education of level 3 scored significantly higher than women of education level 1. Significant mean difference also appears between (Matric to FA) = level 2 and (BA and above) = level 3 ($Mean_{diff} = -5.13$, $p < .001$), the mean scores show that women with education of level 3 scored significantly higher than women of education level 2 on women's empowerment.

Discussion

In order to compare the means scores on women's empowerment of groups with reference to different contextual variables, t-test and one way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were run. Results of t-test showed that significant differences were found between the scores of

women who were engaged in paid job, and those who were not engaged in paid job, and between women living in Multan and Lahore (see Table 1).

The higher mean scores of women's empowerment on paid job are reinforced by (e.g., Blumberg, 2005; Duflo 2003, Browning & Chiappori, 1998; Swain & Wallentin, 2008) that paid job assists women to attain erudite bargaining power domestically by making them more empowered, and to challenge the leading norms that restrain their competence to make choices. Economic bargaining theory of household's advocates that rise in income upturns women's bargaining power which leads toward greater empowerment of women within family (Khan & Awan, 2011). Paid job improves self-esteem which creates self-confidence in women to be empowered in economic domain (AL-Amin & Chowdhury, 2008). Higher scores of women living in Lahore on women's empowerment as compared to the women living in Multan is reinforced by the declarations of experts who emphasize on the role of locality in empowering women. Kabeer (2001) is of the opinion that context rather than individual features of women play crucial role in enhancing their power (agency). Change in area may modify communal environment of individuals and this different environment may stimulate the lives of its inhabitants (Khan & Maan, 2008). Results are in line with Wiklander and Thede (2010) that found women residing in more developed district of India as more empowered as compared to the women living in lesser developed districts; and Khan and Awan (2011) that found that geographical division within Pakistan also elucidated the women's empowerment. Women belonging to Punjab were found more empowered in economic decision-making in comparison to other provinces.

To see whether significant differences existed in women's empowerment scores on different age groups and education levels, ANOVA was run and it appeared that two age groups

of women had significant difference in empowerment (see Table 2). Higher score of older adult women than the young adult women was found. The outcomes are in accordance with the researches that assert the women's higher chronological age as stronger factor to lead them towards higher empowerment (e.g., Acharya et al., 2010; Khan & Awan, 2011; Khan & Maan, 2008; Mostofa et al., 2008; Nayak&Mahanta, 2009; Tareque et al., 2007; Wiklander & Thede, 2010). It is common observation that traditionally a daughter in-law is assigned household work responsibilities whereas, mother-in-law has the power of making decisions about the family matters (viz., Haque et al., 2011) that heightens the empowerment of women with advancing age. The association of higher level of empowerment with older age might imply that older age brings plethora of experiences that support and enlighten women to takesagacious economic decisions.

As the role education level of women concerns, there were significant differences on mean score of women's empowerment. The results showed significant differences in the empowerment mean scores of women with highest level of education from women of comparatively lower levels of education (see Table 3). Our result are in line with numerous researches that the greater women's empowerment is associated with their higher of education (e.g., Ahmad & Sultan, 2004; Khan & Awan, 2011; Khan &Maan, 2008; Kishor& Gupta, 2004; Mishra &Nayak , 2010;Parveen&Leonhauser, 2005; Rahman et al., 2009; Rahman &Naoroze, 2007).

Education frequently supports women to uplift their socio-economic status, and make them better capable to claim and shield their rights meritoriously. Education encourages women to challenge the socio-cultural taboos that hinder their well-being. Hence level of education goes a long way in nurturing the outlines of women's lives and unfolds novel outlooks for them

(Rahman et al. (2009). Our results are consistent with Mishra and Nayak (2010) that role of education is pivotal in developing human resource. Education lets people to succeed to the capital of information and knowledge gathered over generations. It also makes individuals more dynamic as education escalates the likelihoods of getting reasonable jobs.

Limitations

There are few limitations of the study. The sample consisted of women belonging to two major cities of Punjab (Pakistan), the generalization of the outcomes to the women in other provinces of Pakistan is not reliable, so data should be collected from the whole country in future studies. In the absence of reliable statistics regarding Pakistani women and lack of sampling frame for illiterate/educated and working/non-working women, a convenient sampling technique was used. Government should manage to provide data on women to ensure sampling frame. The study was a quantitative survey, however, in order to explore Pakistani women's perspective on the factors which they think as more important in determining their empowerment, qualitative studies are recommended. As the outcomes of the present study exposed one point in time situation of women, so the position of women in the past and the present was incomparable. As the element of process was unable to be captured, so it is proposed that the future studies should contain at least two points in time as recommended by Malhotra et al. (2002) so that the element of process of empowerment can be captured.

Conclusion

The results support the notion put forward by Siwal (2009) that bottom up process of empowerment inspires women to attain empowerment through the process of systematically assessing their own condition and sketching an adjustment in the society they live. So to say, in order to achieve empowerment, women should adopt the strategy that must make available

the essential space for them to act as agents of transformation in gender associations (Siwal,2009) through higher education and availing the opportunities to engage themselves in paid jobs. Women are necessitated to be aware of the need of bringing modification within themselves before they stand up to demand change from the society. Once empowered, women may proliferate their power by educating their daughters, which may consequent in further multiplier effects. In this way, women directly and indirectly contribute in countries' national incomes and growth, and may get emancipation from the unwanted underage and early age marriages. Government of Pakistan should bring the HDI of all cities comparable, so that women may find the opportunities to empower themselves.

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