

Socio-Economics Covariates of Women Empowerment in Rural Settings of Pakistan: A Case Study of Tehsil Tandlianwala Faisalabad

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Abstract

Women are a significant part of every civilization because they comprise half the global population. Promoting women's empowerment and gender equality is not merely a development concern but also a human rights issue in developed and developing countries. In developing countries, women struggle to access their fundamental rights, education, involvement in political and economic activity, and involvement in the household's decision-making process; Pakistan is no exception. Using the data collected from a survey of 200 households in tehsil Tandlianwala, this study analyses how a woman's personal and demographic characteristics influence her empowerment. The results suggest that the women who are less educated, unemployed, and living under male dominance are deprived of their fundamental rights, socio-economic and political empowerment, and freedom to make their own decisions compared to their counterparts.

KEYWORDS

Women Empowerment, Equality, Socio-Economics, Covariate, Rural Setting

1 | INTRODUCTION

Women's empowerment is one of the critical aspects of the development discourse and a vital subject in the modern world. Women's empowerment is to improve access and control over their material and social resources at the micro and macro levels (Epezagne Assamala et al., 2022). Through empowerment, women gain control over their financial and intellectual resources. Empowerment ultimately leads to confidence in their decision-making process (Ajaz et al., 2014). Women are bound under different customary and statutory laws, which require them to hold land and assets in their name, and women cannot control their household and economic assets (Maas et al., 2021). According to UNESCO (2015), women in South Asia are miserable and deprived. A large proportion of women are living below the poverty line due to several reasons, including their economic dependence on their spouses or male heads of households. Women are gripped in cultural, societal, and traditional bindings. According to UN Women (2014), before any efforts to bring down poverty, it is essential to ensure gender

equality in society. Women's economic and social empowerment and poverty elimination are directly linked and commonly discussed in the literature (Mackellar, 2019).

Pakistan is the sixth most populous nation in the world, with 50% of its people being female. In Pakistan, the roots of the patriarchal system are firm and dominant in the social system (Ali et al., 2014). The social system believes in women's segregation to get control of their freedom, and it restricts them from walking on the way of progress and development (Campos-Arceiz et al., 2018). Pakistan is a signatory of several international promises to human rights and gender equality organizations like The Beijing Platform for Action, The Millennium Development Goals, the Convention on All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the Sustainable Development Goals. Despite these efforts, Pakistan's ranking of Pakistan in gender equality is very low, and this is worrisome if Pakistan wants to eliminate poverty (Ashraf et al., 2019).

Gender inequality and women's empowerment are significant issues in the development discourse. Like

many other countries, Pakistani women are also subject to gender discrimination (Ashraf et al., 2017). Here, women, who are half of the total population, do not enjoy equal rights and feel empowered, and the situation is worse in rural areas of Pakistan. Women living in rural areas are restricted from participating in economic, social, and political activities and household decision-making processes (Ashraf et al., 2024). Therefore, this study explores the socio-economic covariates influencing women's empowerment in Tandlianwala, a tehsil in the Faisalabad district. This study aims to identify personal, demographic, and economic characteristics at the household level that influence women empowerment in Tandlianwala, a tehsil in district Faisalabad. This study provides preliminary information about the status of women's empowerment in Tandlianwala. This study will be helpful for public officials, especially in feminist-leaning policies. Moreover, the research addressed the following questions.

- i. What are the characteristics of women that influence women's empowerment?
- ii. How do demographic and economic structures of the household influence women's empowerment?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Defining Empowerment

Power and empowerment are linked concepts. According to Rapaport (1987), the idea's original meaning in English was "investment with legal power" or "permission to act for a particular objective or purpose (Butt et al., 2019)." Empowerment is the enlargement of assets and capability of poor people to participate in negotiation with, have an impact on, influence, and maintain responsible institutions that affect their lives; in another perspective, empowerment is a process that increases people's and groups' ability to make decisions and transform those decisions into actions and results (World Bank, 2002). Empowerment has a different meaning in the socio-cultural, economic, and political context, and it's tough to explain in a single language (Cai et al., 2021). Besides that, its multidimensional aspects further affect individuals, groups, politics, sociology, economics, and spiritual levels (Grogan, 2018). Empowerment is a development in which individuals and groups can get power and exercise that power effectively to gain control and change their lives and environment (Solomon, 1976). In another research study, a group of scholars proposed that empowerment is a system of refining the welfare services for people with the assistance of the efficient role of social institutions (Grogan, 2018).

2.2 Women empowerment

Women's empowerment is one of the essential concepts of the development process worldwide. Goal 5 of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2030 is to achieve Gender equality and empower all women and girls worldwide (Cai et al., 2021). Sustainable Development Goal 5 includes different objectives: removing discrimination against women and violence against women and Girls in public and private circles, abolishing early child marriages and forced marriages, and giving equal rights in economic resources and control over their property and inherent natural resources (Gu et al., 2024).

The sustainable development agenda of 2030 reaffirmed the world on one platform and gave crucial importance to gender equality, which led to the achievement of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (You & Badertscher, 2024). A new, influential development agenda that aims to reduce poverty and inequalities and achieve gender equality to support equitable and long-term economic development calls for more jobs to be offered, an equal representation of women in all spheres of life, social protection, as well as a reduction and restructuring of unpaid care and household work (Lufuke & Tian, 2024).

According to an International Labor Organization report (ILO, 2016). "Between 1995 to 2015", the Global women's labor participation rate declined from 52.4 to 49.6 percent, and worldwide, the chances for women's participation in the labor market is 27 percent which is lower than those for men (Epezagne Assamala et al., 2022). In many regions of the world, the gender gap ratio is different, where the gender gap in labor participation is high and persists in Eastern Asia and Southern Asia. Still, on the other side of the world, in southern, northern, and Western Europe, the participation of women in the labor market is high due to their continuous involvement and also due to a reduction in men's employment rates due to economic decline (Kassie et al., 2020). Women's unemployment ratio is more significant than men's; the world unemployment rate is 5.5 percent for men and 6.2 percent for women (Hongbo et al., 2020). To maintain peace and create a sustainable planet, gender equality must be achieved (Hongyun et al., 2021). Giving everyone in society equitable access to good jobs, good health care, and representation in political and economic decision-making ultimately improved societal economic and social benefits (Hemachandra et al., 2020).

2.3 Economic Empowerment

Economic empowerment is a significant tool for women's empowerment and is vital to building a stronger nation (Jiatong et al., 2021). Investing in women's economic empowerment directly reduces

poverty, gender equality, and necessary conditions for inclusive economic growth. Women have a massive contribution to economics, either as employees in businesses and farms or doing work at home as unpaid workers (Dahlum et al., 2022). On the other side, women remain affected by Gender discrimination, poverty, and mistreatment; due to gender discrimination, women work for low wages and have less control over assets such as land and loans (Li et al., 2023). This is all because most women do household work and don't have enough time to pursue economic prospects (UN Women, 2016-17). According to Paramanandam and Packirisamy (2015), women represent 50 percent of the total population in India, and globally, around 1.3 billion live in poverty, of which 70 percent are women—investigated the relationship between economic development and women's empowerment (Li et al., 2020). Both concepts are interrelated; on the one hand, economic development plays a significant role in reducing gender inequality, and on the other hand, women's empowerment helps the development process (Li et al., 2023). Research proves we must balance women's empowerment and economic development to achieve sustainable development (Rohatgi et al., 2023).

According to President Bill Clinton (2009), around 66 percent of women perform world work and produce 50 percent of the food. Still, women earn only 10% of the income and own only 1% of the property. According to the OECD (2010), the proportion of women's spending in their families and society is higher than men (Li et al., 2020). The chances of livelihood and child survival are increased by 20 percent if women-controlled household income; increasing the participation of women in the economy is the solution to economic and financial crises (Laszlo et al., 2020).

2.4 Household Empowerment

Mulugeta and Amsalu (2014) studied the women's role in household and farm management decision-making in the Ethiopian economy (Li et al., 2021). This study was conducted in the Yilmana Densa district in the Amara Region to determine the study's objectives. Three villages were selected from the district, and 30 female respondents were observed through random surveys. The study data is collected through standardized random questionnaires, and descriptive and correlation analysis has been used to obtain statistical results (Li et al., 2020). The results depict that women have done most of the farm work, and most rural women manage their households (Muriithi et al., 2024). There should be more need to focus on women's power in household decision-making and management (Li et al., 2020).

Muriithi et al. (2024) checked the association between educational investment and women's empowerment in household decision-making in the

Spanish nation. This study analyzed the Living Conditions Survey (LCS) for 2010. This is secondary data collected by the National Statistics Institute to check the ability of Spanish households to make decisions with the help of the European Union Statistics framework (Li et al., 2018). This survey consists of 16000 samples in different census sections. This work used multinomial probit models for econometric analysis to test the LCS data (Lecoutere et al., 2023). After family characteristics have been taken into account, the results show that both the husband and wife's education have an encouraging effect on conditions for fairer decision-making for three major expenditure categories, including daily shopping, prohibitively costly durable consumer goods, and significant expenditure on children (Meng et al., 2022). In addition, only female education positivity was found to cause endless money, and it was also discovered that education had no impact on the use of savings (Danquah et al., 2021).

2.5 Political Empowerment

According to Chile's president, when a woman becomes a leader, it transforms her, and when there are more women in leadership positions, it alters politics and policies (Murad et al., 2022). According to the World Bank, the female political career (2015) participation of women in politics has increased very slowly in the last 15 years, increasing just 10% from 2000 to 2015. Despite that, we are moving toward positive steps but still are behind in achieving equal representation (Hassan et al., 2023). According to Latif et al. (2015), the current study aims to ascertain (Bilal et al., 2024) how men view women's political participation (Murad et al., 2021). The purpose of this qualitative investigation is to have a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon.

The conclusions of this study, which employed the purposive sampling method, are based on 20 in-depth interviews and two focus group discussions. The study concluded that the primary barriers to women entering politics are religious, economic, and patriarchal mindsets. Commonwealth Foundation (2014) studied opinions toward women's political participation in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. This survey was conducted in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province's Districts Swabi and Mardan. Young women activists who have received training from Aware Girls in active civic and political participation conducted this study (Aziz et al., 2021). The survey had 1,503 participants, of whom 874 were women and 629 were men. The study's findings revealed that most women follow the voting preferences of their male relatives since they are expected to do so while exercising their right to vote. Women are not allowed to participate in civic, political, or electoral procedures in their families (Anjum et al., 2023).

Ocran (2014) investigates the causes of women's steadily increasing political participation in Ghana and Tanzania. The study used time series data from 2000 to 2012 for this aim. According to the findings, the improvement made by women in political decision-making has been made possible by equal access to education for men and women, the use of gender affirmative action plans, multiparty rule of law, concerted efforts of civil organizations at the local and global levels, and pressure from women's organizations (Qader et al., 2022). Waring's (2010) study examines women's outcomes in recent elections. To explain the results, the article considers women's political participation, including issue mobilization, NGO and informal action for advancing women's rights, and political advocacy (Fatima et al., 2023b). Leadership and prominent women did not change Liberia and Mozambique in Asia, India, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. Violence taints election campaigns, making it risky for female candidates (Hongyun et al., 2023).

The study conducted by the International Centre for Research on Women (2012) examines the issue of domestic violence, which is widely recognized as a pervasive manifestation of gender inequality, to analyze the influencing factors surrounding such discourse. The study's conclusions draw upon a survey encompassing nearly 3,000 elected members of Gram Panchayats (GPs), comprising both women and men, alongside qualitative insights derived from Sarpanches, Panchayat Samiti, and Zilla Parishad members, as well as other pertinent stakeholders across three selected districts (Garikipati, 2008). According to the findings, women are progressively assuming leadership positions within Gram Panchayats through both reserved and open seats, with many perceiving membership in GPs as a pathway to enhanced self-assurance and improved societal status within family and community settings (Shahzad et al., 2021).

2.6 Social Empowerment

Ragasa et al. (2023) explain the relationship between economic mobilization and women's empowerment. The study focuses on checking the economic empowerment of working women inside and outside their homes. Researchers conclude that the women of Karim Abad contributed significantly to their household income. They also find that rural women contribute significantly to socio-economic development despite limited resources and opportunities. Quisumbing et al. (2023) find that vocational training education promotes women's empowerment in the Lagos state of Nigeria (Fatima et al., 2017). The objective of this study is a political dispensation in Nigeria because Nigeria is one of those countries where women have less contribution to government decision-making. Nigeria felt this

deficiency at the Beijing conference because, according to the Beijing conference, each country must make a 30% contribution to government decision-making. Still, Nigeria contributed only 10% to women in Government decision-making (Wang et al., 2023).

The study found that the country's economic condition was raised if women got vocational training and skills. Rahman et al. (2023) investigate the relationship between women empowerment and higher education in Gilgit-Baltistan. Studies have explored the positive relationship between education and the development of any society and the fact that social change will occur under the condition that males and females equally participate in every field of life. According to this study, through higher education, women show their empowerment in different fields of life, such as making independent decisions, making economic decisions, and participating in civil society (Setiawan & Wismayanti, 2023).

2.7 Status of Women in Pakistan

The ascent to the zenith of magnificence for any nation is contingent upon the collective empowerment of its women. Constraining women to the confines of domesticity equates to a violation of fundamental human rights. The deplorable conditions under which women are often compelled to exist persist unchecked across various locales, constituting a grave injustice (Muhammad Ali Jinnah, 1944). Pakistan is also considered among the countries where the male gender mainly dominates the division of social setup (Baxter et al., 2019). Such as the narrow scope of the social and cultural divide favoring patriarchy does not give any equal privilege to other genders, which equally occupy the majority number of the population in Pakistan. This stark social division hindered the development of women in Pakistan society.

As per the results documented in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2016, Pakistan was ranked 143 out of 145 countries, indicative of its standing as one of the least conducive environments for women (World Economic Forum, 2016). Similarly, data from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) indicates that Pakistan ranked 147 out of 188 countries on the Gender Inequality Index (GII), further underscoring the pervasive gender disparities within the nation (Khan et al., 2022a).

Pakistan is an Islamic country, and all rules and regulations are based on Islamic ideology. But despite that, there are some powerful customs and traditions prevailing in society that are anti-Islam (UN, 2011). The solid cultural and custom pattern prevents Pakistani women from enjoying their legal and religious rights (Ibrahim, 2005). As per the Pakistan Social and Living

Standard Measurement (PSLM) Survey 2015, the literacy rate of the total population of Pakistan is 60 percent, which was 58 percent in 2014; the continuous increase in literacy rate in Pakistan has helped in achieving their development goals (Di Cesare et al., 2015). Besides that, on the 11th five-year plan of the government, Pakistan allocates 2.7 billion rupees specifically to improve women's socio-economic development and empower them. All the above efforts are directly reflected in the labor force participation rate. The male labor participation rate decreased to some extent in 2012-13, but female participation increased from 15.6 to 15.8, which is helpful for Pakistan's future economic growth. The increased female labor participation rate tells us that Pakistan's institutions are very loyal and sincere to increasing women's labor participation and reducing gender inequality (Economic Survey of Pakistan, 2015, 16).

3. MATERIAL AND METHOD

3.1. Study Site

The study site is named Tandlianwala, a tehsil of district Faisalabad in the province of Punjab. Tandlianwala is located 190 kilometers south of Lahore, the provincial capital, and is famous for its many multilingual and multicultural tribes. Tandlianwala consists of 28 union councils, out of which 25 are rural (Fatima et al., 2023a). Agriculture is the primary source of earning for most people living there. The tehsil is well known for producing high-quality sugar cane and cotton. The tehsil has two sugar mills and several cotton factories, providing employment opportunities for people in Tandlianwala. There are six tehsils in the district of Faisalabad, but the author picked Tandlianwala because of the following three reasons:

- i) The author is a resident of the village of Tehsil Tandlianwala and fully understands the cultural Norms and socio-economic conditions. The author is very familiar with the area and had good access to the area for accurate data collection,
- ii) Tandlianwala is a perfect representation of a typical rural area in Punjab and
- iii) Tandlianwala represents a perfect mix of different castes and tribes.

3.2 Sampling Design

As mentioned above, there are 28 union councils in the tehsil Tandlianwala, out of which four union councils were selected purposively to have a good mix of various cultures, casts, languages, and socio-economic conditions. Each union council has 4 to 5 villages, of which one village was selected using convince sampling. Within each sample village, the study adopted

a two-stage sampling strategy. In the first stage, from each sampled village, 50 households were selected through a random walk, starting from the household with the most recent marriage and following the right-hand rule. "The right-hand rule" is where every household falling to the right side of the street is contacted until a successful interview is conducted. A gap of the specific number of households is kept before moving on to the next household. This rule negates interviewer biases in the selection of a household. In the second stage, one eligible female was selected for the interview using a Kish grid from each sampled household. The Kish selection grid is a systematic approach employed in the process of selecting individuals within a household for interviews. This method utilizes a predetermined table of random numbers to identify the specific person to be interviewed.

3.3 Instrument and Variables

This study used two structured questionnaires for the data collection in the two phases. As mentioned, the study selected 200 households from 4 union councils and collected household-related information (Fatima et al., 2023). The household-level questionnaire was based on four parts, which are discussed below:

- i) the first part of the questionnaire collects the basic information of respondents regarding village name, union council, and household number;
- ii) the second part asks for names of household members living in the house, their relationship with the head of household, the number of male and female adults living in the house, their ages and marital status, and the highest level of education completed by each household member;
- iii) The third part asks questions related to employment status, nature of the occupation, and the amount they earn from all sources in a month;
- iv) The fourth part covers household assets and their value in monetary terms like agricultural land, cows and buffalos, residential land/buildings and gold or any jewelry and household accessories like telephones, irons, fans, refrigerators, televisions, cars, motorcycles, etc.

The study used another structured questionnaire, which helps understand women's empowerment status. This questionnaire was distributed into four sections, each measuring a separate dimension of women's empowerment, i.e., economic, political, social, and participation in household decision-making. Questions were asked on the "Likert Scale" to check the intensity of the respondents' answers. Three to four questions were asked under each construct. Like in economic empowerment, questions on women's right to hold money, share in inheritance, and choose to work were asked. In the second part, questions were asked on women's right to cast their vote, give opinions on political issues, and participate in political activities.

Under social empowerment, questions on women's rights to move outside the house, participate in friends and family functions outside the house, and participate in social activities were asked. The final part of the questionnaire includes questions on women's involvement in household decision-making.

3.4 Field Experience

The survey was conducted in August 2017. The author conducted Phase one of the survey, while female university students were hired for phase two. The field experience was a whole of exposure to a noble cause of women's societal empowerment. But at the same time, due to cultural non-acceptance, many challenges were faced in asking.

4 RESULTS

This chapter presents the analysis of data collected from the field and interprets the most important result, which sheds light on various socio-economic factors that influence women's empowerment. This chapter helps us to understand the trend in women's empowerment overall and variations with household characteristics.

4.1 Household Empowerment

Table 1 explains the women in household decision-making respondents' education, employment status, and male adults. It is clear that women with intermediate or less education (43.1%) have less freedom to express their choices than at least undergraduates (53.1%). Moreover, females with intermediate or less education (74.3%) are less critical in household decision-making compared to females who have at least undergraduate education (80.3%) (Baxter et al., 2019). Additionally, females with at least an undergraduate (35.6%) consider their opinion worthy, and females with intermediate or fewer qualifications (32.4%). Moving toward the second column of the above table, elaborate that unemployed women (34.2%) have fewer rights to express their choices than employed women (47.2%). Taking family involvement in decision-making, women who are employed (77.2%) have more chances to be involved in family decision-making than unemployed women (63.6%). Similarly, families considered employed women's decision worthy in household decision-making (32.4%) as a matchup to unemployed women (27.2%).

In households with two or fewer male adults, women more actively participate in household decision making in the variation of Male Adults at Household, it is shown that females express their choices bitterly (46%) having two or less than two male adults in HH, as evaluate to families those have three or more adults in HH (40.5%). After considering women's involvement in household decision-making with value to male adults in HH, women

having three or more male adults in HH have less involvement in household decision-making (70.4%) compared to females having two or more adults (75.7%). In women's opinion, it is considered (San Vicente Portes et al., 2019) more worthy in 2 or fewer male adults in HH (65.2%), as it matches up to females having three or more male adults in HH (65.2%). Comparatively, the table shows that women are more educated and employed, and HH and fewer male adults are more empowered in household decision-making.

Table 2 revealed women's participation in the household decision-making process under the respondent, number of female adults, head gender, and household head employment status.

Considering the number of female adults in household decision-making, it is shown that households with three or more female adults have greater access to express their choices (46.5%) compared to households with two or fewer female adults (45.3%). Moreover, female involvement in HH decision-making or less a household having two or fewer female adults (75.3%), as evaluated HH having three or more female adults (82.2%), a family considering female opinion worthy in household affairs having two or fewer female adults (32.9%), rather than three or more female adults in Household (25.3%). Keeping in view the effect of head gender on household decision-making, females are more liberated to express their choices in case the head of the house is male (46.3%), in comparison to female head of house (30.2%) (Akhtar et al., 2023).

In addition, under the male head, the involvement of females in decision-making is relatively better (80.6%) than in families living under a female head (76.1%); similarly, female heads consider women's opinions less worthy (20.2%), and male head consider female opinion more worthy in household decision making (32.5%). Considering the head employment status in household decision-making, which explains that females are more accessible to express their choices while living under the supervision of an unemployed household head (55.5%), as compared to females living under an employed household head (44.9%). Likewise, women's involvement in family decision-making is higher when served under the unemployed head (88.9%), comparatively with that family they are living under the employed head of household (75.7%). Also, females living in unemployed head families consider their opinion more worthy (33.3%), as do females who are employed household heads (31.8%).

Table 3 above describes the female association in household decision-making under the Head Employment sector, below median and average income statuses. Coughing the head employment sector first, which described that females living under-employed in agriculture head are more open to expressing their choices in the house (51.7%), in contrast with females living under agriculture employed (42.7%) (Krause,

2024). in the same way, females' involvement in household decision-making is less; they exist under unemployed in the agriculture sector (73.9%) comparison to females are living underemployed in agriculture head

(81.7%), but families consider their opinion less worthy than females they are living underemployed in agriculture head (26.7%), rather than those who are living under the non- agriculture head (34.2%).

Table 1: Women's Role in Household Decision making (% of women agreed with statement)

Statement	Respondent Education Level		Employment Status		No of Male Adults in HH	
	Intermediate Or Less	At Least Undergraduate	Unemployment	Employment	2 or Less	3 or More
Within house, are you allowed to freely express your choices?	43.1	53.1	34.2	47.2	46.1	40.5
Your family involves you in household decision making?	74.3	80.3	63.6	77.2	75.7	70.4
Family considers your opinion worthy in household affairs?	32.4	35.6	27.2	32.4	65.2	21.2

Table 2: Women's Role in Household Decision making (% of women agreed with statement)

Statement	Female Adults		Head Gender		Head Employment Status	
	2 or Less	3 or More	Female	Male	Unemployed	Employed
Within house, are you allowed to freely express your choices?	45.3	46.5	30.2	46.3	55.6	44.9
Your family involves you in household decision making?	75.3	82.2	76.1	80.6	88.9	75.7
Family considers your opinion worthy in household affairs?	32.9	25.3	20.2	32.5	33.3	31.8

In the proper check of the women's participation in household decision-making under the below median income status, females living above median income status household are little unwrap to express their choices (46.1%) as compared to females living under the below median income status (40.3%), similarly female are living under below median income household having a lesser amount of involvement in family decision making (74.5%) against female are survived under above median household (78.2%). Likewise, households that consider women's opinions worthy in household affairs are living under above median income households (33.5%), as weighed against women's are living under the below median income household (29.3%). furthermore to verify the role of women's in household decision making under the Below average Income Status, female is living under the above average household are free to express their choices in the house (49.2%), as compare female are living below average income household (43.9%). in a same way women's are living below average income have less involvement in family decision making (72.9%), as judge against women's are living above average under Above average income household (77.7%).

Likewise, the household considers their opinion more worthy, those females living under the above average income status (33.9%), as a judgment against females living under the below average household (27.1%).

4.2 Social Empowerment

Table 4 above shows the status of female social empowerment under the respondents' education level, employment status, and the number of male adults living in the household. Regarding the female education level, females are more likely to move outside the house and have at least an undergraduate degree (84.4%), as opposed to females with intermediate or less education (71.2%). Similarly, undergraduate females are more likely to move to attend friends/family functions outside the house (62.3%) than females with intermediate or less education (62.3%). In a way, females who have intermediate or less education have less right to move outside the house for work (36.3%), rather than females who have at least an undergraduate are more liberal to move outside the house for work (41.6%) (Ongo Nkoa et al., 2023).

Females with intermediate or less education have less freedom to participate in social activities in the community (30.1%), whereas compression females have at least an undergraduate (40.7%). Regarding employment status, unemployed females have less right to move outside the house (68.2%) than employed females (82.9%). Unemployed females have less access to attend friends/family functions (54.5%)

than employed females (57.4%). In the same circumstance, unemployed females cannot move outside the house for work (36.3%), as employed females are more accessible to join work outside the house (39.8%). Similarly, a female who is employed has greater access to participate in social activity (45.5%) than unemployed females (30.7%) (Ongo Nkoa et al., 2023).

Women living under two or fewer male adults have more access to move outside the household (81.8%) compared to women living under three or more male adults in a household (40.4%). Likewise, women under three or more male adults have less opportunity to attend friends and family functions in their houses (36.3%); in contrast, females have two or fewer male adults in their household (56.4%). In addition, women living under two or fewer male adults have a better chance to move outside the house for work (48.5%) than women living under three or more male adults (38.8%). Similarly, women living under two or fewer male adults have greater freedom to participate in social activities (33.3%) than women living under three or more male adults in a household (31.5%).

Table 5 describes women's social empowerment status under the Female Adults, Head Gender, and Head Employment Status. Considering the number of female adults in HH, females living under two or fewer female adults in households have less freedom to move out of their houses (78.6%), against households having three or more female adults (81.8%). Likewise, households having three or more female adults have greater access to attend friends and family functions (56.4%), alongside households having two or fewer female adults in HH (46.5%).

Similarly, HH with two or fewer female adults has lower work permission outside the house (21.4%) than HH with three or more female adults (38.8%). Also, HH having three or more female adults has a better chance to participate in community activities (42.8%) than HH having two or fewer female adults (31.5%). Considering head gender to estimate female social empowerment, women living under the male head are more likely to move outside the house (80.6%) alongside women living under the female head (65.5%). Also, women living under the female head have less freedom to attend friends and family functions in their houses (50.5%) in comparison to women living under the male head (57.5%) (Pécot et al., 2024). Likewise, women living under the female head are more accessible to work outside the house (50.1%) than women living under the male head (38.8%). Furthermore, women living under male adults have more rights to participate in social activities (65.2%) than women living under female heads (55.3%).

Furthermore, women living under the unemployed head are more flexible about moving outside the house (80.4%) than women living under the employed

head (30.2%). Furthermore, women living under the employed head have less freedom to attend friends' and families' functions in their houses (28.1%) than women living under the unemployed head (88.9%). Likewise, women living under the unemployed head have greater freedom to move outside the house for

work (44.4%) than women living under the employed head (42.9%). Also, women living under the employed head had more freedom to participate in social activity outside the house (40.2%) than women living under the unemployed head (33.3%) (Eggerman et al., 2023).

Table 3: Women's Role in Household Decision making (% of women agreed with statement)

Statement	Head Employed Sector		Median Income Status		Average Income Status	
	Non-Agriculture	Agriculture	Above	Below	Above	Below
Within house, are you allowed to freely express your choices?	42.7	51.7	46.1	40.3	49.2	43.9
Your family involves you in household decision making?	73.9	81.7	78.2	74.5	77.7	72.9
Family considers your opinion worthy in household affairs?	34.2	26.7	33.5	29.3	33.9	27.1

Table 4: Women's Role in Social Decision-making (% of women agreed with the statement)

Statement	Respondent Education Level		Employment Status		No of Male Adults in HH	
	Intermediate Or Less	At Least Undergraduate	Unemployment	Employment	2 or Less	3 or More
Do you have permission to move outside the house freely except attending family/friend functions?	71.2	84.4	68.2	82.9	81.8	40.4
Are you allowed to attend families/friends functions in their houses?	56.4	62.3	54.5	57.4	56.4	36.3
Are you allowed to go outside for work?	36.3	41.6	36.3	39.8	48.5	38.8
Are you allowed to participate in social activities in your community?	30.1	40.7	30.7	45.5	33.3	31.5

Table 5: Women's Role in Social Decision-making (% of women agreed with the statement)

Statement	Female Adults		Head Gender		Head Employment Status	
	2 or Less	3 or More	Female	Male	Unemployed	Employed
Do you have permission to move outside the house freely except attending family/friend functions?	78.6	81.8	65.5	80.6	80.4	30.2
Are you allowed to attend families/friends functions in their houses?	46.5	56.4	50.7	57.5	88.9	28.1
Are you allowed to go outside for work?	21.4	38.8	50.1	38.8	44.4	42.9
Are you allowed to participate in social activities in your community?	31.5	42.8	53.3	65.2	33.3	40.2

Table 6: Women's Role in Social Decision-making (% of women agreed with the statement)

Statement	Head Employed Sector		Median Income Status		Average Income Status	
	Non-Agriculture	Agriculture	Above	Below	Above	Below
Do you have permission to move outside the house freely except attending family/ friend functions?	79.7	85.7	82.7	80.3	82.3	78.4
Are you allowed to attend families/friends functions in their houses?	57.3	58.7	55.1	50.7	61.5	55.4
Are you allowed to go outside for work?	44.9	26.7	43.5	35.7	42.3	32.7
Are you allowed to participate in social activities in your community?	34.5	28.3	33.6	31.4	35.6	30.9

Table 6 explains that women's social empowerment under the head employment sector is below the median and below average. Considering head employment status, females living under employed household heads in the agriculture sector had a greater extent to free move outside the household (85.7%) than females living underemployed households in the agriculture sector (79.7%). Similarly, females living in the non-employed household sector are less accessible to attend friends' and family's functions outside the house (57.3%) than females living under the head employed in the agriculture sector (58.7%).

Likewise, females living non-employed in agriculture households have a greater extent to work outside the house (44.9%) than females living underemployed in agriculture households head (26.7%). Similarly, females living under a non-employed agriculture household head are more accessible to

participate in community social activities (34.5%) than females living under a head employed in the agriculture sector (28.3%). Females living under the median income household have more power to move outside (82.7%) than females living below the median income household (80.3%).

In addition, under the supervision of the above median household income status, females have a greater extent to attend friends and family functions in their houses (55.1%) than females living under the below median income status (50.7%). In addition, females living under the below median income status have less right to move outside the house for work (35.7%), compared to females living under the above median income status household (43.5%). Likewise, females living under the above-median income status household head have more rights to participate in social activity in the community (33.6%) than females

living under the below-median income status household (31.4%). Likewise, females living in average-income households have more excess of moving outside the home (82.3) than females living in income households (78.4); in the same context, females living in median average-income households are free to attend friends and family functions (55.4), as compare female living under the above average income household (61.5). In addition, females living in average households are more able to move outside the house (42.3) than females living in average households (32.7). Likewise, females living in below-average households are less likely to participate in social activity (30.9), as evaluated by females living in above-average households (35.6).

4.3 Economic Empowerment

Table 7 above illustrates the women's economic empowerment status under the Respondent's education level, employment status, and the number of male adults in the household. Under the consideration of education level, women with intermediate or less education have less right to hold as much money as they want (67.2%), against women having at least an undergraduate degree (74.3%). Likewise, women with at least undergraduate education had greater access to due shares in inheritance (68.6%), whereas camper women had intermediate or less education (62.3%). Furthermore, women with intermediate or less education have less right to buy property and own their names (69.4%), as association women have at least undergraduate education (77.5%). They are considering the employment status of women. Unemployed women have less right to hold money as needed (63.3%), as judged against employed women (73.6%). Also, employed women are more likely to get a due share in inheritance (68.2%) than unemployed women (66.5%).

Additionally, employed women have more access to buying property and owning their names (81.8%) than unemployed women (68.2%). Considering the number of male adults in a household, women have two or fewer female adults. They are more accessible to hold money as they want (72.7%), as with women having three or more male adults in the household (69.7%). Moreover, women with two or fewer male adults are more likely to get a due share in inheritance (66.7%) than women with three or more male adults (66.4%). Likewise, women with two or fewer male adults in the household are more likely to buy property in their name (70.3%) than women with three or more male adults (66.7%).

Table 8 above illustrates the female economic empowerment status under the Number of female Adults in the household, Head Gender, and Head Education. Because of the number of female adults in

the household, HHs with two or fewer female adults are less empowered to hold as much money as they want (67.9%) than households with three or more female adults (72.9%). Furthermore, a household with three or more female adults is more likely to get a due share in inheritance (69.3%) than a household with two or fewer female adults (64.1%). Likewise, households with three or more female adults are more broadminded to buy property in their names (75.6%), and households with two or fewer female adults (68.9%). In addition, women living under a male head of household are more likely to hold money as they want (72.3%) than women living under a female head of household (70.3%). Also, women living under the male head of household are less empowered to get due share in inheritance (66.5%), alongside women living under the female head of household (70.4%) (Khan et al., 2022b).

Likewise, women living in the male head household are less empowered to buy property in their names (69.1%) than women living under the supervision of a female head (80.6%). Taking into Head employment status describes that women living under an unemployed household head are more extant to hold money as they want (77.8%) than women living under an employed household head (72.3%). Furthermore, women living under the employed household head are less empowered to get due share in inheritance (65.5%) than women living under the unemployed head of household (88.8%). Likewise, women living under the employed head of household are less empowered to buy property own your name (60.4%) than women living under the unemployed head of household (66.7%).

Table 9 above states that women's economic empowerment status under the head employment sector is below the median and average incomes. Regarding the employment sector, females living under the employed household head in agriculture are less suitable to hold as much money as they want (66.6%) than females living under the employed agriculture head of household (74.7%). Likewise, females living in employed households in agriculture have greater freedom to get due shares in inheritance (69.6%), as opposed to females living under household heads employed in agriculture (60.3%). Similarly, females living under an employed head of household in agriculture are less accessible to buy property on their name (68.1%); in contrast, females living under a non-employed head of household are employed (73.3%). Under the below median income status, females living under above median income households are more extant to hold money as they want (73.5%), as compared to females living under the below median income household (71.1%)(Ongo Nkoa et al., 2023).

Table 7: Women's Role in Economic Decision-Making (% of women agreed with the statement)

Statement	Respondent Education Level		Employment Status		No of Male Adults in HH	
	Intermediate Or Less	At Least Undergraduate	Unemployment	Employment	2 or Less	3 or More
Do you have right to hold as much money as you want?	67.2	74.3	63.3	73.6	72.7	69.7
Do you think you will get due share in inheritance?	62.3	68.6	66.5	68.2	66.7	66.4
Are you allowed to buy property on your name?	69.4	77.5	68.2	81.8	70.3	66.7

Table 8: Women's Role in Economic Decision-Making (% of women agreed with the statement)

Statement	Female Adults		Head Gender		Head Employment Status	
	2 or Less	3 or More	Female	Male	Unemployed	Employed
Do you have right to hold as much money as you want?	67.9	72.9	70.3	72.3	77.8	72.3
Do you think you will get due share in inheritance?	64.1	69.3	70.4	66.5	88.8	65.6
Are you allowed to buy property on your name?	68.9	75.6	80.6	69.1	66.7	60.4

Similarly, females living under the above median income household are more likely to get a due share in the property (69.3%), as against females living in below-median-income households (66.2%). Likewise, females living in households with below-median income have less authority to buy property in their name (67.4%) than females living in above-average households (72.5%). Regarding the below-average income status, females living under the above-average income have a righter to hold as much money as they want (72.5%) compared to females living in below-average income households (70.4%). Likewise, females living in above-average income households are more likely to get the due share in inheritance (69.7%) than females living in average households (62.3%). In addition, females living in above-average-income households are more able to buy a property under their name (77.6%), in contrast to females living in below-average households (72.7%).

4.4 Political Empowerment

Table 10 above illustrates a woman's political empowerment status under the respondent's education

level, employment status, and the number of male adults in the household. Taking into the respondent level of education, women having intermediate or less education are a little less accessible to cast their vote (80.1%) compared to women having at least an undergraduate degree (81.3%). In addition, women with at least an undergraduate degree have greater freedom to express their political choices (78.2%) than those with intermediate or less education (64.2%). Likewise, women with intermediate or less education are less suitable for choosing their political ideology (42.4%) than women with at least an undergraduate degree (52.5%). In addition, women with intermediate or lower education are free to participate in political activities (40.1%), rather than women with at least undergraduate education (42.2%) (Pécot et al., 2024).

In addition, females who are employed have greater access to vote (80.5%) than unemployed females (70.4%); further, unemployed females are less accessible to express their political opinion (65.4%), as compared to females who are employed (75.7%). In addition, unemployed females are less likely to choose political ideology (35.7%) than employed females (47.5%).

Table 9: Women's Role in Economic Decision-Making (% of women agreed with the statement)

Statement	Head Employed Sector		Median Income Status		Average Income Status	
	Non-Agriculture	Agriculture	Above	Below	Above	Below
Do you have right to hold as much money as you want?	74.7	66.6	73.5	71.1	72.6	70.4
Do you think you will get due share in inheritance?	69.6	60.3	69.3	66.2	69.7	62.3
Are you allowed to buy property on your name?	68.1	73.3	72.5	67.4	77.6	72.7

Table 10: Women's Role in Political Decision-making (% of women agreed with the statement)

Statement	Respondent Education Level		Employment Status		No of Male Adults in HH	
	Intermediate Or Less	At Least Undergraduate	Unemployment	Employment	2 or Less	3 or More
Do you have right to cast your vote?	80.1	81.3	70.4	80.5	79.4	81.8
Do you have right to freely express your opinion on political issue?	64.2	78.2	65.4	75.7	63.1	69.7
Are you free to choose your own political ideology?	42.4	52.5	37.7	47.5	52.1	36.4
Do you have right to participate in political activities?	40.1	42.2	45.4	48.8	44.8	33.5

Besides that, unemployed females are less accessible to participate in political activities (45.4%), while

employed females are (48.8%). Furthermore, women living with two or fewer male adults in a household are

less likely to cast their vote (79.4%) than women living with three or more male adults (81.8%). Likewise, women living under three or more male adults in a household have greater freedom to express their opinions on political issues (69.7%) than women living under two or fewer male adults in HH (63.1%). Also, women living under two or fewer male adults are more accessible to choose their political ideology (52.1) than women living with three or more male adults in the household (36.4%). In addition, women living with three or more male adults in the household are less accessible to participate in political activities (33.5%), as judged against women living under two or fewer male adults in HH (44.8%).

Above Table 11 explains women's political empowerment status under the number of female adults, head gender, and head education. Considering the number of female adults in HH, women with two or fewer female adults in HH are more liberated to cast their vote (80.6%) against women with three or more female adults in HH (75.3%). Women with three or more female adults in HH are more likely to express their opinions on political issues (71.5%) than women with two or fewer female adults in HH (63.2%). In addition, women with two or fewer female adults in HH have more access to their political ideology (52.3%) than women with three or more female adults in HH (32.2%). Likewise, women with three or more female adults in HH are more accessible to participate in political activities (53.5%) than women with two or fewer female adults in HH (43.1%). Considering the Head Gender, Women living under a female head of household are more empowered to cast their vote (90.4%) than women living under a male head of household (79.3%).

Furthermore, women living under a male head of household have less access to expressing their political opinions (63.2%) than women living under a female head of household (80.2%). Likewise, women living under a male head of household have less freedom to choose their political ideology (50.5%), alongside women living under a female head of household (90.4%). Also, women living under a male head of household are more accessible to participate in political activities (44.6%) than women living under a female head of household (40.2%). Under the employment status of the head of household, females living under the unemployed head of household are more empowered to cast their vote (80.6%), as against females living under the employed head of household (80.1%). In addition, females living under the unemployed head of household are less accessible to express their opinion on political issues freely (46.7%), as opposed to females living under the employed (64.3%). Likewise, females living under the employed head of household are less empowered to choose their political ideology (49.2%) than females living under the

unemployed head of household (55.5%). Similarly, females living under the employed head of household have less autonomy to participate in political activities (44.1%) than females living under the unemployed head of household (55.9%).

Table 4.4.3 states that women's political empowerment is under the head employment status, below median, and average income status. Considering the head employment status, females living under the non-employed in agriculture head are better positioned to cast their vote (83.4%) as a judge to females living under the employed head in agriculture (78.2%). Furthermore, females living under the head of agriculture do not express their political issues as freely (70.1%) as compared to females living under a non-employed head of agriculture household (81.6%). In addition, females living under head employment in non-agriculture can more easily choose their political ideology (54.4%) than females living under the head employed in agriculture (38.4%). Similarly, females living under heads employed in non-agriculture are more independent in participating in political activities (50.2%) than those employed in agriculture (31.6%). Taking into the below median income status of households, females living under the above median income household have greater freedom to cast their vote (80.6%), in contrast to females living under the below median income household (78.2%).

Furthermore, females living below the median income are less likely to freely express their political issues (60.1%) than females living below the median income household (61.2%). In addition, females living in the above median-income household are more likely to choose their political ideology (53.1%), compared to females living in the below median income household (46.4%). Likewise, females living in income households have less autonomy to participate in political activities (46.2%) than females living in income households (48.9%).

Considering below-average income status, females living in above-average income households are more likely to cast their vote (81.3%) than females living in below-average income households (79.2%). Likewise, females living in below-average income households have less self-sufficiency in expressing their opinions on political issues (64.1%), as evaluated by females living in above-average income households (64.4%). Furthermore, females living in average-income households are more empowered to choose their political ideology (51.1%), alongside females living in income households (45.5%). Likewise, females living in average-income households have greater autonomy to participate in political activities (49.2%) than females living in below-average-income households (47.5%).

Table 11: Women's Role in Political Decision-making (% of women agreed with the statement)

Statement	Female Adults		Head Gender		Head Employment Status	
	2 or Less	3 or More	Female	Male	Unemployed	Employed
Do you have right to cast your vote?	80.6	75.3	90.1	79.3	80.6	80.1
Do you have right to freely express your opinion on political issue?	63.2	71.5	80.2	63.2	46.7	64.3
Are you free to choose your own political ideology?	52.3	32.2	90.4	50.5	55.5	49.2
Do you have right to participate in political activities?	43.1	53.5	40.0	44.6	55.9	44.1

Table 12: Women's Role in Political Decision-making (% of women agreed with the statement)

Statement	Head Employed Sector		Median Income Status		Average Income Status	
	Non-Agriculture	Agriculture	Above	Below	Above	Below
Do you have right to cast your vote?	83.4	78.2	80.6	78.2	81.3	79.2
Do you have right to freely express your opinion on political issue?	81.6	70.1	61.2	60.1	64.4	64.1
Are you free to choose your own political ideology?	54.4	38.4	53.1	46.4	51.1	45.7
Do you have right to participate in political activities?	50.2	31.6	48.9	46.2	49.2	47.5

5 | DISCUSSION

Gender equity is a fundamental right of women and the foundation for a peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable world. Pakistan is a signatory of different international commitments and conventions on eliminating all types of violence and discrimination against women in all spheres of life. However, Pakistan stands at the 134th position out of 135 countries around the globe, which is considered one of the worst places for women (World Economic Forum Report, 2012). As per the United Nations Development Programs' (UNDP) recent report on gender inequality, Pakistan stood at the 123rd position out of 148 countries (GII, 2012). The finding of

this study suggests that women with intermediate or less education have less freedom to express their choices compared to women who are at least undergraduates.

Nevertheless, females expressed their choices more freely in households with two or fewer male adults than three or more adults. Similarly, women from households with three or more male adults are less involved in household decision-making. Women's opinions were considered more worthy in 2 or fewer male adult HHs (65.2%) in contrast to women having three or more male adults in their HHs (21.2%). Employed women, women having higher education, and women living with fewer male adults were more empowered in household decision-making.

Households with three or more female adults have greater access to express their choices (46.5) than households with two or fewer female adults (45.3). Moreover, female involvement in HH decision-making in a household having two or fewer female adults is 75.3, compared to HH having three or more female adults, which is 82.2. Families considering female opinion worthy in household affairs have two or fewer female adults (32.9) than three or more female adults. In the same way, R Asiyabola (2005) found the same outcome in Nigeria: females living in households with more than three male adults are less empowered.

Females were more liberated to express their choices if the head of the house was male (46.3%), compared to females as head of household (30.2%). In addition, the involvement of the male head in the female's decision-making was relatively better (80.6%) than in families living under a female head (76.1). Similarly, female heads consider women's opinions less worthy (20.2%), and male heads consider female opinions more worthy in household decision-making (32.5%).

They are considering the head's employment status in household decision-making, which explains that females are more accessible to express their choices while living under the supervision of unemployed household heads (55.5%), as weighed against females living under employed household heads (44.9%). Likewise, women's involvement in family decision-making is higher, which is served under unemployed heads (88.9%), compared to the families that live under employed heads of household (75.7%). Similarly, women living under two or fewer male adults have greater freedom to participate in social activities (33.3) than women living in 3 or more male adult households (31.5).

Likewise, females living under the above median income status household heads have more right to participate in social activities in their communities (33.6%) than females living under below median income status households (31.4%). Women living under the employed head of household are less empowered to buy property in their name (60.4%) than women living under the unemployed head of household (66.7%).

In addition, females living in income households have greater freedom to buy property in their name (77.6%), in contrast to females living in income households (72.7%). Women living under three or more male adults in households are less likely to participate in political activities (33.5%) than women living under two or fewer male adult HHs (44.8%). Regarding the number of female adults in the HH, women having two or fewer female adults in the HH are more liberated to cast their vote (80.6%) against women having three or more female adults in their HH (75.3%). Women with three or more female adults in their HH express their opinion on political issues more (71.5%) than women

with two or fewer female adults in their HH (63.2%).

Similarly, females living under employed heads of household have less autonomy to participate in political activities (44.1%) than females living under unemployed heads of household (55.9%). Likewise, females living in average-income households have greater autonomy to participate in political activities (49.2%) than females living in average-income households (47.5%). These findings are consistent with the existing literature (Shoaib et al., 2012) that suggests that women with graduation degrees are more competent in household decision-making and mobility and have greater access to learn skills and work.

6. Recommendation

The following recommendations on women empowerment are derived from the literature and discussion of the author with notable personalities of different union councils regarding their understanding of women empowerment, its barriers, and challenges in implementing the women empowerment concept in respective union councils of tehsil Tandlianwala.

- Social and cultural barriers are dominant factors in women's empowerment, and these influential factors restrict their freedom in social, economic, and political fields. Their involvement in the household decision-making process, especially in rural areas of Punjab, is also affected by culture. There is a need to revive the traditional culture and customs through education, training, and campaigns.
- Education is a dominant factor for women's empowerment. Women's educational profiles need to be improved through appropriate arrangements of education facilities for women in rural areas.
- Employment is also a factor that empowers women. Less educated women should be provided technical and vocational education that may develop their skills.
- It is observed that women do not have accurate information about inheritance and property rights. Opportunity to buy property in their name and property rights following inheritance laws must be ensured to the women.
- Civil society must be mobilized to create awareness and social representation on the highlighted issues like education, employment, voting, and property rights.
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- Employment is also a factor that empowers women. Less educated women should be provided technical and vocational education that may develop their skills.
- It is observed that women do not have accurate information about inheritance and property rights.

Opportunity to buy property in their name and property rights following inheritance laws must be ensured to the women.

Civil society must be mobilized to create awareness and social representation on the highlighted issues like education, employment, voting, and property rights.

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