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Key Dimensions and Determinants of women's Empowerment in Pakistan: Empirical Evidence from Southern Punjab

Abstract

Women empowerment is indispensable for attaining sustainable development goals (SDGs) 2030. This study empirically identified the key dimensions and determinants of women empowerment in Southern Punjab using primary data taken through multi stage cluster sampling technique. Considering the multidimensional nature and context a comprehensive cumulative women empowerment index is constructed through polychoric principle component analysis with six dimensions of women empowerment. The empirical results revealed that women empowerment is positively influenced by age and job of women, advertency of legal rights, access to medical facilities, participation in social gatherings, safe and clean environment, communication behavior, participation in politics and negatively by area of residence, unpaid domestic care work and fear of violence.

***Key Words:** Women Empowerment, Determinant Factors, Polychoric Principle Component Analysis, Cumulative Women Empowerment Index*

1. Introduction

It is vividly recognized that women empowerment is indispensable for sustainable economic growth and reduction in poverty in developing countries (Klasen, 1999). Women's empowerment is a key means and critical component for accelerating process of development. World Bank Policy Research Report recommended women empowerment as an important policy goal for betterment of women and family (King and Mason, 2001). It is an important instrument of enhancing household and child welfare (Dutta, 2014). Gender equity has been specified in

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many of the sustainable development goals (SDGs, 2030) and goal 5 clearly aims at the accomplishment of gender equality and the women empowerment. Several researches indicate that women's empowerment has a great influence on the attainment of human development, good governance, sustained peace, and harmonious dynamics between the environment and human populations – all of which are at the core of proposals for the SDGs and a post-2015 development framework.

As women empowerment is the considerable part of contemporary development policies of developing countries, it faces several difficulties. There is much debate at theoretical level as to what empowerment constitutes and how to achieve it. (Kabeer, 1999). There exists an interpersonal variation in meaning and connotation of empowerment depends on socio-economic, cultural and on various other conditions of society (Dutta, 2014). Empowerment is also enhancing the individuals or groups capacity to make choices and transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes (Alsop, *et al*. 2005). Alsop, *et al*. 2005 has identified the theoretical linkage between women empowerment and development outcomes.
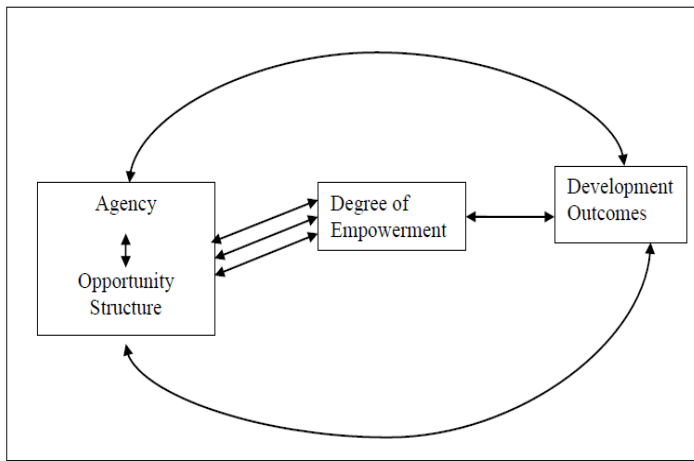
Source: Alsop, et al. (2005)

Figure 1: Dynamics of Women's Empowerment

Generally, empowerment of women has focus on dimensions and envisions greater access to knowledge, social and economic resources and greater autonomy in economic and political decision making process (Kabeer, 2005, Khan *et al*. 2006). It is also the creation of sense of dignity among the women (Dutta, 2014). Women empowerment is a dynamic, multidimensional and context specific. Therefore empowerment of women as a 'Sustainable Development Goal' could not be attained because neither world bank or any other development agency has suggested any specific method for measuring it. So, an empirical study to identify

the key dimensions and determinants for empowering women has great significance because policy makers and funding agencies will make policies in right direction for accelerating development process and help in achieving post 2015 development agenda.

Since women empowerment has strong relationship with economic development (Duflo, 2012) it faces various problems in Pakistan because of traditional norms and patriarchal culture. Multifaceted factors made women in Pakistan vulnerable, marginalized and oppressed which also lead to acute poverty, health and education problems in Pakistani women.

Low status of women in terms of right, opportunity and endowment in Pakistan can be observed from the 9th edition of Global Gender Gap Report (2017), UNDP's Human Development Report 2017 also. Despite various efforts and steps by government of Pakistan for betterment of women a large gap still exists between policy and practice .This urgently requires the creation of an environment in which distribution of resources and power, the opportunity to engage in paid work, opportunities to access educational, medical and public services move in favour of women population.

As several empirical studies indicated depressing situation of woman in Pakistan (Akram, 2018; Batool, 2019) and in Southern Punjab (Abrar-ul-haq *et. al.*2017) in spite of various efforts. Hence the question arises: how empowerment can be accurately measured? How can we make our women active participant of the economy and empower them? Which are key correlates and significant factors to make our woman more empowered? These questions can be answered properly by investigating key dimensions and determinants of women empowerment by appropriate methods. Keeping in view the connotation of the issue, present research was carried out to measure the key dimensions and identify determinants of empowering woman in Southern Punjab and to propose appropriate recommendations to improve their empowerment in society.

The paper is organized as: literature review is presented in section two; section three deliberates data sources and sampling techniques methodology, description of variables and methodology for empirical analysis. Section four deals with analysis and interpretation of the empirical results, and final section discusses conclusion and policy implications of the present research.

2. Literature Review

Several studies specified empowerment as a process rather than a goal (Akhter and Ward 2009; Kabeer *et al.* 2011). By considering dominant position of men in the society, empowerment related studies primarily focus on women (Wieringa 1994; Elson 1999). Capitalizing extended definition of empowerment, by extending

process and agency approach suggested that women empowerment is a continues process or cycle that entails dynamic capabilities to restrain alternative choices, decisions and actions rather than it is a linear process (Al-Dajani, 2007) and this process is imperative for others social change (Jabre *et al*. 1997). Kabeer, 2001 definition of empowerment is very useful which states that empowerment means "the expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them". Several studies have been conducted to explore determinants and dimensions of empowering women. The brief overview of selected studies is presented in the present section.

Study of Chaudhry & Nosheen (2009) makes an attempt to explore the key determinants of women empowerment in remote area of Pakistan. Women empowerment index is built by personal autonomy index, family decision making, economic consultation and political autonomy index. Women ducation, access to media, societal norms, work status of women and household participation and knowledge of an Islamic Concept of Women Empowerment are found important determinants. The study of Khan *et al*. 2010 have also found education of women, participation in politics and paid job as significant contributing factor for empowering women.

Varghese (2011) empirical study in Oman used household and economic decision making ability, mobility is used to measure empowerment of women. Income, education, employment, accusation of assets are identified as important determinants while media exposure has insignificant impact in determining the level of empowerment

Zaman, et al. (2012) find out level of women empowerment in some selected urban and rural regions of Bangladesh. Empowerment of women was measured by decision making in domestic sphere. Bivariate analysis designated that women residing in urban areas, having paid jobs, higher education level for both husband and wife, having higher level of income, living in pacca houses, having less number of children are more empowered

Awan & Zertashia (2015) have examined determinants of empowering women in backward and remote area like D.G. Khan, using primary data with random sampling technique. fear of violence and joint family system negatively while women job, access to media and women bank account positive influence women empowerment. Dey and Khudri (2015) measure women empowerment constructing two indices *i.e* women behavior for domestic violence and decision making at household level based on PCA. The results revealed women with more education protest more against physical violence in comparison with women who are illiterate.

Dadi (2017) has identified determinants of rural woman economic empowerment in Guduru district of Oramia regional state. Study found that woman access to information, participation in decision making, freedom of mobility, institutional factors and women participation in organization significantly and positively affect rural women economic empowerment. Women empowerment index was constructed through principle component analysis with six variables related with the decision making by Abrar-ul-haq *et al.* (2017) in southern Punjab, Pakistan. Socioeconomic condition, family structure and women education were found as important determinants of women empowerment. Akram (2018) used household decision making, financial decision making, autonomy in child health care and autonomy in visits to family and friends as dimension of woman empowerment.

Batool (2019) assessed the relative strength of factors at individual, social and family level to empower women. Work status, income, internal locus of control, own property, legal awareness, self-esteem and her gender awareness, were used as individual factors and conjugal age, husband's support , and family head as a familial level factors and mobile phone as a socio cultural factor .The study found that in a patriarchal culture of Pakistan the individual level factors are most significant enabling factors of women empowerment.

The literature reveals that there are several studies which identified several determinants of woman empowerment. Beside with the other socio economic, demographic and political variables present study also keep in account those important capabilities of women which are significant enabling factors in attaining this effective instrument of household and social welfare. So the communication behavior of women, advertency about recently passed women protection bill, unpaid domestic care work, sustainable development indicator safe and clean environment variables were tested along with the other demographic, social, economic and political factors. There is no study which used all these factors collectively anywhere in the world so that key determinants of woman empowerment can be assessed which is crucial variable in attaining post 2015 development agenda.

Empowerment of women is not a meticulously studied arena in Pakistan. Previous studies mostly used data of secondary nature. Different studies used different dimensions of woman empowerment. There is no study that construct such a comprehensive index of woman empowerment with covering all dimensions [viz., household decision making (every day regular decisions, economic decisions), access to formal financial institutions and saving mechanism, social mobility, familial, psychological and political empowerment. There is no study used the methodology *i.e.* polychoric principle component analysis (most appropriate for ordinal categorical variables, Kolenikov and Angeles, 2004, 2009) to construct

such a comprehensive, cumulative women empowerment index at household level as a variable of women empowerment.

The present study was conducted to:

- Construct a comprehensive, cumulative women's empowerment index at household level with appropriate methodology and weighting scheme.

- Assess the key social, economic, political, legal, demographic and individual variables in predicting the empowerment of woman.

- To make women more cognizant of their personal capabilities which may help them to empower themselves.

3. Data and Research Methodology

3.1 Data Source and sampling technique

Present study based on primary source of data. A detailed questionnaire was developed for data collection. The targeted respondents of this study are only married women of age (17-50) years (Mean=31.30, SD=7.972). The cronbac alpha value of questionnaire was (0.727). A multi stage cluster sampling technique has been used for data collection from district Bahawalnagar. Bahawalnagar has been selected from southern Punjab on the basis of an average district on the prevalence rate of female literacy rate. The total sample of 370 is determined by with the following statistical formula, $\mathbf{Z^2 \partial^2 / è^2}$ Where $\partial^2 = \mathbf{Q\ (1\text{-}Q)}$ *where* $\mathbf{Q}$ shows the value of prevalence rate (female literacy rate). Number of households selected from clusters proportionate to rural urban proportion of 2017 census *i. e* is 37% and 63% for urban and rural areas respectively. Sample households are selected on the next stage from clusters on the basis of quotient rule with random start. The detailed household lists of clusters were obtained from BOS.

3.2 Data and Variables

3.2.2 Cumulative women empowerment index (CWEI): The Dependent Variable

Cumulative women empowerment index (CWEI) was constructed by combining six dimensions *i.e* decisions making, socio-cultural mobility, familial/interpersonal empowerment, economic empowerment, political empowerment and psychological empowerment with 28 variables to get a comprehensive and complete idea of women empowerment. Statistical association of variables in each dimension has been checked through Kendall tau b rank correlation. Polychoric principal component analysis (PCA) with orthogonal varimax (Kaiser off) was

performed to develop CWEI which is suggested best method for dimensionality reduction of categorical variables (Kolenikov and Angeles, 2004, 2009).

PCA can be applied when all the variables are numeric (*i.e* the variables are either quantitative or continuous) and the relationships among variables is linear (Gifi, 1990 and Kamanou, 2005).Variables in our dataset are categorical, measured at ordinal and nominal level. So, classical PCA would not be the most suitable technique. Ordinal variables do not have an origin or a unit of measurement and therefore means, variances and co-variances have no real meaning estimating the co-variance (correlation) matrix, the standard PCA is no longer the appropriate methodology.

The retained six components provide a summary measure of each dimension of women empowerment by extracting common information captured by single indicators, avoiding redundancy and minimizing statistical biases. Weighted sum of the components where weights are obtained by dividing loadings with the square root of eigen value i.e varience explained by each component in polychoric principal component analysis, has been considered as the cumulative index of women empowerment in district Bahawalnagar of Southern Punjab. Scores for each component are calculated by multiplying the variables with appropriate weights obtained through polychoric PCA.

CWEI=HHD+SEM+EEM+POLEM+FAMEM+PSYEM

Where, HHD: Household Decision making, SEMI: Social Mobility, EEM: Economic Empowerment, POLEM: Political empowerment, FAMEM: Familial empowerment, PSYEM: Psychological Empowerment.

3.2.3 Determinants of Women Empowerment: Independent Variables

There are various socio-economic, demographic and political variables that explain changes in response variable women empowerment. Present study also aims to identify the key determinants for empowering women. selected variables description is given below.

Table 2: List of Selected Variables for Empirical Estimates

Variables	Description of variables
Dependent variable	
CWEl	Cumulative women empowerment index (calculated by six dimensions of women empowerment from questions in questionnaire through polychoric principal component analysis)
Explanatory variables	
AGE	Age of women in years
AROR	Area of Residence=1,if woman lives in urban area, 2= if she lives in rural area

FSTR	Family structure=1, if woman belongs to nuclear family system, 2=if she belongs to joint family system
NCHLD	It is number of children of respondent
PHW	Place of handwashing with soap and water = 1 if yes or = 0 if not
CSPA	More aware of what's going on around the world than most of my friends = 1 if yes or = 0 if not
RWST	Woman is salaried employed=1 if yes ,or = 0 if not
EDU	Number of Years of schooling completed
PRCV	Property received (especially inherited) from parents = 1 if yes or = 0 if not
WCONEL	Woman should contest election = 1 if yes or = 0 if not
AFINST	Access to financial institution in case of personal and family financial matters no access =0, medium=0.5, high=1
CVOT	Woman caste vote in election = 1 if yes or = 0 if not
AMFC	Woman access to medical facilities in case of personal health problems no access =0, medium=0.5, high=1
PSGT	Woman participation in social gatherings no participation =0, medium participation =0.5, high participation =1
VIOL	Fear of violence from husband = 1 if yes or = 0 if not
LPCH	Life partner choice by parents alone =1, joint decision by woman and parents=2, by woman alone=3,
UPCW	Time spent in Unpaid domestic care work
KNKCN	Woman has knowledge about written contents of nikah nama = 1 if yes or = 0 if not
KWPB	Woman has knowledge about women protection bill = 1 if yes or = 0 if not
LOANB	Woman has availed loan from the bank for personal business = 1 if yes or = 0 if not

3.3 Methodology for Empirical Analysis

In order to determine the socio economic and demographic, political and individual determinants for empowerment of women, ordinary least square regression model is used in this study.

$$Y_i = \gamma_{0} + \gamma_i X_i + \varepsilon_i$$

The dependent variable Y_i is cumulative index of women empowerment, X_i shows explanatory variables, ε_i is error term and γ_i shows parameters of current model , the ordinary least square regression model is given as:

$$CWEI = \gamma_0 + \gamma_1\ AGE, + \gamma_2\ AROR + \gamma_3\ FSTR + \gamma_4\ NCHLD + \gamma_5\ PHW + \gamma_6\ CSPA + \gamma_7\ RWST + \gamma_8\ EDU_{+} \gamma_9\ PRCV + \gamma_{10}\ WCONEL + \gamma_{11}\ LOANB + \gamma_{13}\ AFINST + \gamma_{14}\ CVOT + \gamma_{15}\ AMFC + \gamma_{16}\ PSGT + \gamma_{17}\ VIOL + \gamma_{18}\ LPCH + \gamma_{19}\ KNKCN_{+} \gamma_{20}\ KWPB_{+}\varepsilon$$

All the analysis was accomplished by using Stata version 13.

4. Results and Discussion

In this section before having the descriptive statistics and the regression estimates we have depicted the major findings of polychoric PCA for women empowerment at household level. For the results of the variance explained by components at initial situation after extraction and after rotation and rotated factor loadings of women empowerment at household level. Table 3 shows the weights through polychoric PCA.

Table 3: Weights through Polychoric Principle Component Analysis

Variables	Weights	Variables	Weights
DFOD	0.210	DEPL	0.268
NFOD	0.199	DCHC	0.312
DCFEE	0.199	DOHC	0.394
DFRG	0.210	SDPROB	0.131
DJEW	0.196	OPEMNS	0.137
DPROP	0.188	ACOMG	0.131
VNHS	0.2708	UNEVENT	0.138
VFAHS	0.268	UNFORSN	0.151
VSHOP	0.257	SOLVP	0.145
VIWED	0.275	COPAB	0.137
BAC	0.254	SEVSOL	0.127
SSAC	0.387	THNKSOL	0.128
CPSAV	0.142	HANDLEV	0.161
ECOM	0.275	OCHV	0.675

Source: Author's estimations using Stata version 13

Table 4 represents descriptive statistics of variables selected in the model

Table 4: Descriptive results of variables in samplen=370

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.
CWEl	9.744	1.657
AGE	31.3	7.972
AROR	1.608	.4889
FSTR	1.570	.496
NCHLD	1.654	.806
PHW	.889	.314

CSPA	.465	.4994
RWST	.189	.392
PRCV	.308	.462
WCONEL	.510	.501
VOBANKS	.473	.363
CVOT	.759	.428
AMFC	.596	.305
PSGT	.523	.250
VIOIL	.170	.376
LPCH	1.873	.518
KNKCN	.422	.494
KWPB	.613	.488
LOANB	.108	.311
UPCW	2.092	.824

Table5 represents regression results of the present study. Results suggest that regression equation is overall significant and 62 percent variation in concept of Women Empowerment is explained by the selected explanatory variables which depict the moderate goodness of fit.All the variables have the anticipated signs.

Higher chronological age of women is a important factor which leads women towards higher empowerment. (e.g., Tareque *et al*., 2007;Nayak and Mahanta, 2009; Wiklander and Thede, 2010;Acharya et al.,2010,Khan and Awan,2011;Sultana and Hossen, 2013:). Higher age is positively significantly correlated (.0252 at $p<0.001$) with higher empowerment level

Women residing in urban areas have high empowerment than women living in rural areas (Khan and Maan, 2008).Our empirical findings reveal that rural respondents are less empowered than the urban respondents. The regression coefficient vale -0.662 at $P<0.000$ represents that CWEI is less than 0.662 points for women living in rural areas as compare to respondents residing in urban areas.

The existing circumstances confirm that women socio economic and political status improves in urban areas. Better educational facilities, better opportunities for gaining knowledge and skills and other facilities in the cities act as intervening variables to make such differences.

Handwashing facility with soap and water is an indicator of better, safe and clean environment. Access to basic handwashing facility at home is an important sustainable development indicator. The coefficient value of 0.451 at $p<0.015$ indicates that women are more empowered in safe and clean environment.

The degree of openness for ideas, knowledge and to gather information outside of his social system is cosmopolitness (Rogers, 1995).The coefficient value 0.489 at $P<.000$ represents the change of response pattern from '0' (no) to '1' (yes) results an increase of CWEI by 0.489 points on average. More cosmopolitan attitude makes women more empowered. Woman awareness about what's going on around the world rather than focus on domestic issues makes them more knowledgeable and informative. However, achievement towards empowerment goal depends more on attitude (Nayak and Mahanta, 2009). Modification in women attitude is indispensable before to demand alterations in set up of society. The empowerment of a community can be related to the communication behavior. (Mustaffa and Asyiek, 2015).This is contribution of our study that role of communication behavior (cosmopolitian attitude) has empirically tested in women empowerment. So our empirical result regarding the effect of communication behavior on household level of empowerment of women is reasonably conclusive.

In contemporary social cultural scenario of Pakistan, women involvement in paid job is limited. Women empowerment enhances when they are working for cash (Akram, 2018). The empirical findings are in line with several other studies including Kabeer *et al*. (2011, 2013) ,Ayesha (2014) and Bloomburg, (2005) study that when women earn more money they gain greater control over resources and achieve more freedom to use the earnings and economic independence is a basic factor in reducing gender inequality. The less economic dependency increases the self-confidence of women that eventually hence their decision making ability. All these lead them towards more empowerment.

The impact of women access to financial institutions for personal and family financial matters and availed loan from the bank on household level women empowerment is negative and statistically insignificant. The reasons may be that number of women who availed loan and got access to financial institutions for financial matters is so low. During the time of interview it was observed that women who availed loan and have access to financial institutions are not empowered and many women who have not availed loan enjoy commendable

empowerment at household level. Visit to hospital in case of personal health problems is positively effecting women empowerment.

Women with low level of participations in social gatherings are less empowered. Women's greater involvement in social activities assists them to exchange views, share problems and attain supportive atmosphere that increase their empowerment (Mosedate 2003). Significant value of regression coefficient 1.31 (p<0.000) presented that increase in participation in social gatherings caused 1.31 points increase in CWEI. Women opinion for practical political participation is positively related 0.770 (p<0.000) to women empowerment.

Domestic violence is negatively related to women empowerment and coefficient is statistically significant. It shows that female are 0.459 points less empowered when they suffer from fear of domestic violence. Unpaid care work also shows negative and statistically significant impact on women empowerment and the coefficient value -0.181 at P<0.013 depicts the fact that women involvement in unpaid care domestic work reduces additional opportunities in life and makes them less empowered (Qura-tul-Ain *et al.* 2016). More unpaid domestic care work by women leaves less time for women to acquire education, skills and to invest their effort in market related activities. (OECD, 2014)

Women's rights and development are highly correlated. (Duflo, 2005 and Sinha, Raju, and Morrison 2007). Advertancy of legal rights is a new variable tested to investigate its role in female empowerment. For this purpose two variables awareness about women protection bill and advertency about written contents of nikah nama were tested. Both variables are highly significant and positively related to women empowerment. Regression coefficient value 0.512 of awareness about women protection bill (P<0.000) and 0.298 (P <0.039) of knowledge about written contents of nikah nama indicated that women of southern Punjab having more knowledge and advertency about legal rights are more empowered.

Table 5: Regression Results of Determinants of Woman Empowerment

Dependent Variable: Cumulative Women's Empowerment Index

CWEMI	Coefficients	S.E	T	P>|t|
Women's Background Characteristics				
AGE	.0252466	.0077161	3.27	0.001
Area of residence	-.6617613	.1272161	-5.20	0.000
Family structure	-.1703587	.1147167	-1.49	0.138
Number of children	.0988084	.071543	1.38	0.168
Hand washing facility with soap and water	.4506768	.1838551	2.45	0.015
Cosmopolitan attitude of women	.4892581	.130859	3.74	0.000
Education	.0222499	.0154	1.44	0.150
Economic Variables				
Work status of women	.5500435	.184	2.98	0.003
Property received from parents	.191157	.128	1.49	.137
Availed loan from bank for personal business	-.0223634	.182	-0.12	0.902
Access to financial institutions for	-.0447471	.199	-0.22	0.822

personal/family financial matters				
Social variables				
Unpaid domestic care work	-.1809424	.0725043	-2.50	0.013
Visit to hospital in case of personal health problem	.8975957	.2285305	3.77	0.000
Participation in social gatherings	1.31011	.2753546	5.19	0.000
Fear of intimate partner violence	-.459427	.1560886	-2.96	0.003
Choice of life partner	.033043	.1116606	0.35	0.728
Advertency of legal rights				
Knowledge about written contents of nikah nama	.2977837	.1434664	2.08	0.039
Knowledge about women protection Bill	.512431	.1369326	3.74	0.000
Political Variables				
Women contest election	.7701091	.117624	6.55	0.000
Caste vote in election	.1415863	.1431512	0.99	0.323

Constant	7.40	.501	14.77	0.000
Summary Statistics				
Number of observations = 370 F(20, 349) = 28.81 Prob > F = 0.0000 R-squared = **0.6227** Adj R-squared = **0.6010**				
Breusch-Pagan / Cook-Weisberg test for heteroskedasticity Ho: Constant variance Variables: fitted values of CWEI chi2 (1) = 0.16 Prob > chi2 = 0.6932				

Source: Author's estimations using Stata version 13

Conclusion and policy implications

Empowerment is one of the main ceremonial concerns when addressing human rights and sustainable development. In Pakistan the male dominated behavior along with numerous social customs hampers involvement of women in paid job and mostly women are destitute from their inherited property. Women empowerment is essential in Pakistan for sustained economic development. The present study collected data of 370 respondents by using multistage cluster sampling in rural and urban areas of Southern Punjab. The response from respondents was collected through face to face interview.

Present study constructed comprehensive cumulative woman empowerment index (CWEI) by six dimensions through polychoric principal component analysis. These dimensions are household decision making (ordinary household decision making and large economic decision making), social mobility, access to formal financial institutions and saving mechanism, political, familial and psychological empowerment.

To identify key determinants of women empowerment twenty independent variables were tested among which twelve are dominant determining variables in influencing the CWEI. Age of women, women work status, advertency of legal rights, cosmopolitan attitude, access to medical facilities and participation in social gatherings and woman opinion to contest election have positive relationship with

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the cumulative women empowerment index. However unpaid domestic care work, fear of violence from intimate partner, area of residence have negative connotation on different dimensions of women empowerment.

Numerous policy implications can be drawn from this empirical study which later may prove crucially important for empowerment of women in developing countries in general and southern Punjab, Pakistan in specific. As women paid job involvement emerged as a momentous factor, in women empowerment so more job opportunities for the women may be created. Furthermore, while providing jobs to women it may be guaranteed that these opportunities are as close as possible to their homes. Moreover, metropolitan transportation systems should be improved for women to reach at workplaces without fear of the harassment. The laws of women harassment at workplace from men as well as women should be strengthened.. Governmental and non-governmental organizations training to earn by their own will also help to change the gross socio-economic status of women in southern Punjab. Sharing of responsibilities for care and domestic work between men and women should be promoted through dramas and stories in text books to diminish stereotypes on gender roles. To change the mindset of society government, NGO, s and educational institutions should organize conferences, seminars and symposiums for educating the society about women related issues especially in rural areas. Domestic violence by intimate partner not only lowers self-efficacy but instill fear in them which badly effect their capabilities to perform daily tasks to the satisfaction level. Furthermore, societal norms that tolerate and accept domestic violence are widely prevalent in our society and an adherence to them inhibits women from seeking care. True enforcement of legislation related to violence against women is needed to implement to bring out women from deplorable condition. Women improve their communication behavior by keeping themselves aware about what's going on around the world where they live. Women are necessitated to be aware of their legal rights and bring changes within themselves before they set up to demand modifications from the society. Advertency of legal rights of women is crucial to claim against discrimination. Study demonstrated that most of the sample women are unaware about the legal rights and government initiatives in favour of them. This is the cause of low women empowerment in selected region under study. Government should establish a legal cell integrated with the local level government to provide free advice to women about their rights. Various programmes through electronic media, public meetings, rallies and seminars especially in rural areas could be effective tool to create awareness among the women and thereby support in empowering women. In southern Punjab economic and social infrastructure of the society should also be improved and women may be allowed to form social networks in the community to share their experiences and feelings.

At the length it may be convenient to say that the task of empowering of women is not an easy task rather, it is intricate one in such typical area like Bahawalnagar district where still a major portion of women are not aware about their self-identity, legal rights and self-efficacy in the pressure of family matters. Women empowerment that is as an important sustainable Development Goal by as declared by UNDP, could be achieved only when all concerned bodies will comprehend and work together according to the factors analysed in this study.The society as a whole has to comprehend women's competences and their contributions for acceleration of development process.

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