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The Relationship between Higher Education and Women Empowerment in Pakistan

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Abstract

Women empowerment is one of the critical dimensions of a feminist perspective. In patriarchal societies, women are oppressed and suppressed; hence higher education is considered a remedy to equip them to deal with the issues arising from undue oppression and suppression. This study aimed to find the relationship between the attainment of higher education among women and women empowerment. The study has been carried out in Central Punjab, Pakistan. The study was framed under a correlational research design. Data was collected from a sample of 200 respondents equally selected (50 from each) of four different universities, including the University of Gujrat, University of Management and Technology, Lahore, University of Minhaj, University of Lahore. A stratified random sampling technique has been utilized, whereby 200 samples were questioned through a structured questionnaire. The collected information was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Findings showed a strong correlation between the attainment of higher education and women empowerment. The correlation was determined among one independent variable (attainment of higher education) and four dependent variables, including the power of decision making, increased political participation, economic independence, respect, and self-esteem. All variables have been found significantly associated with each other, which provides evidence that higher education attainment leads to women empowerment. Based on the study's findings, it is concluded that higher education plays a significant role in liberating women from oppression and suppression.

Keywords: Women empowerment, higher education, self-respect, self-esteem, economic independence

Introduction

Education plays a vital role in advancing a country and achieving standards of modern life. Higher education is equally important and required for male and female members of any society. However, women face several issues in accessing higher education, and they are discriminated against continuously in this sector. In

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this context, women's education is even worse in traditional societies and developing countries like ours. Literary evidence indicates that women's chances of getting higher education are lower than men's; women are subjected to gender-specific roles in male-dominant society (Batool et al., [2013](#); Khokhar, [2018](#)). In this way, the prevailing socio-cultural and economic values of society create impediments to women in terms of getting a higher education and barred them from playing their due role in societal uplift (Yousuf, [2019](#); Marie, [2003](#)).

In Pakistan, there has been a significant gap between male and female basic education and literacy scores. Malik and Rose ([2015](#)) have identified while discussing the opportunities for financing education in Pakistan for the Oslo Summit, that Pakistan's performance in women education had been worst, as only 59 percent of girls get primary education, while only 13 percent could reach high school up to 9th grade. Another study disclosed that 72 percent of girls even do not complete school level education, and only 10 percent of females enter universities (Syed, [2018](#)). In this context, developed regions with greater gender equality stood far better than Pakistan in women's education in general and higher education in particular. Numerous socio-cultural impediments, such as the feudal system, patriarchal culture, lack of familial support, lack of travel freedom, lack of facilitation from the government (Mehmood et al., [2018](#)), poverty (Khan et al., [2015](#); Saleem et al., [2019](#)), fear of sexual harassment, and pre-marital affairs (Leach, [2013](#); Joseph, [2015](#)) are responsible for the low higher educational profile of women in Pakistan. In Pakistan, women have to put a hard struggle to attain their fundamental rights. Noreen and Khalid ([2012](#)) reported that education's role brings a remarkable change in the development of any country. The opportunities and possibilities are created easily with higher education, and women can become earning hands and gain a favorable position in society.

A study conducted by Nawaz and colleagues affirmed that higher education improves females' status in family and community. The study showed a significant correlation between higher education and decision making, as higher education was the higher in decision-making in domestic matters (Nawaz et al., [2017](#)). Similarly, in another study, it was revealed that highly educated women possess an increased awareness about the rights, which enable women to choose wisely. Thereby, higher education among women is associated with gender equality, at least at the family level. It also boosts women's self-esteem and enables them to participate in the decision-making process, particularly about themselves (Sharma & Afroz, [2014](#)).

Women comprise nearly half of the world population, and their role and participation in economic, social, and political affairs are necessary for economic

growth and to attain independence. Every society has some cultural constraints, which identify the difference between men and women and define the boundaries of their activities, due to which women face some grounded barriers to participate in all areas of life (Naz&Chaudhry, [2011](#)). In dominant male society, women are pushed and pulled by the norms of patriarchal society, and they are not allowed to take their decisions independently. Women empowerment depends on some determinants such as education, poverty, economic independence, social and cultural issues, and economic opportunities for women. The study showed a significant relationship with empowerment determinants to increase participation in society (Bushra&Wajiha, [2015](#)).

The patriarchal society is considered the cheapest and most flexible labor source (Sengupta, [2013](#)). Akhter and Akbar ([2016](#)) have reported that a male child's birth brings pleasure for his parents. Pakistani people preferred a male child because they think that male children carry the whole family's responsibility, whereas the female would be a liability. Although women play a double role in the community, managing the home and working in the field for unremunerated jobs, they are still not granted proper respect and right to take charge of their own lives. It is also observed that women achieving higher education, knowledge, and skills are not offered compatible remuneration or position in the organization (Arif, [2011](#); Arif et al., [2017](#)).

Education facilitates the acquisition or learning of knowledge and skills, values, habits, attitudes, beliefs bringing opportunities for unlimited learning. Education connects people towards the betterment of the whole society (Yousuf, [2019](#)). Higher education plays a significant role in increasing income levels among women as it leads to better levels of self-esteem, independence, confidence, and, most importantly, allows women to emerge out of traditional gender roles (Asghar, [2018](#)). Highly educated women can exercise their own choices and create awareness about their rights, among others (Batool & Batool, [2018](#); Packianathan et al., [2016](#)).

Jayaweera ([2010](#)) also concluded that access to higher education had enhanced the worth of life for women as it enhances women's status in the family and society. In this context, women's higher education is significantly associated with freedom of opinion and expression, better decision making, involvement in economic activities, and increase women's political choices and participation. In contrast, uneducated women remain pre-dominantly dependent on men throughout life (Asghar, [2018](#); Butt & Asad, [2016](#)). Conclusively, women are being discriminated against both at society and institutional levels; it is a burning issue calling the research community's attention for in-depth investigation of all of its aspects and

highlighting the role of higher education in mitigating those issues (Friedman, 2004).

Theoretical Framework

In this study, Marxist Feminism has been utilized to determine women's subordination, particularly in the field of the decision-making process in different societies. It is a fact that women have been oppressed and subjugated throughout the world (Henslin, 1996). In this context, Marxist Feminism gets a high status of prestige regarding women's rights advocacy and their subordination as it mostly emphasizes the equal access of women to accumulate property and other services, from which women are deprived. Further, the conflict perspective of Karl Marx (1818-1883) recognized an inbuilt tension and conflict among men and women, which is reinforced through the capitalist structure, and dismantling capitalism would lead to women's liberation. In most developing societies, including Pakistan, women are deprived of their fundamental rights, including their access to higher education and the economic decision-making process. In this context, while applying Engels's theory (1820-1895), this study argues that the leading cause of declining women's right to higher education is rooted in patriarchy, which accumulates power, prestige, and authority in a few men's hands.

In general Pakistani society also represents such a scenario where men accrue the overall means of production, whereas the women are restricted to domestic circle leading to their subordination and deprivation both at family and public levels. Besides, the centuries-old cultural norms also support empowering men and disempowering women. Conclusively, Marxist Feminism sees women's oppression and subordination in private property and family structure. Based on such assumptions, it is apparent that women shall be deprived in every sector, including their higher education access. In this regard, the ideological position and power relations are male-oriented and patriarchal, which is best suited to Marxist philosophy and justifies researchers' position in this study.

Statement of the Problem

The survey was conducted to determine the relationship between higher education (attained by women) and women empowerment. The research would highlight the factors that contribute to Women's attainment of higher education, as well as the factors that lead to perceptions of empowerment by women.

Research Questions

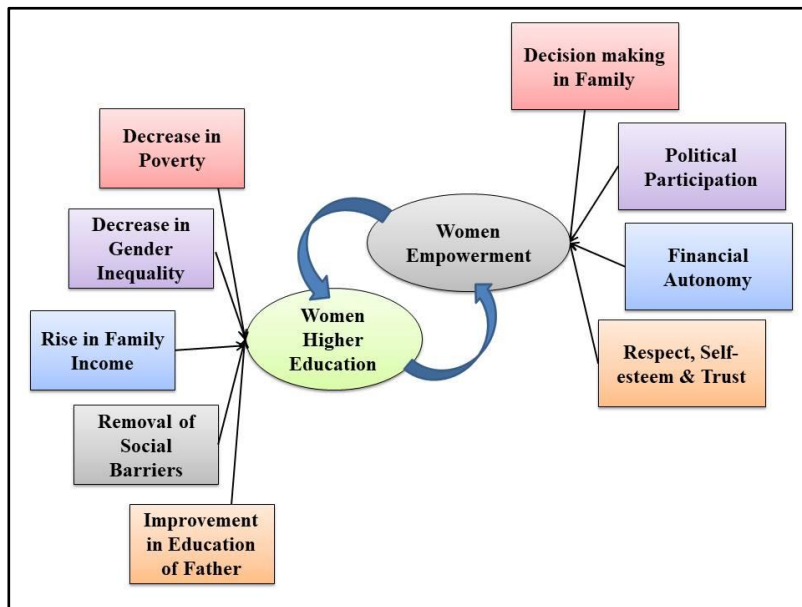
1. Which factors contribute most to women's attainment of higher education in Punjab?

2. Which factors contribute most to women's perceptions of empowerment in Punjab?
3. What is the relationship between women's attainment of higher education and perceptions of empowerment in Punjab?

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1

The Conceptual Framework of the Study



Methodology

This study was framed under a survey research design. The population was postgraduate students studying in various programs of universities. The stratified random sampling technique, a probability sampling technique, was specifically adapted to select samples. Primary data was collected from a sample of 200 female postgraduate students equally: fifty students from each of four different universities, including the University of Gujrat, University of Management and Technology, Lahore, University of Minhaj, and the University of Lahore. A structured questionnaire was designed and administered to collect the desired data from the respondents. The questionnaire collected demographic information, as well as contained items related to the attainment of higher education of women and their perceptions of empowerment in society after getting a higher education.

The instrument was self-constructed based upon an in-depth review of the literature and consisted of three parts. Part A asked for demographic information; part B contained items on a dichotomous scale (Yes/No) to get general perceptions about women's empowerment in universities. Part C collected information on factors leading to increased chances of attaining higher education and women empowerment. The items included in Part C were developed on 5-point Likert Scale.

Results

First, the descriptive analysis of the demographic characteristics of the sample are presented below:

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Variables	N	f	%	M	SD
Respondents Age	200	20	30	24.16	2.922
20-23		70	35.0		
24-27		66	33.0		
28-30		64	32.0		
Total		200	100.0		
Marital Status	200			1.30	.457
Single		141	70.0		
Married		59	30.0		
Total		200	100.0		
Qualification	200			2.13	.697
Bachelors		37	18.0		
Masters		100	50.0		
MPhil		63	32.0		
Total		200	100.0		
Household Monthly Income	200			2.26	.752
10,000-30,000		37	18.0		
31,000-60,000		74	37.0		
Above 61,000		89	45.0		
Total		200	100.0		

The results show that most of the respondents, 70(35%), were aged in-between 20-23 years, 66(33%) respondents were aged in-between 24-27 years, while 64(32%)

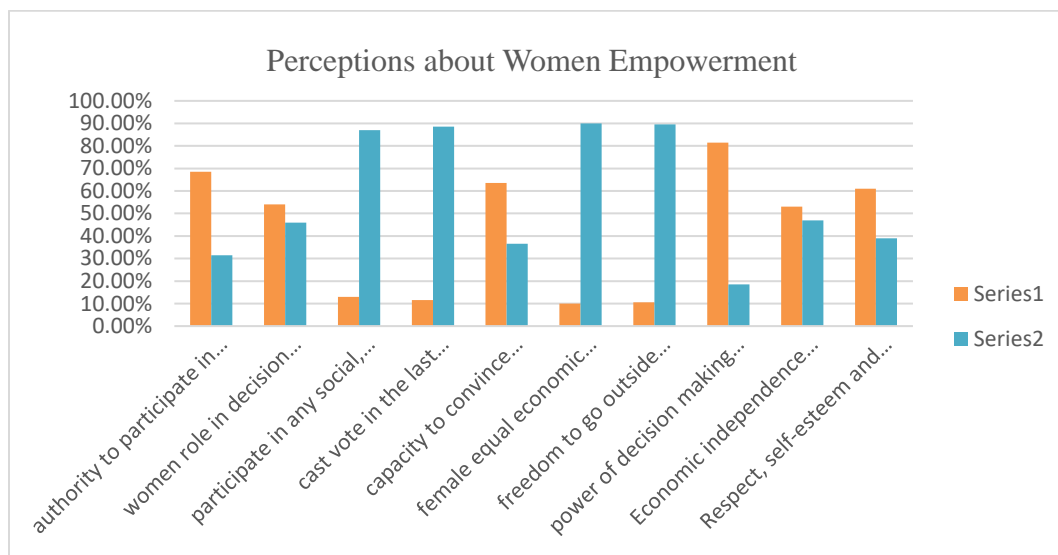
respondents were aged in-between 28-30 years. The results indicate that the age variable is almost equally distributed among the sample selected for the study. Table 1 informs that 141 (70%) women were single, and 59 (30%) were married. Regarding the respondent's academic qualifications, 37(18%) respondents had earned a bachelor's degree, 100(50%) respondents were masters, and 63(32%) respondents were MPhil. It is specified that women of Pakistan prefer to get higher education. Table 1 also describes that 37 (18%) respondents belonged to 10,000-30,000 income group, 74 (37%) respondents belonged to 31,000-60,000 income group, while 89 (45%) respondents belonged to income group of above 61,000 per month. The results indicate that more women belonged to the upper-income group than the lower.

Perceptions about Women Empowerment

Perceptions about women empowerment were taken on a dichotomous scale from the respondents. The detail of the responses is described below:

Figure 2

Frequency Distribution of Dichotomous Scale



The percentage of acquired responses is represented in a graph shown in Fig 2. It is clear from the graph that 63(68.5%) respondents expressed no authority to participate in formulating and executing decisions on domestic affairs, while 37(31.5%) agreed with the statement. 92(46%) respondents agreed that women

played an essential role in decision making about family matters, while 108(54%) respondents negated the statement.

87% of the respondents claimed that they wanted to participate in community events, while 13% disagreed; 88.5% of the respondents declared that they had cast their votes in the last elections while 11.5% said they did not cast their votes. 63.5% of respondents informed that they could not create political awareness among other women, 36.5% affirmed that they could. 90% of the respondents asserted that women could earn an equal economic opportunity, while 10% declined any such possibility. 89.5% of the respondents said they have the freedom to work and explore job opportunities, while 10.5% said that they have no freedom to seek jobs. 81.5% of the respondents negated that they have any power to make family decisions, while 18.5% affirmed that they could make decisions in family matters. 53% of the respondents expressed that they were not economically independent, while 47% said they were financially independent to fulfill their family needs. 61% of the respondents admitted that they do not enjoy desired levels of respect, self-esteem, and trust from their community, while only 39% confirmed that they enjoy respect, self-esteem, and trust.

Factor Analysis

The reliability of the scale items was found to be 0.832. The KMO score is 0.789, which shows that sample was adequate and internally consistent.

Table 2

Values of KMO and Bartlett's Test

KMO and Bartlett's Test			
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.			.789
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square		3678.660
	df		199
	Sig.		.000

Confirmatory factor analysis was performed to check the strength of constructs and sub-factors displayed in the conceptual framework. Two primary constructs, women's higher education with five sub-factors and women empowerment with four sub-factors, were yielded in the process. It was ensured that all factors comprise three items, each having a factor loading of $<.3$. At the same time, each item correlates with at least one other item in the factor (Anderson, 2003; Fava

&Vellicer, 1996). All factors and sub-factors have an alpha value $<.7$, showing a strong internal consistency of the construct. See the table below for further details.

Table 3

Descriptive of the Constructs of the Study

Constructs	Alpha	M	SD
Women Higher Education	0.78	3.70	1.697
Increase in poverty	0.79	4.12	.968
Decrease in gender inequality	0.80	3.24	.456
Rise in family income	0.76	2.24	.687
Removal of societal barriers	0.88	3.58	1.245
Improvement in the education of a father	0.70	2.67	.643
Women Empowerment	0.81	3.12	1.763
Decision making for Family	0.77	2.56	.678
Political Participation	0.75	1.80	.876
Financial Autonomy	0.70	1.75	.948
Respect, self-esteem, and Trust	0.72	3.65	.743

Pearson Product Moment Correlation

The Pearson correlation was computed to determine the relationship between the attainment of higher education of the university students and their perceptions of empowerment. The relationship of higher education has been checked with four sub-factors of empowerment. Results are shared in the table 4.

Correlation analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between the attainment of higher education and women empowerment in terms of four dimensions of women empowerment among samples, including the power of decision making in the domestic sphere, political participation; financial autonomy; and respect, self-esteem, and trust. In this context, attainment of higher education among female have been found significantly associated with the power of decision making in the domestic sphere ($r= 0.88, p=0.001$; and $r=0.78, p=0.001$). Higher education levels among females are significantly associated with increased political participation among females ($r= 0.69, p=0.039$; and $r=0.48, p=0.041$). Higher education levels among females have been found significantly associated with financial autonomy ($r= 0.78, p=0.002$; and $r=0.56, p=0.048$). Higher education attainment among females has been found associated significantly with respect, self-esteem, and trust ($r= 0.88, p=0.001$; and $r=0.78, p=0.001$).

Table 4

Correlation Matrix showing Relationship among Attainment of Higher Education and Women Empowerment

Sub-factors	Decision making for Family		Political participation		Financial Autonomy		Respect, self-esteem, and Trust	
	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
Attainment of Higher Education	0.88	0.001	0.69	0.039	0.78	0.002	0.88	0.001
Perceptions of Women Empowerment	0.78	0.001	0.48	0.041	0.56	0.048	0.78	0.001

Multiple Linear Regressions

To determine the predictive values of the five sub-factors (increase in poverty, decrease in gender inequality, rise in family income, removal of societal barriers, and improvement in the education of the father) on the dependent variable (attainment of female higher education) linear regression was calculated. Only three out of the five sub-factors had statistically significant value in predicting a change in the dependent variable, attaining female higher education. These three sub-factors are the increase in poverty, a rise in family income, and the removal of societal barriers. The results are demonstrated below:

The multicollinearity is tested using the Tolerance Test, which shows how much the variables are correlated to each other, whereas Variance Inflation Factor VIF is reciprocal of the Tolerance. All reported values of VIF are lesser than 10, indicating the absence of collinearity.

The coefficient of determination R^2 is 0.56, indicating that change in independent variables may explain 56% of the dependent variable variation, while the rest of 34% is due to residuals (Gujarati, 2003). The adjusted R^2 is 0.51. The F-Statics is 11.35 ($p < 0.05$), implying that model was highly appropriate.

The coefficient of increase in poverty 25.62 ($p < 0.05$) would have a negative impact on the attainment of higher education; it means that an increase in poverty would make the attainment of higher education difficult for women of Punjab. The results explained that a 1% decrease in poverty would result in a 26% better chance

of female higher education attainment while keeping other factors constant. Gender inequality was rendered statistically insignificant in predicting change in the dependent variable. The results show that a decrease in gender inequality would lead to a 2% increase in female higher education attainment while keeping other factors constant.

An increase in income also shows a positive sign and significant impact. The results reflect that a 1% improvement in family income would lead to a 1.24% improvement in women's higher education attainment. The removal of societal barriers was the most potent predictor of women's higher education attainment. The results explained that for every one percent decrease in societal obstacles, a 26% increase in chances of women's attainment of higher education occurs, keeping all other factors constant. The improvement in father education was statistically insignificant, though beta value informs that for every 1% increase in father education would cause a 20% increase in chances for the female higher education.

Table 4

Regression Analysis for the Factors affecting Attainment of Women Higher Education

<i>Variables</i>	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>p-value</i>	Tolerance	VIF
(constant)	7.25	0.60	64.20	.089		
Increase in poverty	-25.62	9.319	3.067	.004*	.090	1.11
Decrease in gender inequality	2.39	3.252	1.023	.401 ^{NS}	.091	1.098
Rise in family income	1.24	.541	3.401	.002*	.085	1.176
Removal of societal barriers	25.85	5.896	4.453	.000*	.087	1.149
Improvement in the education of a father	20.20	25.896	.952	.456 ^{NS}	.092	1.086
R ²		0.56				
Adjusted R ²		0.51				
F- Value		11.35				

*Note, * = Significant at 95% level of confidence, ** = Significant at 90% level of confidence, ^{NS} = Non-significant*

Discussion

In Pakistan, in general, and rural areas in particular, female schooling and education are alarming (Malik & Courtney, [2011](#); Yousuf, [2019](#)). This situation is further compounded by the prevailing traditional norms, widespread poverty, and lack of female educational institutions (Sengupta, [2013](#); Syed, [2018](#)). In most rural areas, women are not allowed to get an education beyond the primary level, and they remain far behind men in higher education. Higher education is a key factor of women's empowerment and their socio-economic uplift (Bushra & Wajiha, [2015](#)). In this context, previous research also elucidated that higher education leads to economic independence, freedom, participation in the political sphere, respect in family and community, and better self-esteem (Batool & Batool, [2018](#); Packianathan et al., [2016](#)).

A decrease in poverty increases the chance of female higher education. So, it was safely concluded that poverty was crucial as it reduced women's ability to acquire further higher education. Other studies (Afzal et al., [2012](#); Fabre & Augersaud, [2004](#); Chaudhry, [2007](#)) also supported these results. The results revealed that improvement in gender equality would lead to an improvement in women's higher education attainment, all else constant. Other researchers (Nawaz et al., [2017](#); Naz & Chaudhry, [2011](#)) explained similar results.

The increase in income may positively affect the education of women in society. The higher the family income, the higher the education of women and vice versa (Sharma & Afroz, [2014](#)). Similarly, better father education may also increase the chances of women getting a higher education. The most credible factor, according to the results, was reducing societal barriers. The percentage analysis of perceptions of empowerment also reflected: even though women are getting higher education, still, they are not involved in family affairs; they did not get financial autonomy, and they have not reached the desired levels of self-esteem, respect, and trust of family and community.

The current study indicates that higher education among females is associated with empowerment, as it brings forth the skills and abilities of women and liberates them from ignorance, enables them to exercise their will or consent concerning marriage, and provides them more space to work. This study's findings are in line with Sharma and Afroz ([2014](#)), who asserted that higher education empowers women to make their choices and participate in the family decision-making process.

Further, the present study concludes that higher education among females is also associated with increased political participation, i.e., casting a vote, expressing

political opinions, and enhancing their leadership capabilities. Furthermore, highly educated females have been found to have a better understanding of politics and political dynamics and their role in the process (Asghar, [2018](#); Butt & Asad, [2016](#)). The study of Marie ([2003](#)) also shows that education among women is key to their political participation level. Cultures and societies where women achieve higher educational levels are known for the increased political involvement of women.

Likewise, an increase in the number of academic years is linked with an increase in income; this statement is right in women's case (Murtaza, [2012](#); Noreen & Khalid, [2012](#)). In patriarchal societies, women are often economically dependent on men; however, it is evident that female higher education leads to their economic independence in such communities (Akhter & Akbar, [2016](#); Friedman, [2004](#)). This study also shows that higher education provides women with financial stability and autonomy for leading a quality life, enjoy better status, and plan their future.

The current study results show that university-level education is vital in providing women with trust, self-confidence, self-esteem, and respect in the family and community, the most critical indicator of women empowerment. Many studies so far have concluded that higher education leads to higher levels of confidence, better self-esteem, and respect for women in the family and community, especially in patriarchal societies (Batool & Batool, [2018](#); Jayaweera, [2010](#)).

Discrimination starts in the home, where boys are preferred over girls by discussing the catalog of discriminatory practices. Sadly, it continues throughout the life of a woman; women are largely excluded from the process of decision-making, and they are denied to get equal opportunities to develop their confidence and abilities (Qureshi & Shaikh, [2007](#)). They are assigned passive and subordinate roles. It was noted by Akkermans & Kubasch ([2017](#)) that family influences the cultivation of positive feelings of self-efficacy, healthy social relationships, and art to utilize academic support; this way self-esteem and trust in society increase. The most credible factor, according to the results, was reducing societal barriers. By considering women's voices, the education system should focus on discriminatory practices, and it needs to reinforce the value system that girls are facing in the home because, in this way, they are unable to develop their full potential (Qureshi & Rarieya, [2007](#)).

Denied opportunities create a lack of confidence and low self-worth in women; then, women would not acquire economic independence. It leads to the results in which they cannot get the same respect that an educated person is getting. The percentage analysis of perceptions of empowerment also reflected that even though women are getting higher education, they are still not involved in family affairs;

they did not get financial autonomy. They have not reached the desired levels of self-esteem, respect, and trust of family and community. Socio-cultural values and norms strongly influence women's position in Pakistani society as it is a male-dominated society (Ahmad, [2001](#)). Undoubtedly, women's educational opportunities are being promoted by the current political environment, but cultural attitudes for women remain the same as they are biased and unchanged.

Conclusions

The current study concludes that the attainment of higher education is a critical determinant of woman empowerment. The study also found that this achievement is associated with better living standards and a rise in socio-economic standing. The study ascertained the key elements of women empowerment, such as freedom of choice, participation in family matters through decision making, economic independence, political participation, self-esteem, and respect.

The removal of societal barriers was the most potent predictor of women's higher education attainment. Poverty negatively impacts the attainment of higher education among women, whereas the influence of fathers' level of education is insignificant. It is further concluded that higher education is a vehicle through which female students can steadily achieve the destination of women empowerment and enhance their positive role in matters related to an increase in participation in decision making regarding family affairs and politics.

Higher education would also lead to women's financial autonomy, strengthen their self-confidence, self-esteem, and respect in the family and community. However, unfortunately, in the patriarchal society of Pakistan, women are getting the freedom to explore jobs, but equality of opportunities is limited. A majority of the respondents negated having any power to make family decisions; many of them expressed that they do not enjoy financial autonomy and admitted that they do not enjoy the desired levels of respect, self-esteem, and trust from their community.

Implications

The purpose of higher education is to bring social change (Malik & Courtney, [2011](#)). Women who are economically and socially dependent are not empowered women (Sharma & Afroz, [2014](#)). Higher education helps in lessening inequalities and functions as a means for improving their status within the family. Higher education increases women's ability to make independent decisions, reduce violence, claim legal rights, participate in civic society, economic independence, and many more.

Education among women is the most potent tool for attaining power in society. Higher Education of women plays a significant role in releasing their energy and creativity and enabling them to meet the complex challenges of the present world (Aggarwal, [2014](#)). However, the main focus of the HE institutions has been geared towards their internal academic needs rather than focus on the students themselves, who are arguably the primary stakeholders (Latif et al., [2019](#)). University students perceived that their teachers are more concerned with preparing them for their examinations than preparing for life (Ullah et al., [2013](#)). Following Muslim female students of the developed countries, Pakistani higher education students should also be self-reflective, discover their potential, and learn ways to employ it to claim their share in available financial, cultural, and social resources while observing cultural and structural constraints (Al-Deen, [2019](#)).

Free and fair access to higher education empowers women in diverse socioeconomics aspects, assuring them gender equality in metropolitan cities like Karachi and Lahore in Pakistan (Nawaz et al., [2017](#)). They have suggested that the government and other leading Institutions, families, civil society, and NGOs must strive for females' early empowerment by getting them into schools. Nevertheless, Sharma and Afroz ([2014](#)) commented that it is just a myth that higher education and getting paid work in any formal organization would empower and liberate women. Women empowerment slogan has been politically reduced to a movement against dowry, and physical violence against women, especially in South Asia. This oversimplification should be challenged. For instance, this drive must be connected with women's reproductive rights and devising strategies to lessen gender discrimination. Moghadam et al. ([2017](#)) have expressed concern that most academically educated women have reduced their fertility rate; the institution of the family does not much appreciate it. Reaching gender equality requires improvement in the educational status of women, and higher education can act as an essential foundation for marginalized women to achieve legislated equality as documented in national laws to reach the real equality, the equality of outcomes (Yasun, [2018](#)).

Muslim women face inequality and discrimination within their own families and the communities they live in (Mendoza, [2018](#)). In Europe, this situation has led to Muslim Feminism; this discourse leads to negotiations and new interpretations of religious practices and understanding of moral norms in Muslim societies in the developed world.

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