Determinants of Women Empowerment in Pakistan: Some New Evidences from PSLM (2011-12)

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Abstract

There are various criteria and determinants to quantify Women Empowerment. The present study attempted to address two key concerns; Women decision about education and Women decision about more children to explain Women Empowerment in Pakistan. For the quantitative analysis, data set from PSLM (2011-2012) has been used. Binary Logistic Regression is applied as an estimation strategy. In addition, the detailed descriptive analysis has done prior to empirical analysis to see the relative importance of different determinants in Women Empowerment. The study reveals that the ration of empowered women is very low in the country; unfortunately, women enjoy relatively substandard status as compared to men. Education level of women generally improves decision making capacity of a woman. Similarly, age, type of educational institutions and paid work proved to be significant factors of women decision about education. On the other hand, increasing number of children enhance the level of a woman empowerment in family. Further, there exists huge proportionate disparity between rural and urban women regarding the decision making aptitude. Even though the government is running number of programs to address the issue but still the situation has remained gloomy mainly because there exist highly constrained autonomy of females in contrast with males within the society. There is a dire need to extend awareness to empower women across all of the districts of country to fasten the development process.

Key Words: Women empowerment, Discrimination, Gender, PSLM
JEL Codes: J7, J12, J16

1. Introduction

During the last two decades Women Empowerment has become a popular research agenda. Among other determinants of economic development, Women Empowerment is identified as a one of the most significant aspect of development (World Bank, 2011). But the terminologies and meaning linked with this notion are not much comprehensible. Among the developing countries of the world, Women Empowerment in Pakistan is considered a multidimensional notion and is

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determined by many socioeconomic factors coupled with the cultural norms. Women constitute around half the population of Pakistan (1998-Census). It is a known fact that in the development process of Pakistan, the role of female is undermined as compared to their male counterparts. There exist a huge disparity between women and men in almost all facets of life such as, education, employment, political participation, decision making and ownership of the resources. There is huge inequality in the ownership and control of resources between both sexes (Saigol, 2011). In 2014, Pakistan ranked 141 out of 142 countries (Global Gender Gap Index Report, 2014). It is noteworthy that in 2006, Pakistan ranked at 112, and since then, its position has been increasingly worsening every next year. Furthermore, statistics show that the Literacy rate of adult female (% of females ages 15-24) is only 42.72%, compared to 69.57% for adult males (% of males ages 15-24) (WDI, 2015). Similarly, Labor force participation rate for ages 15-24, for female remains 21.10% while Labor force participation rate for ages 15-24, for male stood at 67.19% (ILO, 2014). In addition, mortality rates at childhood for girls are relatively greater than boys, primarily due to insufficient medical facilities. Preliminary results of "Female Labor Force Survey" and "Situation Analysis of Domestic Workers" demonstrated that only 27% of women in the total labor force are working in government institutions, whereas approximately 73% are employing in the private sector. Roughly 26% of women are engaged in manufacturing, 18% in health & social work, and 18% in education. About 48% women are are not allowed to work, are restricted by their families (ILO: 2015).

On the other hand, the goal of development urges for the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment. Women's empowerment is also needed for rapid achievement of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) such as: improving maternal health, reducing child mortality, achieving universal primary education and reducing poverty in which the country is already lagged behind. But investigating the concrete status of Women Empowerment is multifaceted and complex phenomenon especially within the multicultural and regional society of Pakistan. (Badar *et al.,* 2013). It is also the fact that among many societies around the globe, women are considered as the property of others throughout their lives. Their physical well-being –health, security and bodily integrity-is often beyond their own control. Women have hardly any power on wealth, and they are unable to choose to get better health care for themselves or for their offspring. The significance and need of supporting women in Pakistan to play their role in economic activities is escalating around the country.

The current study is distinct from all previous studies on Women Empowerment as the study is using the core determinants to identify the factors of empowering women in the country coupled with the country level huge and recent data set of PSLM for four provinces. Huge disparity exists in economic and social conditions among these provinces. Male to Female ratio in Punjab is

107.2, Sind is 112.2, Baluchistan is KP is 105 (1998 Census). Generally, women, the most vulnerable group of population in the county has limited access to almost all basic facilities and human needs i.e. Health, Education, work opportunities, outdoor mobility, political awareness and recreational facility. The major objective of the present study is to empirically analyze the factors which effect the Women Empowerment in Pakistan along with the cross-provincial comparison of Women Empowerment in Pakistan. The study is organized as follows; Section 2 briefly incorporates the existing literature on the subject. Section 3 portrays the methodology and data related issues. Section 4 gives details about empirical findings. Lastly, Section 5 concludes the study along with policy options.

2. Review of Literature

This part of study discusses the available literature on women empowerments at national and international level. There are various studies which addresses the matter of Women Empowerment theoretically and empirically. Among all these studies, the notion of Women Empowerment has been presented in a different way but there is little literature in which empirical justification is also provided along with the theoretical constructs. Generally, education, family size, family type, religion, wealth, health etc. are those aspects which have been explained thoroughly in the literature to determine women empowerment. Evidence shows that among all these factors, education proved to be a very strong factor in making women empowered not only at household level but also in whole society. In this respect, studies like Zafar *et al*., (2005), Shahnaz and Kizilbash (2002), Fatima (2013), Samari and Pebley (2015), Ali and sultan (1999), Jeebhoy and Sathar (2001) who concluded that education is one of the strong determinants of women empowerment. Among these, we have discussed a detailed account of important studies in a chronological manner.

Jeebhoy and Sathar (2001) studied women's autonomy across India and Pakistan based on region and religion. They identified education as the main force which determines Women Empowerment instead of region and religion. In the same lines, Shahnaz and Kizilbash (2002) worked on the female decision making process. They particularly took paid employment decision as a bench mark criteria for the empowerment in district Punjab, Pakistan and came out with the conclusion that employed females are more empowered as compared to unemployed one. The study of Ghuman (2003) encompasses selected Asian countries (India, Pakistan, Thailand, Malaysia and Philippines) to test the women's autonomy. He came up with the view that Muslim women generally had less freedom of movement as compared to non-Muslim women. Education and family type (joint or nuclear) are studied by Zafar *et al*., (2005) in the district Faisalabad, Pakistan and argued that education is one of the strong determinant of women participation in any kind of affairs but family type do not play any

significant role in decision making process of a woman. Jan and Akhtar (2007) found significant role of marital status and family planning on the decision making. Similarly, Nayak and Mahanta (2009) studied some important indications such as financial autonomy, freedom of movement, political participation, acceptance of unequal gender role, exposure to media, access to education, and domestic violence in India. They found that household decision making power and freedom of movement of women vary considerably with age, education and employment. Acceptance of unequal gender norm by women themselves is still prevailing. Generally speaking, Indian women are relatively disempowered and they enjoyed lower status than men. Another important study done by Khan (2010) who identified some socio-cultural determinants of women's empowerment in domestic sphere in district Punjab, Pakistan by using large number of social and economic factors such as education, age, number of respondent's brothers, amount of property and dowry, husband cooperation, paid job, local level facilities, awareness about their rights, veil, political participation, social networking, religious tendency, exposure to mass media and work load of respondent to address empowerment of women in the study area. Amount of dowry and property is the considerable factor which affects the empowerment of women at house hold level. Similarly, the greater number of brothers has also greater socio-economic support for women.

Again, Khan (2011) highlighted another unique determinant i.e., the number of children (not the number of sons) by analyzing empirically the contextual[1] assessment of Women Empowerment and its determinants at micro level during 2005-2006. He argued that number of children is very appropriate in enhancing women's empowerment, along with socioeconomic environment, level of education and employment status of women. Khan and Noreen (2011) examined determinants of Women Empowerment in district Bahawalpur, Pakistan which is one of the least developed regions in southern Punjab, Pakistan. They highlighted the role of microfinance institutions in empowerment of women. In addition, they also concluded that vocational trainings may play a supportive role in management of women empowerment. Hou and Ma (2012) used PSLM data set to study the effect of women decision making power on maternal health services uptake in Pakistan to explore the link between women's decision making and their uptake of maternal health services. Their results showed that rate of maternal health services uptake was very low in Pakistan. Maternal health services uptake rate is related with welfare status. Badar *et al.,* (2013) conducted a cross sectional house hold level study in one town of district Bahawalpur, Pakistan and identified that there are solely two main factors (Education, duration of the marriage) which determine the level of empowerment of women in this region. Fatima (2013) empirically analyzed the relationship

[1] Context of family planning and economic decision making in the household.

between education, employment and women's household empowerment in Pakistan. She found that education and employment increase women's household empowerment.

Similarly, Paid work increase women empowerment. Yasmeen (2014) further added some more factors such as loan size and established some interaction terms between education and loan size on women's decision making. The purpose of her study was to evaluate the impact of microfinance involvement of women's household decision making in Pakistan. He argued that women borrowers are more empowered as compared to women who are not borrower. Increase in income has positive relationship in decision making while there is hardly any impact of marital status on decision making. The most recent study of Samari and Pebley (2015) analyzed the case of women's autonomy in Egypt for the year 2011. The main determinants of women's autonomy in Egypt were house hold wealth and region along with age, education, employment, current settling (Rural or Urban), household size, husband age, husband's education and husband employment.

3. Methodology

Secondary level data has been taken from (PSLM)-Federal Bureau of Statistics, Government of Pakistan 2011-2012 by using some proxies available in the data set. The original sample contains data of 106561 individuals. We then selected females only with some model specific characteristics which reduced the sample size for further analysis. Selected cases for age limit between 15-49 years reduced the sample to 25486. Further, 7-8 possible responses in all the empowerment related questions were re-coded to 4 categories. These categories of Women Empowerment proxies were labeled ranging from "no say" in decision making to "good say". The study have taken two major proxies of Women Empowerment i) Women decision about her education and ii) Women decision about more children. These two proxies are purely different and non exclusive categories. Hence in order to explain these two proxies of empowerment, we have taken the set of determinants from the existing literature. For the quantitative measurement of theoretical framework and particularly of explained variable (Women Empowerment), we develop the following baseline testable equation;

$$\mathbf{WEP} = \boldsymbol{\alpha_0} + \boldsymbol{\alpha_i} + \mathbf{X_i} + \mathbf{U_i} \qquad \mathbf{(1)}$$

Where, (WEP) shows Women Empowerment and is explained variable, and X_i is the vector of all explained variables or determinants. While U_i is residual term in the equation. To explain WEP (Women Empowerment), we develop further two proxies i.e., i). Decision of women about her Education and ii) Decision of women about more Children. So the following econometric models are developed;

Empirical Model

Model 1:

$$D.EDU = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 EDU + \alpha_2\ AGE + \alpha_3 EMP + \alpha_4\ MAS + \alpha_5 TEI + \alpha_6 REG + \alpha_7 PRO + U_i \quad (2)$$

Model 2:

$$D.CH = \beta_0 + \beta_1 EDU + \beta_2\ AGE + \beta_3 EMP + \beta_4\ AAM + \beta_5 TEI + \beta_6 NOC + \beta_7 REG + \beta_8 PRO + U_i \quad (3)$$

Here, (**D. EDU**) shows Decision of women about her Education, and (**D. CH**) shows Decision of Women about more Children. From the questionnaire of PSLM, decision about education is measured with the question, 'who in your household decides whether you can start or continue to get education?' with response categories as; woman herself = 1, head/father of the household decides alone = 2, head/father in consultation with his/her spouse = 3, head/father in consultation with the woman concerned = 4, head/father and spouse of the head in consultation with the woman concerned = 5, head/father and other male members decide = 6, other combination of persons decide = 7, too old to study or work = 8, woman concerned has no interest in study/work = 9. Decision about having more children in PSLM are asked as, 'who in your family decides whether you should have more children?' with response categories as; husband alone = 1, woman herself = 2, husband & woman jointly =3, mother of woman or husband = 4, nobody = 5, menopausal/infertile =6, other = 7, It is in the hands of God = 8.

We measure these two dimensions by recoding further into four categories; 0, 1, 2 and 3 for 'no say', 'very less say', 'less say' and 'good say' respectively. Cases with menopausal/infertile response are not included in question about having more children. Similarly, cases with too old to study or work in question about decision for education were excluded. Our analysis is limited to female respondents of age limit 15 to 49 years. After excluding the cases in which female respondents choose the options; too old to study or work, Woman concerned has no interest in study/work; the remaining sample left for analysis is 21671.

The detailed description and construction of all other variables included in the models as given in the following table 1:

Table1: Description and construction of variables	
Variable Name	**Description and construction of variables**
1. **WEP**	WEP shows Women Empowerment and is Explained variable. This dimension is used to assess the role of respondent in household decision making. Numerical measurement of this dimension is made by preparing a matrix question consisting of two proxies; i). Decision about more children (**D. CH**) and ii) Decision about education(**D. EDU**). We selected those females who did not report infertile in our question about more children. The variable is nominal in nature that take values 0= Less empowered, 1=empowered.
2. **EDU**	EDU is the Education Level of the female which of Measured in number of years of schooling.
3. **AGE**	AGE is age of the Female which is a continuous variable and measured in scale. i. e from 15-49 years.
4. **EMP**	EMP shows the Employment situation of women. It is nominal in nature and take values 1= employer, employing less than 10 persons, 2=employer, employing 10 or more persons, 3= self- employed, 4= paid employee
5. **MAS**	This shows Marital Status of women. It is a categorical variable that takes values; 1= unmarried / never married, 2= currently married, 3=widow / widower, 4= divorce and 5= Nikkah solemnized but Rukhsati not taken place.
6. **TEI**	This shows Type of educational institutions. It is dummy generated from the original question about type of educational institution from where the respondent took education). It takes value 1= Government, 2=Private, 3= Deeni madrassa 4=NGO, foundation, trust non formal basic, 5=education school, 6=other ,7=privately
7. **NOC**	It shows number of children a woman has. It is measured by deducting dead sons and daughters from total number of children
8. **REG**	Region is divided in rural and urban that takes value 1=urban and 2=rural
9. **AAM**	AAM stands for Age at marriage measure in number of years.
10. **PRO**	PRO represent Province of the respondent i.e., all four provinces of Pakistan, Punjab, Sind, Baluchistan and KP. It is measured as categorical variable, 1=Punjab, 2=Sind, 3=KP and 4=Baluchistan.
Source of data: Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement (PSLM)-Pakistan Bureau of Statistics.	

To measure the empirical relationship between categorical variable and dependent variable, the Binary Logistic regression is applied. In addition, the detailed descriptive analysis has done prior to empirical analysis to see the relative importance of different determinants in Women Empowerment.

4. Findings and Discussions

To capture the objectives of the study, we have carried out quantitative analysis which is divided into two parts, descriptive and empirical analysis. The current study is utilizing the larger data set from Pakistan Standard Living Measures (PSLM) 2011-2012, along with broader objectives so the foremost focus of the study is to measures two unique dimension of Women Empowerment

"Decision of women about Education" and "Decision of women about more Children" in Pakistan. Table 2 shows provincial comparison of Women Empowerment by two dimensions. Firstly, how much women are independent regarding decision making about having more children. Secondly, regarding decision about education. Within a province a comparison is given for rural and urban area. For the dimension of Women Empowerment related to decision about having more children, Baluchistan rural respondents are equal to urban Sind. However, respondents with 'no say' in rural Baluchistan are relatively the highest amongst all other provinces of Pakistan. In KPK and Sind, mostly the response is 'less say' which depicts that decision making is not solely by women; however, it is mutual consultation of women with other family members.

On the other dimension it is evident from the table 2 that decision about education is in the hands of women solely in urban Punjab as compared to other provinces. Balochistan is at the bottom of this list where most of the respondents lies in category 'no say'. This percentage of 'no say' in KPK is higher than Sind and Balochistan. Except Punjab, all the other provinces show 'poor say' of women regarding their decision about education.

Table 2: ***Province-vise Regional distribution of women's Say (%)***

Decision about having more children								
	Punjab		Sind		KPK		Balochistan	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
no say	4.4%	6.0%	4.2%	8.5%	2.3%	6.2%	5.8%	11.0%
very less say	22.4%	28.7%	20.3%	30.2%	17.8%	28.3%	31.4%	49.7%
less say	69.7%	61.9%	66.8%	55.1%	78.8%	63.9%	58.1%	30.5%
good say	3.4%	3.4%	8.7%	6.2%	1.1%	1.5%	4.7%	8.8%
Decision about Education								
no say	36.2%	47.4%	50.9%	70.3%	68.1%	76.7%	42.3%	62.1%
very less say	23.9%	19.2%	32.2%	26.2%	19.2%	15.4%	47.6%	35.4%
less say	6.5%	6.8%	2.7%	0.7%	4.7%	2.9%	4.7%	1.5%
good say	33.4%	26.6%	14.2%	2.9%	7.9%	5.0%	5.4%	1.0%

Source: Authors own calculations from PSLM (2011-12), percentage is given column wise.

As the main objective of our study is to investigate the determinants of Women Empowerment in Pakistan at provincial level; therefore, our study principally centered on Women Empowerment in Pakistan.

Table3: Illustrates the empirical outcomes of our empirical Model 1.

Table3: ***Women Decision about Education in Pakistan***

Variables	Coefficient	Significance (P-value)
AGE	0.031***	(0.000)
PRO	-0.709***	(0.000)
REG	-0.114	(0.107)
TEI	0.148***	(0.003)
EMP	0.307***	(0.001)
EC	0.429	(0.000)

Note: P-value of t-stats is in parenthesis.*,**,*** show significance at 10, 5, and 1% respectively.

We estimated a logit model where dependent variable takes two categories 1 and 2 for less empowered and more empowered women respectively. This dummy variable is generated from recoding original variable on two dimensions of women empowerment. Table 3 indicates effect of various determinants on our dependent variable that is dummy variable generated for question on decision about education.

Results revealed that all of the variables have significant influence on women's empowerment except REG (region). It is due to the reason that there may not exist regional disparity in our data of Pakistan in rural/urban perspective. However, it is evident that PRO (province) proved to be one of the main determinants of women decision about education which is highly significant. It is due to the fact that there exist provincial disparity in Pakistan in terms of women decision about education.

Similarly, AGE (age) enters in the model with positively and is statistically significant. This is due to the fact that bargaining power of aged individuals (females or males) in society is relatively higher than their younger counterparts. Education is one of the important factors in determining the decision-making power of the women. Coefficient of EDU (education of female) is positive and significant. Outcomes are in line with findings of Khan (2011), Zafar *et al*., (2005), Shahnaz and Kizilbash, (2002). TEI (type of educational institution) is too statistically significant. The dummy for private institutions shows that private institutions are more reliable source to empower women as compared to government institutions.

Table 4 presents results of Model 2, where we introduced again a dummy for decision about more children as dependent variable. According to the results, EDU (education) again appeared to be one of the important factors in determining

the magnitude of decision-making powers of females. The result is too reasonable as an increase the level of education; it may leads to greater probability for the rational reproduction decisions.

Table 4: *Women Decision about more children in Pakistan*

Variables	**Coefficient**	**Significance (P-value)**
EDU	0.07***	(0.000)
NOC	0.085***	(0.000)
TEI	-0.015	(0.806)
AAM	0.008	(0.476)
EMP	0.045	(0.634)
PRO	0.008	(0.837)
REG	-0.231**	(0.001)
AGE	-0.029***	(0.000)

Note: P-value of t-stats is in parenthesis.*,**,*** show significance at 10, 5, and 1% respectively.

On wards from the second determinants, NOC (Number of children), holds positive sign and signifying a positive impact on D.CH (Women decision about more children). Our findings are supported with the social norms of the country that perhaps woman with more children receives relatively greater status as compared those without children. Unlike the educational domain of women decision making, the dummy variable of TEI (Type of Institutions) is insignificant in decision making process of more children. There is a systematic relation emerged between AAM (Age at marriage) and D.CH (women's decision about more children). The results also shows that EMP (paid work) that enters in the model insignificantly but with positive sign. The result indicate that a women with paid job enjoys more decision making power as compared to unemployed women. Similarly, PRO (province) enters in the model as a significant determinant of women decision making power regarding family size. The shows that there exists a provincial disparity in Pakistan in terms of family planning related domain of women empowerment. However, the results revealed that REG (region) hardly play any significant role in determining the family size. The result suggests that data does not allow region to explain Women Empowerment in decision about having more children. Therefore, results suggest that there is no regional disparity in Pakistan in this domain of women empowerment.

5. Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Though there is large and growing literature available on Women Empowerment and its determinants. However most of these studies focused on small data sets and on gender related issues. But we believe that there are two main areas where women are challenged to take their decisions. These are education and reproduction decisions of the women respectively. To see what factors determine these viewpoints of the women empowerment, we conducted this empirical study. Findings indicate that there is hardly any Women Empowerment prevails within Pakistan both at house hold and country level. It motivates to investigate through empowerment contexts formerly known as decision about education and decision making about more children independently. Empirical results show that there exists highly constrained autonomy of females in contrast with males within the household. This suggests that a large proportion of women are excluded from participation on any level of decision making in household related decision.

Further, there exists wide proportionate difference of participation in decision making authority between urban and rural women. As noticed in the empirical exercise that education level of women generally improves their empowerment in decision making. Study reveals that age, type of educational institutions and paid work are significant factors of women decision about education. We also find that increasing number of children enhance the level of a woman empowerment in household. It is concluded that by encouraging women role and status in society and providing them education, rights to participate in decision making can be enhanced in the aggregative analysis results show that women from the province Baluchistan depict greater empowerment as compared with women from other provinces. In contrast results show that women from the province of KPK show lowest empowerment in decision making compared with other three provinces.

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