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Women's Empowerment in Pakistan: The Effect and Role of Social Media and Its Implications

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ABSTRACT

Empowerment is a multi-dimensional term that includes social, economic and individual aspects, which have a considerable impact on women health and wellbeing. A wide body of research has identified issues like healthcare access, reproductive rights, access to the workforce, gender equality, and discrimination as being integral to women's empowerment, but these are especially prevalent in developing nations. Although substantial progress has been made in Pakistan to increase women's participation in work, their legal status, and their social infrastructure, the traditional methods employed to achieve this have not been effective in the overall improvement of women's health. In today's era when digital communication technologies are gaining great significance, especially social media, the present study explores the relation of social media and its impact on women's empowerment and their health related behaviors in Pakistan. The study employs empirical analysis and looks into the impact of social media on women's decisions on health care utilization, contraceptive use, abortion, and early marriage. The results show that social media makes a negligible impact on women's choice on these important health and reproductive issues. The findings also show that there are strong women's attitudes and behaviors that are rooted in culture and society. Domestic violence is seen by many women as normal and often due to fear of social stigma, family pressure or divorce. Likewise, issues of Honor Based Violence continue to have a significant impact on women's decisions and freedoms. While there are many women's groups, women's awareness campaigns and advocacy forums, women's empowerment and health outcomes still lag behind due to entrenched cultural and patriarchal structures. The research concludes that social media does not help in achieving positive and significant transformation with respect to empowerment and health decision making of women in Pakistan. The implementation of sustainable improvements needs a comprehensive approach to changes that considers cultural barriers and institutional support, as well as social transformation, and supports digital awareness building.

Keywords: *Women's Empowerment, Social Media, Women's Health, Well-being, Gender Equality, Domestic Violence, Early Marriage, Reproductive Health, Pakistan.*

Introduction

Empowerment of women is a key to any society's growth and development. Women empowerment is perceived as an issue of priority, one of the global opportunities is educational opportunity, not only because of the increase in awareness of the equality and women rights, but also because its significance rose on the global level. UN Women and The Malala Fund are two initiatives that seek to eliminate barriers like cultural prejudices, child marriage and poor education facilities. As time has gone on, women's political involvement

has increased. The evidence that has come out recently, is that there are women leaders in many countries, for example, Ursula von der Leyen, who is the President of the European Commission, and Jacinda Ardern of New Zealand. Affirmative action and quotas have been used in developing nations to guarantee greater representation. But, the situation with gender balance in politics remains an issue worldwide. Another crucial aspect of women's empowerment is their involvement in the economic affairs. The workforce participation rate among women has been increasing, but women are faced with a gender gap in wages, a lack of leadership roles, and limited access to resources such as loans or land. In several regions, gender equality is being promoted and women are being offered more economic opportunities to address the gender wage gap. There are organizations that promote the decent employment of women, including the International Labor Organization (ILO). Access to reproductive rights and reproductive health care is vital to the empowerment of women. Many women face barriers to accessing health care, including tough abortion laws, and no maternal services. Women are battling for improved access to healthcare in many places, such as Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa. Women are often limited in their independence by social conventions and gender-based violence. International campaigns and movements, including #MeToo, #TimesUp, child marriage and FGM (Female Genital Mutilation) have shed light on the challenges that women face. Societal attitudes are slowly changing, but it will take years to remove the traditional customs and practices. Through programs like UN Women, which seeks to advance gender equality and women's empowerment worldwide, the UN, through its many agencies, supports women's empowerment. One of several nongovernment organizations (NGOs) calling for change is the Global Fund for Women that provides grants to women's groups in the region. All of these issues have been highlighted due to the increased access of social media through increased digitalization. Women rights and women empowerment are promoted on social media. Disparities persist, nevertheless, particularly in areas that are underdeveloped or in war areas. Among developing countries, in Pakistan, whether in rural or urban areas, women continue to face needless discrimination and systemic inequalities (Raza et al.2023). However, women have been working tirelessly to elevate their status in society by taking an active role to overcome the illiteracy and access their required social and economic rights. In Pakistan as in the rest of the world, the position of women has changed dramatically from being a housewife to becoming a key income generator. They can also be actively involved in the social, economic, and political decision making factors that influence their lives and communities in today's environment (Hussain, 2022). This transformation has a direct impact on women's empowerment, as this is essential to the progress of gender equality. Women's empowerment in the twenty first century requires that women be able to make strategic decisions in both their private and public life. Therefore, it is paramount to design strategies to strengthen the empowerment of women and to comprehend the desired outcomes when attaining gender parity. These principles should be used as a framework for all NGOs, policy makers and individual who in good faith is concerned about the urgent issues relating to women's rights and equality in all aspects of life. However, in Pakistan women continue to exposed domestic violence even in rural and urban area and at the same time they are earning earning source for their families. Moreover, domestic violence and husbands' bad behavior is a normal life. The Aurat Foundation (2020) found 2,297 cases of violence against women in 25 parts of Pakistan during COVID-19 pandemic. A significant difference was observed among the regions with 57% incidents reported in Punjab as opposed to 27% incidents in Sindh. However, in metropolitan areas, women have started to recognize their rights by much approach to social media. In this paper,

an attempt has been made to study the contribution of social media in empowering women in Pakistan. Marginalization of women is still going on in Pakistan who are financially and socially independent. Women's empowerment in a male-dominated society has yet to be understood. The torment of a woman is an issue that affects her at all ages in her life (Maqsood et al.2024). No one can describe the experience of growing up as a daughter, the experience of being a daughter-in-law, and the many injustices suffered as a mother. In those times, however, Pakistani women are able to stand up and make their voices heard through many methods. The present study is particularly significant, because the province of KPK is a region where changes are often ignored. Interesting, because women already started to perform well-paid jobs in the media-related area. This will help us to understand the relationship between social media and empowerment of women in today's society.

Background of Women's Empowerment in Pakistan

The first stirrings of the women movements in Pakistan were in the early 1800s with the private philanthropy and progressive Christian missionaries who were campaigning against social evils such as child marriages, polygamy, sati, purdah, and a veil so tight that it made women 'more beautiful.' Women were allowed to stand for election in local elections in 1904. A fair share of schools for both girls were established throughout the entire region (Sadaf & Siitonen, 2022). Prior to partition, the profile of women was relatively high in the context of the British Raj, which was a time when traditional, male-dominated societies and ultra-conservative readings of religion were held in check by the interplay of various – not always complementary – forces. In Pakistan, the level of poverty is high among women. Poor farmers are supported by charity and in part by the government these days. More than 1/3 of Pakistan's rural population is considered to be living below the poverty line. Over 40% of women are illiterate and have limited access to formal education and extension services, and few women (only 3%) are listed as direct beneficiaries of such services. Socio-Cultural Factors The government has also adopted various policies and programs to enhance the socio-economic status of Pakistani women and minimize gender gap since the liberation of Pakistan. Women are still suffering, even today in settled and tribal areas of Pakistan. Gender issues are a topic of interest not only in the developed countries, but also in the developing countries. People of middle and lower classes want equality among themselves and in the upper class there is an apparent superiority which is accepted by the men. There is no responsibility or status associated with both. (Batool & Liu, 2021)(Al-shami et al., 2021) In rural areas, restricting women's lifestyles and thus creating an inferiority complex in the minds of women is considered a natural domain of women, whereas in urban areas there is still some resistance to quick stereotyping and close confinement. Such a situation is ideally conducive to reforms or conversionary movements, covering women's rights from their right to vote to being selected or appointed at any higher or lower-ranking position in any public office or body. Significance of the Study Social platforms in today's world are not only a place for socialization but are also a source of social change and social activism as is witnessed in Pakistan. Yet, there is not enough consensus and literature on the use of social media for empowering women. In this research, an attempt will be made to find the effect of social media on women empowerment and to bridge this gap. It will analyze whether or not digital activism is an effective means to promoting women's empowerment. The results would help expand the growing literature on gender and digital activism, developing new models of understanding the current era of communication and the future of women's empowerment. With the increasing use of the internet and smart phones in Pakistan, this study will assess the impact of social media on women empowerment. The lessons learned can help

community leaders and policy makers use social media to raise awareness about women's rights and create a more inclusive society by empowering women in Pakistan. Empowerment of women in Pakistan Although the history of Pakistan has demonstrated opportunities and dreams for women to be a part of both public and private sphere, the evidence today says otherwise about the status of women in the society of Pakistan. Women in Pakistan play a role in various aspects of society; they are active in sports, work, politics and media (Usman et al.2021). They are also underrepresented in such areas, however. There are fewer women in the job market, in politics and in sports. Women's situation in Pakistan is complex and cannot be simplified to one-dimensional explanations. Considering historical, cultural and political narratives, among other intersections of analyses, is necessary to grasp the position of women. Pakistan is a patriarchy based society where women are regarded as minority and there is gender imbalance. In this context, prevailing norms that perpetuate misogyny can include honor killings, domestic abuse, and malnutrition of young girls, child marriage, and informal justice systems. This is the informal justice system that many people use to access justice (Zulfiqar, 2022). There are solutions available to involve the grassroots in the education of girls, health care, and legal services. The Protection against Harassment of Women and Children at the Workplace Act, the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act, the Criminal Law Amendment Act, and the Punjab Women Protection Authority Act are all seen as banners under which society has started responding to violence against women. All of these could be collaborative entry points: the Women Special Committee, performance of institutions at the provincial level on various issues relating to CEDAW recommendation 28, policies, and the mechanisms for implementation. But all of these overarching means of dealing with violence against women are beset by different problems. A lack of resources – human, financial, etc. – will be cited by many respondents. Challenges and Opportunities Challenges Faced by Women and Girls Widespread systematic discrimination against women and girls exists in Pakistan. Social, political and economic systems are based on the premise that women are inferior. It is important to dissect the notion of “restricted autonomy” and “restricted control” of women in terms of their public, political and financial life. Females have been deemed a second-class citizen in society which has resulted in various negative cultural practices that have compounded low self-esteem and confidence among women. Women are routinely subjected to violence, sexual discourse and honour killings, that threaten their socio-economic participation and independence. Thus, prospective dissenters need to consider these forces before exercising their rights and many are dissuaded from acting against the status-quo (Amani et al., 2024).

The power of authority, control over resources and land, level of education, labor force participation, and networking abilities are all areas where women often exhibit a lack in comparison to men. This limits the options available to women and their life options. At the economic level, this has a breadth too, as a foregone 50 per cent of the population in the country who have experience in market activities end up losing an estimated 33 per cent of actual productivity. They miss out on the other options, creativity, insights, experience, products, and problem solving that a broader skill field socio-economically brings to families, communities and the economy. It is a habitus and dependency on the male socio-economic pool that can lead to entire economies and fields being in need of revitalisation and diversification from other experience pools that have previously been deemed "not to be main production roles". Opportunities for Change There is a growing number of welfare and development organizations whose key focus is to promote gender equality and empowerment of women. This is due to growing concerns about women's status in Pakistan

and its impact on development. There are changes occurring in society and politics, which should be helpful in rectifying this, such as greater opportunities and levels of education, rising participation in the workforce and political campaigning. The government has also taken a few steps to achieve administrative reforms and promote equality and legal policy in gender discrimination. In particular, an informal network that acts to support women has been established, seen as an innovative mentorship that is catching global attention. The mentoring group was developed with the concept that women will help other women to break the barriers they have set in the professional and cultural worlds. When observing the breadth and scale of new legal services and professional networks that are being created, one can see the push for empowerment of women (Karim et al.2023). When it comes to the challenges and opportunities for empowerment today in Pakistan, the convergence of promoting women, addressing challenges, and the existing networks that can help is key. This will pave the way for the comparison and demonstration of the impact of one-on-one interviewing and networking issues on women as a research population and for their level of impact in this context. Progress and Initiatives Pakistan has introduced the Women's Empowerment Policy in 2002 to improve the status of women in society and increase their role in the economic development of Pakistan. The mindset to use knowledge and the rights of women as tools for economic growth and poverty alleviation crossed over from military to democratic government in 2008, where, in a Poverty Reduction Strategy, there is a separate discussion on how to mainstream gender in development (Butt et al.2021)(Abbas et al., 2021). During the tenure of the political government (2008 – 2013), Pakistan has taken a few steps to enhance the organizational capacity and statutory rights of women. This is an important move, as the dilemma the government policy faced in the past the lack of implementation becomes one of the major reasons behind the failure of both the NPA GAD and GAD policy. There are a number of organisations in Pakistan working for the rights of women and their economic empowerment. Some of these are grassroots, others target the strategic dimensions. The working group is spearheading the joint work of developing the National Plan of Action for implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the guidelines provided under the Existing and Future Laws Pertaining to Violence against Women and Children and to allocate resources more efficiently (Health Organization, 2021). The country is conducting field trials of a gender-sensitive computerized national identity card with the help of the National Database and Registration Authority. There are several international organizations which are involved in the projects of women empowerment in Pakistan. A programme engages with the Pakistani political leadership, government bodies, donors, international development bodies and activists to encourage meaningful gender-integrated programming in all aspects of development assistance. Another effort involves making sure that resources are available to local organizations, such as leadership and advocacy for positive behavior around the community and engagement on the policy level for women's right to better health. This blog will cover the issue of women empowerment and social media. With the introduction of social media, a whole new discussion has emerged on the topic of women empowerment as it provides an environment that is completely free of the physical world. This is highly relevant in Pakistan, where limited digital literacy, limited women's labor force participation, and a conservative society put a double burden on women seeking to have their voices heard (Hassaan et al.2023). The use of the internet, however, is becoming more literate and gender roles are loosening. Social media campaigns on 'women empowerment' and 'awareness' have proven to be very fruitful to attract the attention of thousands of people. Women have unwisely begun to untie the social chains that aren't just being imposed on the

tech-toting male sensibilities, but on a conservative population of women as well. Social media campaigns have boosted cross-gender support. The technological age, on the one hand, has thrived to make the nation globally connected; on the other, it has offered women the opportunity to come out of their stone-crafted thresholds and be part of the national and international discourse in a way suited to them. Empowerment of women as a result of social media is not restricted to urban areas only, rather women living in remote and conservative communities of Pakistan are also benefiting from this new phenomenon (Qadir, 2024). The most powerful aspect of social media is that it comes up with issues that have been taboo in society. Digital activism has even come to eclipse more traditional kinds of activism in Pakistan, such as protest and public assembly. Over the past few years, social media platforms have become a part of the international campaign and it has caught the attention of world organizations and human rights activists. Digital activism is not just about technology trends, it's about real time activism on the heels of mass telephoning as well.

Overview of Social Media Usage in Pakistan

In the era of digitalisation, the use of social media in Pakistan has grown at a phenomenal rate. Internet users increased to an estimated 47 million, mobile broadband subscribers to 91 million, and cellular subscribers to 173 million in 2019, largely thanks to mobile and internet penetration, the increasing affordability of smartphones, competitive mobile data packages, and social media-friendly handsets (Jamil, 2021). The youth population constitutes 63.9% of the total population, so it will be a lucrative market for social media giants who have given special attention to the untapped youth segment in Pakistan. The nation has more than 35 million Facebook users, 7 million Twitter and 25 million, Facebook Messenger. Pakistan is also a vibrant market for WhatsApp, due to its 250 million mobile phone subscribers. In the past, it has been recorded that women in urban areas in Pakistan have encountered less barriers in internet, and social media usage. Social media is seen by the general public, media and private sector as means of entertainment and social activism and political discussion. Facebook accounts and blogs and social media activism have influenced a large proportion of the 'digital natives' (17-23) years old. Apart from Facebook, Twitter is another platform that is widely used in cities of Pakistan, as narratives, events, reports and campaigns spread like wildfire on the internet. There are lots of journalists and columnists in Pakistan who are active on Twitter. The Pakistani English, Urdu and Pashto language bloggers who are also active on Twitter are using it to spread information to a larger mass audience. The current most used smartphone messaging application in Pakistan with more than 25 million active subscribers WhatsApp has been used to send messages and share news during the times of turmoil. There were many rallies, protests and strikes in early 2019 that had one mandate: Do not take media reports as the sole source of information, but citizens' reports on WhatsApp. The involvement of the rural areas of Pakistan is not widely known, but there is nothing that can stop educated and active networking among Pakistani women by social media. While this is certainly an optimistic trend toward social change, it has also raised some issues around the peripheries, such as the issue of women's access and expression of self through social media, as well as the debate on why women are using social media (Shahzad & Omar, 2021)(Sarwar et al., 2023). The challenges faced by Pakistani women in relation to digital assets are that only 5 percent of women have digital assets of their own and 6 percent of the women are the leading directors or managers of IT companies. Engaging Social Media for empowerment. One-way social media empowers women in Pakistan means giving women a platform to voice their opinion, their experiences and what they have to say about the experiences of Pakistani women. There have been several online campaigns launched by women including hashtags

and many more. Women have used social media to connect with others dealing with the same issues, and over time, groups of women have formed trustworthy communities, some with thousands of members (Aksar et al.2023; Safdar, 2023). There were even individuals who met in person, and built a sense of personal solidarity among these women. These on- and off-line communities are significant for many reasons. For some women, the networks are a support network. To them they are a means for raising awareness on social issues. There have been a number of success stories in social media. For example, a renowned Pakistani social media influencer has managed to get a job at the United Nations in New York using social media platforms. Also, another Pakistani woman has been awarded for a tech boot camp she took part in for a digital media project she developed. Digital activism projects (Anjum et al., 2021) have been initiated by many youth. They have a couple of different ways of spreading the word; a lot of them have gone ahead and published in the mainstream press. They could, for instance, curate their images as travel bloggers, drawing advertising income and market interaction. They also tell success stories about a widely used app, which is available in a local language. The digital economy is also being leveraged by Muslim women in Pakistan and beyond to provide religious and social assistance services from matchmaking to religious translation online. In fact, social media are part and parcel in disseminating information about how one can educate ones rights and duties and how they can access these basic services easily for women in Pakistan. For instance, one woman has taken her life coaching practice to a weekly radio show and on-air call-in show. Women such as her hold traditional sessions at her social enterprise office in Karachi as well as fun and fast socials to introduce women to her podcasts and online materials. Both women are involved with live podcasts and webinars where they answer the questions students have about new tech tools, terms and conditions of companies, and discuss cybersecurity and other topics. Social media has had a significant impact on women's empowerment. The effect of social media on women empowerment has been profound. This paper suggests that the role of social media in Pakistan has multiple and complex importance regarding women empowerment in socio-political context. Positive implications would be the encouragement of 'women's sense of community', digital spaces as tools for various collective actions, support and sharing of knowledge, practices and 'gossip'. Digital tools, as social media platforms, can enable and empower activism, awareness creation, mobilisation around the opposition of norms and as forms of surveillance, particularly for those that are left unattended or unnoticed socio-political issues and communities (Li et al.2021). It changes another kind of public perception on particular issues and problematizes the policy discourses towards these communities. Likewise, digital technologies can bring about more risks for online violence, abuse, or insult, and there are also support groups off-line that can give resistance and relief on the ground. Improved community intervention is also growing, with women coming together to discuss problems relating to safety. To summarise, citizens (women or other) engage with digital tools for policy advocacy, awareness raising, acting against, seeking help or networking. The internet, including new information and communication technologies for information, communication, and networking, has not only potential but has built a platform for new ways to manage citizens' agendas that are new in terms of context and type of resistance. In environments where the presence of secrecy laws, anti-censorship communication and writing is not only discouraged but denigrated and sanctioned, digital spaces are called free spaces. In a society like Pakistan, where a culture of silence prevails and is forcefully constructed or imposed, it is in this context that some see the 'ability of the internet' to allow the expression of a polarization of public agendas in ways quite different from those possible in the past. As a

result of such concerns about online harassment and dangers, many women have declined to use the new technology (Aziz & Moussa, 2021). The topic of women and social media is a 'wicked problem' and there are no simple answers to this. This study will try to analyze this 'wicked problem' from a Pakistani perspective. Arguments in this thesis maintain that there is a need to unpack the complexities and intersections of power hierarchies in society, and their effects to theorize practical steps to counter these problems. The internet is like the weapons of violence – but many people say the internet insults and degrades women more. In many ways, 'cyber-cooling' has become more difficult to control either by the state or other controls because of the sheer volume, users' preferences, and capacity to communicate this information on the net. There have been problems in regulating the internet. Many critics believe it has a low level of security features and unknown users online, and therefore have made use of it as their go-to device to harass women. Legal systems have also required time to come to regulate. (Sultana et al.2021). There is a severe dearth of infrastructure needed for encapsulating measures to protect them, especially women, from online violence. There have been a number of positive effects that social media has brought into the life of women empowerment. First, it is being used by women and women's groups to bring to the fore those issues that matter to women in general (Bhat2022). Social media enables more visibility of women's issues and hence provides them a bigger platform to do collective advocacy. Secondly, social media is also being utilized to offer women with an opportunity to express themselves and share their experiences, challenges, and success stories. These online communities help women to feel more connected, supported, and part of a community. There are a number of success stories which recount the experience of women who used social media to bring change to their communities. This is empowering as women can express their points of view, engage, learn, and become active change agents. Third, women have begun to leverage these platforms to access information regarding their rights, resources and opportunities. Social media platforms are becoming more popular with young educated women to seek and share information concerning women's rights, feminism, laws and trends worldwide. Access to information would help them be better informed citizens of the world as access to information is a human right and it is a precondition for the enjoyment of all other rights. Lastly, the internet and social media provide the accessibility and space for sharing ideas, being a part of learning groups, and engaging in positive interactions in society. Collective action for women's rights and more generally women's issues may result from positive interaction. Moreover, it is noteworthy here that such online engagement is vital in the context of Pakistan as women are not generally allowed to attend public forums, gatherings, learning seminars, and policy interventions — particularly in the rural and conservative milieu of the country. While the debate is currently raging on the generally positive impact of social media on women's empowerment in general, and women's activism in particular, many women are subject to various forms of discrimination and waste their time dealing with an unending wave of misogynistic content on social media (Miller et al.2021). This subsection discusses a few negative impacts in detail. Secondly, an increasing number of women around the world are affected by cyberbullying. Online harassment is harassment that takes place on the internet or mobile communication technology. The fear of accidents, bullying and ultimately, deterrence has contributed to enormous levels of anxiety amongst women from home to work place, and these events have had a seriously detrimental impact on women's well-being. Many people, especially those who are in the margins, suffer from bullying, harassment and trolling. Online environments have become a place for violent extremist groups and individuals to share violent threats, harass girls, incite hatred towards

others and promote racist and extremist ideologies, particularly for women and girls. This is made worse by the anonymous content that is possible on social media platforms. A great deal of gossip and rumour mongering among journalists has only reinforced the many flaws in the cyber landscape. It's not difficult to imagine how the misinformation around these issues can warp reality when fueled by hate speech, cyberbullying and manipulative propaganda. Perceived lack of personal security is likely to trigger psychological/emotional stress that renders use of transformative strategies to further enhance their lives, unavailable (Abbas et al.2022). A large number of those involved in women's rights and advocacy are again going into silence. The main reason why they don't criticize the sites they like is because they are silent in order to withstand challenges and to defend themselves or their own objectives, such as conserving investment interests for some of the highest echelons. Nowhere have online communities and social media executives done enough to address particular hostilities and mitigate discriminatory impacts on women. These challenges can only be addressed through technologies that help to reduce gender-based violence and that make women more visible and capable in exercising beyond constraints of current infrastructures.

Data and Methodology

Data

The data from 2016-2023 has been obtained from the World Development Index (WDI) with the proxy, female using the internet, and social media platforms in Pakistan (f int), females take their own informed decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive health care (f dec), females who believe a husband is justified in beating his wife (f beat), while age and education level have been taken as control variables. Methodology To get robust results, we have used three types of regression models to test the outcomes of each DV regarding the use of social media among females in Pakistan during 2016-2023 in order to answer our research question. The data was obtained at an annual frequency which has been converted to monthly level using the frequency conversion method. This study used an annual frequency data collected from the WDI. Data has been restructured from low frequency to high frequency (annual to monthly) to increase the strength of the results. To this end, the quadratic sum method has been used using the Eviews software and mathematically formulated as:

$$y_t = Ayt + A1Ly_t + A2L2y_t + \dots + AqLqy_t + Bxt + \epsilon_t \quad 1$$

A disparity in dimension, temporal scope, and delays is currently the reason for several variations in notation: y_t is an m -dimensional vector of endogenous variables; x_t is an r -dimensional vector of exogenous variables; $t=1, \dots, t$ denotes time in an annual model, with S , the forecast horizon, conventionally set to five or ten; $A, A1, \dots, Aq$ constitutes a (m, m) matrix of coefficients applied to endogenous variables, specifically the elements of vector y_t , evaluated at time $t, t-1, \dots, t-q$; L is a polynomial in the lag operator L : $Ly_t = y_{t-1}$, so $L2y_t = y_{t-2}, \dots, Lqy_t = y_{t-q}$; B is a (m, r) matrix of coefficients that multiplies exogenous variables, namely elements of vector x_t ; and ϵ_t is an m -dimensional vector of error terms (Klein & Kushnirsky, 2005).

Results and Discussion

Domestic violence, female healthcare and early marriages constitute a critical public health and human rights concern in Pakistan, where cultural, economic, and societal factors perpetuate its prevalence. This study offers a statistical analysis of a dataset encompassing critical characteristics associated with domestic violence, including the frequency of intimidation, verbal abuse, physical abuse, age at marriage, education level, and overall age

distribution. This section aims to delineate the attributes of the gathered data through summary statistics, encompassing measurements of central tendency, variability, and distribution. Furthermore, all the variables are stationary at the level.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max	p1	p99	Skew.	Kurt.
f int	209	12.23	2.204	9.494	15.297	9.494	15.244	-0.314	1.353
f dec	209	31.117	2.66	17	37	17	37	-3.113	18.087
f beat	209	31.146	3.82	17	54	17	38	-0.308	13.552
f mar	209	16.575	2.959	10.154	19.65	10.18	19.65	-1.035	2.313
Age	209	2.763	0.046	2.656	2.84	2.671	2.84	-0.12	1.885
Edu	209	0.193	0.183	0.088	0.888	0.088	0.842	2.211	7.037

The average intimidation frequency (f int) is 12.23, with a range from 9.494 to 15.297, indicating moderate levels of reported intimidation. The average frequency of females taking own decision (f dec) is 31.117, with a lower limit of 17 and an upper limit of 37. The average frequency of physical abuse (f beat) is 31.146, with a broad range of 17 to 54. The average age at first marriage (fmar) is 16.575, with a minimum of 10.154 and a high of 19.65, suggesting that numerous respondents married at an early age. The average education level (edu) is 0.193, with a minimum of 0.088 and a maximum of 0.888, indicating poor educational attainment within the sample. Elevated standard deviations in decision making and physical abuse (f dec, f beat) indicate increased variability in these responses. The first percentile (p1) of education is 0.088, indicating that the lowest 1% of respondents possess exceedingly low education levels. The standard deviation of f mar (age at first marriage) is 2.959, indicating significant variability in marriage ages within the sample. The negative skewness in f dec (-3.113) and f mar (-1.035) indicates that these variables exhibit lengthy left tails, signifying a higher frequency of lower values. Education (edu) exhibits a significant positive skewness (2.211), suggesting that the majority of respondents possess minimal educational attainment. The elevated kurtosis in f dec (18.087) and f beat (13.552) indicates a pronounced peak near the mean, accompanied by extreme values, suggesting the potential existence of outliers or a densely clustered distribution. The data indicates a high prevalence of verbal abuse (31.117) and physical abuse (31.146), with considerable variance across responders. The elevated kurtosis values for these variables suggest the presence of extreme cases, potentially reflecting the severity of domestic violence within specific population segments. The average age of first marriage is 16.575, consistent with cultural norms in Pakistan, however, also raises concerns about child marriage and its implications for women's health, education, and autonomy. Disparities in Education: The right-skewed distribution of education reveals that most respondents possess minimal educational attainment, which is frequently associated with increased susceptibility to domestic abuse. Data Distribution Challenges: The significant skewness and kurtosis in certain variables indicate the necessity for transformations or non-parametric statistical methods in further analysis. This study presents an overview of essential characteristics in a domestic violence survey conducted in Pakistan. The results indicate prevalent verbal and physical abuse, premature marriage, and inadequate educational attainment among participants. Significant variability and non-normal distributions in certain variables require comprehensive statistical analysis, including regression modeling or structural equation modeling, to elucidate domestic violence's underlying causes and associations. Policymakers must prioritize education, legislative reforms, and awareness

initiatives to tackle the persistent issues related to domestic abuse in Pakistan. Baseline regression Model 1:

$$f_dec = \beta_0 + \beta_1 f_int + \beta_2 age + \beta_3 edu + \epsilon \tag{2}$$

where:

- f_dec (dependent variable) female takes own informed decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive health care
- f_int (independent variable) Female using internet in Pakistan
- age: control Variable
- edu (education level) is included to assess whether higher education levels correlate with taking own decisions.
- ϵ represents the error term.

Table 2. Linear Regression-Model 1

f_dec	Coef.	St.Err.	t-value	p-value	[95% Conf Interval]	Sig
f_int	-0.008	0.182	-0.05	0.964	-0.367 0.35	
Age	-6.649	7.275	-0.91	0.362	-20.992 7.695	
Edu	0.34	1.76	0.19	0.847	-3.13 3.81	
Constant	49.524	22.246	2.23	0.027	5.663 93.384	**
Mean dependent var	31.117		SD dependent var	2.66		
R-squared	0.014		Number of obs	209		
F-test	0.974		Prob > F	0.406		
Akaike crit. (AIC)	1006.046		Bayesian crit. (BIC)	1019.416		
*** p<.01, ** p<.05, * p<.1						

This regression investigates that intimidation, age, and education levels do not significantly predict the frequency of female decision making about health, contraceptive and abortions (f_dec) in this sample. The model's limited explanatory ability ($R^2 = 0.014$) and non-significant F-test ($p = 0.406$) suggest the necessity for a more robust model incorporating socioeconomic, psychological, and cultural variables. Subsequent study ought to investigate nonlinear correlations, interaction effects, and supplementary predictors to enhance comprehension of domestic violence dynamics. Regression analysis is an essential statistical technique employed to investigate the connection between dependent and independent variables. This study examines the factors influencing the frequency of female decision making (f_dec) in Pakistan because family norms and pressures do not let the female take independent decisions about their health care. The model incorporates the independent and control variables of females using the internet (f_int), age, and education (edu). Table 2 presents the regression findings, encompassing coefficient estimates, standard errors, significance levels, and model fit statistics. This analysis aims to ascertain if these characteristics significantly predict verbal abuse in the investigated population. The regression analysis indicates that the frequency of social media use, age, and education do not significantly predict the frequency of female decision making (f_dec) in this sample. The minimal R-squared value (0.014) and the non-significant F-test ($p = 0.406$) with negative coefficient values suggest that the model fails to sufficiently account for changes in female decision making. This needs a more holistic paradigm that integrates economic, psychological, and cultural elements.

Table 3. Diagnostic Test-Model 1

Variable	Obs	Pr(skewness)	Pr(kurtosis)	Adj	chi2(2)	Prob>chi2
Normality	209	0.000	0.000	115.710	0.000	0.000
Hetersadcatcity					863.370	0.000
DW					2.19781	0

The probabilities of Skewness and Kurtosis being 0.000 show that the residuals do not follow a normal distribution. The Chi²(2) statistic of 115.710 with a p-value of 0.000 indicates that the residuals considerably diverge from normality.

A p-value less than 0.05 indicates a violation of the normality assumption. The Chi² value of 863.370 is significantly high, and the p-value of 0.000 indicates pronounced heteroskedasticity. This indicates that the variance of residuals is not uniform, potentially resulting in biased standard errors and incorrect hypothesis testing. The DW statistic of 2.19781 indicates the absence of significant autocorrelation in the residuals. Fundamental guideline for the understanding of DW: DW ≈ 2 ⇒ Absence of autocorrelation (optimal scenario). DW < 1.5 indicates positive autocorrelation (concerning). DW > 2.5 indicates negative autocorrelation (problematic). Given that 2.19781 approximates 2, we deduce that autocorrelation is not a significant concern in this model. Baseline regression model 2:

$$f_beat = \beta_0 + \beta_1 f_int + \beta_2 age + \beta_3 edu + \epsilon$$

where:

- f_beat (dependent variable) females consider physical abuse as a normal course of life
- f_int (independent variable) Female using internet in Pakistan

Table4 . Linear Regression- Model 2

f_beat	Coef.	St.Err.	t-value	p-value	[95% Conf	Interval]	Sig
f_int	-0.345	0.261	-1.32	0.187	-0.859	0.169	
Age	-8.395	10.432	-0.8	0.422	-28.962	12.172	
Edu	-4.396	2.524	-1.74	0.083	-9.372	0.58	*
Constant	59.414	31.899	1.86	0.064	-3.478	122.307	*
Mean dependent var	31.146		SD dependent var		3.82		
R-squared	0.017		Number of obs		209		
F-test	1.191		Prob > F		0.314		
Akaike crit. (AIC)	1156.699		Bayesian crit. (BIC)		1170.068		
*** p<.01, ** p<.05, * p<.1							

This regression model offers insights into the relationship between f_beat and the independent variables, underscoring the necessity for a more robust modeling strategy to comprehensively comprehend the factors affecting f_beat. Subsequent study ought to rectify the aforementioned constraints to enhance the predicted accuracy and validity of the results. This section establishes the outcomes of a linear regression analysis investigating the correlation between the dependent variable (f_beat) and three independent variables: f_int, Age, and Education (Edu). The study evaluates the degree to which these factors account for variation in the dependent variable.

The coefficient of f_int (-0.345, p = 0.187) indicates that a one-unit increase in f_int correlates with a decrease of 0.345 units in f_beat; nevertheless, this effect lacks statistical significance.

The negative coefficient for age (-8.395, $p = 0.422$) suggests that as age rises, f_beat diminishes; nonetheless, the elevated p -value signifies an absence of substantial impact. Education (-4.396, $p = 0.083$): The coefficient indicates that increased education correlates with a diminished f_beat score. This variable is marginally significant at the 10% level, suggesting limited evidence of an effect. The constant (59.414, $p = 0.064$) indicates that the predicted value of f_beat is 59.414 when all independent variables are set to zero. This value is also slightly relevant.

The R-squared value (0.017) indicates that merely 1.7% of the variation in f_beat is accounted for by the independent variables, signifying weak explanatory power. The F-test ($p = 0.314$) indicates that the overall regression model lacks statistical significance, implying that the independent variables do not collectively account for a substantial percentage of the variance in the dependent variable. The AIC and BIC values serve as criteria for model selection, but are chiefly advantageous when contrasting various models. The findings suggest that the regression model lacks substantial explanatory power for f_beat . The sole marginally significant predictor is Education, indicating a possible weak negative correlation with f_beat . Nevertheless, due to the low R-squared value and the absence of overall model significance, more variables should be investigated to enhance the model's explanatory capacity. Subsequent study may integrate other pertinent factors or examine interaction effects to improve model fit.

Table 5. Diagnostic Test-Model 2

Variable	Obs	Pr(skewness)	Pr(kurtosis)	Adj	chi2(2)	Prob>chi2
Normality	209	0.062	0	40.17	0	0.000
Hetersadcatcity					10.2	0.001
DW					2.06561	0

The normality test assesses if the residuals conform to a normal distribution, a prerequisite for proper hypothesis testing in OLS regression. The p -value for skewness is 0.062, which is not significant at the 5% threshold, indicating that the skewness of the residuals is not pronounced. The p -value for kurtosis is 0.000, signifying that the residuals exhibit significant deviation in kurtosis. The adjusted χ^2 statistic (40.17, $p = 0.000$) indicates substantial evidence opposing normality. Given the significance of the kurtosis test, we reject the null hypothesis of normality. The residuals exhibit a non-normal distribution, chiefly attributable to excess kurtosis, indicating the existence of outliers or heavy tails. Nonetheless, considering the sample size ($n = 209$), the Central Limit Theorem may mitigate the effects of this violation.

Heteroskedasticity Examination
 Heteroskedasticity denotes the presence of unequal variance in residuals, potentially resulting in biased standard errors and influencing inferential statistics. The chi-squared statistic is 10.2, accompanied by a p -value of 0.001, signifying substantial heteroskedasticity. Given that $p < 0.05$, we reject the null hypothesis of homoskedasticity, indicating the presence of heteroskedasticity. This indicates that the standard errors in the model may be unreliable, necessitating the use of heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors. The Durbin-Watson statistic (DW = 2.06561) assesses autocorrelation in the residuals. The DW statistic approximates 2, indicating the absence of significant autocorrelation. DW statistic approaching 2 signifies the absence of autocorrelation; thus, we deduce that autocorrelation is not a significant issue in this model.

$$f_mar = \beta_0 + \beta_1 f_int + \beta_2 age + \beta_3 edu + \epsilon_t$$

4

where:

- f_mar (dependent variable) female marriage at 18 years of age
- f_int (independent variable) Female using internet in Pakistan

f_mar	Coef.	St.Err.	t-value	p-value	[95% Conf	Interval]	Sig
f_int	0.304	0.115	2.65	0.009	0.078	0.531	***
Age	-9.398	4.598	-2.04	0.042	-18.463	-0.332	**
Edu	-10.637	1.112	-9.56	0	-12.83	-8.444	***
Constant	40.878	14.06	2.91	0.004	13.157	68.598	***
Mean dependent var		16.575		SD dependent var		2.959	
R-squared		0.682		Number of obs		209	
F-test		146.478		Prob > F		0	
Akaike crit. (AIC)		814.247		Bayesian crit. (BIC)		827.616	
*** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .1$							

Table 6 displays the outcomes of an Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression model analyzing the correlation between the dependent variable and three independent variables: f_int, Age, and Education (Edu). The model elucidates the impact of these predictors on the outcome variable. The regression analysis indicates that f_int positively influences the dependent variable, whereas Age and Education negatively affect it. Among the predictors, Education demonstrates the most pronounced impact, implying that elevated education levels considerably diminish the dependent variable. The model accounts for a significant proportion of the variance ($R^2 = 68.2\%$) and is statistically significant. The expected value of the dependent variable when all independent variables are equal to zero is represented by the constant term ($\beta = 40.878$, $p = 0.004$). This coefficient is statistically significant at the 1% level, indicating that the dependent variable retains a substantial value even without the predictors. The coefficient for f_int is 0.304 ($p = 0.009$), signifying a positive and statistically significant association at the 1% level. This indicates that for each one-unit increment in f_int, the dependent variable rises by 0.304 units, assuming other variables remain constant. The 95% confidence interval ([0.078, 0.531]) indicates that the true effect of f_int is contained within this range.

The variable of age exerts a negative and statistically significant influence on the dependent variable ($\beta = -9.398$, $p = 0.042$), suggesting that an increase in age corresponds to a reduction of 9.398 units in the dependent variable. The significance at the 5% level validates the dependability of this finding. The confidence interval [-18.463, -0.332] indicates that the true effect of Age is probably negative. The variable of Education (Edu) exhibits the most substantial impact within the model, characterized by a negative and highly significant coefficient ($\beta = -10.637$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that an incremental unit of education decreases the dependent variable by an average of 10.637 units. The narrow confidence interval ([-12.83, -8.444]) reinforces the robustness of this effect.

Variable	Obs	Pr(skewness)	Pr(kurtosis)	Adj	chi2(2)	Prob>chi2
Normality	209	0	0.194	17.56	0	0.000
Hetersadcativity					69.870	0.000
DW					2.1034	0

To ensure that the regression model is reliable, we run diagnostic tests for normality, heteroskedasticity, and autocorrelation. The results are shown in Table 7. The normality test assesses if the residuals conform to a normal distribution. The p-value for skewness is 0.000, indicating significant skewness, whereas the p-value for kurtosis is 0.194, suggesting no significant deviation from normality regarding kurtosis.

The corrected chi² value (17.56, p = 0.000) signifies that the residuals considerably diverge from normality. Given that the p-value is below 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis of normality, indicating that the residuals are not regularly distributed. This may affect inference, particularly for limited sample sizes. Heteroskedasticity denotes the non-constant variance of residuals, potentially skewing standard errors and rendering statistical inference incorrect. The chi-squared statistic is 69.870, with a p-value of 0.000, signifying that heteroskedasticity is statistically significant. Given that the p-value is below 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis of homoskedasticity, indicating the presence of heteroskedasticity. This indicates that standard errors may be biased, necessitating the usage of strong standard errors. The Durbin-Watson statistic (DW = 2.1034) evaluates the presence of autocorrelation in the residuals. The DW statistic approximates 2, indicating minimal to no autocorrelation. As 2.0 represents the optimal value denoting the absence of autocorrelation, our model does not experience significant autocorrelation problems.

Conclusion

To conclude, empowerment is a complex three-dimensional concept that embodies a substantial progress of women's status in each of the domains, socially, economically and individually, and has important implications for the indicators of underlying individual health and general well-being. Well documented evidence that can clearly show explicit determinants of women empowerment around the world exists, such as the essential aspects, including health, maternity, contraceptive, abortions, workforce, gender issues, discrimination towards women, and so forth. It should be noted, however, that these are important steps and factors for women empowerment which are more common in developing and less developed country. Although Pakistan saw some reasonable progress both in the labor market and in the social and legal systems in the country, the traditional and non-technological approaches for ensuring a significant improvement in the health of women have not been effective. In Pakistan, more and more women and men are aware of women empowerment and how the various roles of women empowerment affect their health and well-being directly and profoundly, and hence the primary objective of this study was to focus on this intricate process and provisions on which women's health and well-being is potentially moving towards significant improvement. To validate our testable hypotheses, such that social media might affect certain behaviors towards females in Pakistan. But the results of this study show that social media has negligible effects on the decision making of females regarding their healthcare, abortion, contraceptive and early marriages in Pakistan. Moreover, many females are worried about domestic violence as an ordinary issue in their life or it's the social pressure and fear of divorce. Additionally, the problem of honour killing may also be a significant factor in the conduct of the female. Even as there are a lot of women organizations, forums and awareness, the facts and figures are still going against the trend, which is due to the cultural factors. Prospective Research Avenues: Interactions should be studied further to obtain insights into cultural norms, social pressures and honor. Considering non-linear relationships might provide additional insights in these links. Additional control variables could improve the ability of the model to explain the phenomenon.

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