

EFFECT OF EDUCATION AND DURATION OF MARRIAGE ON WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AT HOUSEHOLD LEVEL IN BAHAWALPUR PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

Background: Women empowerment has been identified significant effects on many aspects of human development. **Objective:** To assess the effect of education and duration of marriage on women empowerment at household level. **Subjects and Methods:** **Study design:** Cross sectional descriptive study. Study place: Model town, Bahawalpur. Study duration: From 1st January 2013 to 30th June 2013. Sample size: Expecting the female literacy rate 47% in a population with 5% precision and 95% level of confidence, calculated sample size was 378. Sampling technique: It was simple random sampling. Data collection and analysis: Data was collected by using pretested questionnaire and analyzed by using SPSS version 17. Women empowerment was measured by asking ten questions. Response of each question was divided into three categories and each category was scored as, Not at all = 1, to some extent = 2 and to great extent = 3. The composite score of each respondent was 30. The women's empowerment on the basis of composite score was divided into three levels, the score in between 1-10 = low, 11-20 = medium and from 21-30 was taken as high empowerment. **Results:** Among the illiterate group only 8% women had high level of empowerment, in primary/middle group 33.3%, in third group (matric/intermediate) 53.4%, while in graduate or above group 80.3% respondents were highly empowered. Education was significantly associated with the women's empowerment at household level ($p < 0.0000$). In a group of marriage duration ≤ 5 years 16.3% women had high level of empowerment as compared to 15.7% in 6-10 year, 45% in 11-15 years and 53% in ≥ 16 years category. Significant association was found between duration of marriage and women empowerment ($p < 0.0000$). **Conclusion:** There is significant association between the education, marriage duration and women's empowerment at household level.

Key Words: Education, Women, Marriage, Duration, Empowerment

INTRODUCTION

Women are about half of the world's population and other half directly or indirectly depends on them.¹ More than half billion of women in the world are Muslim; most of Islamic countries have lower level of women status or empowerment and high level of gender gap.²

In developing world, women empowerment is considered a multidimensional concept and is determined by many socioeconomic factors and cultural norms. The concept of women empowerment was introduced at the international women conference at Nairobi in 1985. During the last two decades women empowerment has become a popular issue. Augmentation in women empowerment is one of the strategies of international organizations for reducing population growth rate and poverty alleviation. Despite of major contribution in the development process, female population has low status as

compared to men in Pakistan.^{4,5}

In Pakistan, there is great disparity between women and men in the field of education, employment, political participation, decision making, controlling the resources and job opportunities.³ The third goal of millennium development urges the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment. Women's empowerment is also needed for rapid achievement of other millennium development goals such as: improving maternal health, reducing child mortality, achieving universal primary education and reducing poverty.⁶ Exploring the empowerment status of women is complex phenomenon especially within the multicultural and regional society of Pakistan.⁷ This study was an attempt to assess the effect of education and duration of marriage on women empowerment at household level among married females of 15-64 years of age, in Bahawalpur, Pakistan.

SUBJECTS AND METHODS

Study design: It was cross sectional descriptive study. **Study Population:** The study was conducted in city area of Model Town, Bahawalpur. The population included in the study comprised of married women aged 15-64 years. Total population residing in the selected area (Model Town C) was 80,365 according to the data provided by Bureau of

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statistics Bahawalpur Division. A list of all married women 15-64 years residing in model town C, Bahawalpur was obtained from LHWs of that area and used as sampling frame to select the sample of 378 women by using the simple random method. Study duration: From 1st January 2013 to 30th June 2013. Sample size: Expecting the female literacy rate of females 47% in a population,⁸ 5% precision and 95% level of confidence, calculated sample size was 378.

Data collection and analysis: Data was collected by using pretested questionnaire and analyzed by using SPSS version 17. Chi square test and correlation coefficient was applied to see association between the variables. P value < 0.05 was taken as significant. Inclusion criteria: Married women (15-64 years of age). Exclusion criteria: Women not willing to be included in the study. Level of education: Respondents were categorized into four groups according to their education: Illiterate, primary/middle, matric/intermediate, graduate or above.

Duration of marriage: Respondents were divided into four groups on the basis of years elapsed since marriage, ≤ 5 years, 6-10 years, 11-15 years, and 16 years or above.

Women's empowerment at household level, was measured by asking ten questions: Freedom to buy new household goods, freedom to spend money, freedom to go for shopping, freedom of vote, decision about family size, freedom to visit Relatives/Friends, freedom of expressing views, freedom to attend social Obligations, utilization of health services and consultation for children schooling.

Response of each question was divided into three categories and each category was scored as, Not at all = 1, to some extent 2 and to great extent = 3. The composite score of each respondent was 30. The women's empowerment on the basis of composite score was divided into three categories, the score in between 1-10 = low, 11-20 = medium and from 21-30 was taken as high empowerment.

RESULTS

Age distribution of respondents (n=378) showed that most of them were between the ages of 26-30 years (29.6%) followed by 31-35 years (24.1%)

and 36-40 years (20.1%). The proportion below 25 and above 40 years was quite small (Figure I).

Figure I: Age of respondents

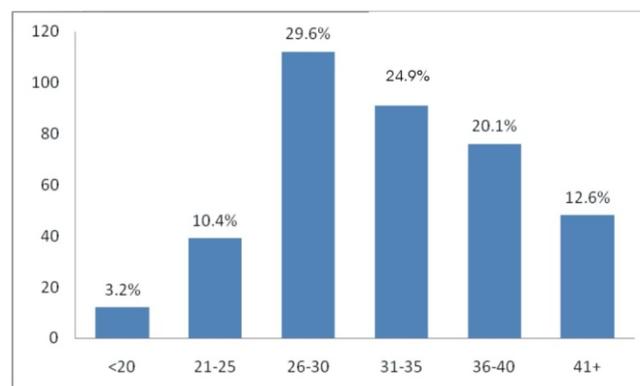


Table I: Women empowerment at household level

Freedom to buy new household goods		Freedom to visit Relatives/Friends	
Category	Frequency	Category	Frequency
Not at all	97 (25.7%)	Not at all	31 (8.0%)
To some extent	237 (62.8%)	To some extent	170 (45.1%)
To great extent	44 (11.5%)	To great extent	177 (46.9%)
Total	378 (100%)	Total	378 (100%)
Freedom to spend money		Freedom of expressing views	
Category	Frequency (%)	Category	Frequency (%)
Not at all	47 (12.4%)	Not at all	110 (29.2%)
To some extent	177 (46.9%)	To some extent	221 (58.4%)
To great extent	154 (40.7%)	To great extent	47 (12.4%)
Total	378 (100%)	Total	378 (100%)
Freedom to go for shopping		Freedom to attend social Obligations	
Category	Frequency (%)	Category	Frequency (%)
Not at all	24 (6.2%)	Not at all	27 (7.1%)
To some extent	144 (38.1%)	To some extent	167 (44.2%)
To great extent	210 (55.8%)	To great extent	184 (48.7%)
Total	378 (100%)	Total	378 (100%)
Freedom of vote		Utilization of health services	
Category	Frequency (%)	Category	Percentage (%)
Not at all	61 (15.9%)	Not at all	17 (4.4%)
To some extent	147 (38.9%)	To some extent	63 (16.8%)
To great extent	170 (45.2%)	To great extent	298 (78.8%)
Total	378 (100%)	Total	378 (100%)
Decision about family size		Consultation for children schooling	
Category	Frequency (%)	Category	Frequency (%)
Not at all	150 (39.8%)	Not at all	20 (5.3%)
To some extent	24 (6.2%)	To some extent	70 (18.6%)
To great extent	204 (54.0%)	To great extent	288 (76.1%)
Total	378 (100%)	Total	378 (100%)

The extent of autonomy of the respondents was assessed by asking ten questions. The response

indicated that they were least autonomous on decision about family size 39.8%, followed by freedom of vote 20%, then freedom of expressing their views about family matters 29.2% and freedom to buy new household goods 25.7%. The respondents perceived that they had higher autonomy on utilization of health services of their own choice 78.8%, consultation about schooling of children 76.1% and freedom to go for shopping 55.8% (Table I).

According to our study among illiterate group only 8% women had high level of empowerment, 38.8% medium and 53.2% were low empowered. In primary/middle group 33.3% high, 56.4% medium and 10.3% were low empowered. In third group (matric/intermediate) 53.4% high, 40.9% medium and 5.7% low while in graduate or above group 80.3% respondents were highly empowered, 15.8% medium and only 3.9% in low empowered category (Table II).

Table II: Level of education and women's empowerment at household level (n=378)

Education	Women's empowerment		
	Low	Medium	High
	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)
Illiterate	93 (53.2%)	68 (38.8%)	14 (8%)
Primary/Middle	4 (10.3%)	22 (56.4%)	13 (33.3%)
Matric/Intermediate	5 (5.7%)	36 (40.9%)	47 (53.4%)
Graduate or Above	3 (3.9%)	12 (15.8%)	61 (80.3%)

$$X^2 = 177.6 \quad p < 0.0000 \quad r = 0.56$$

Table III: Marriage duration and women's empowerment at household level (n=378)

Marriage duration	Women's perception of empowerment		
	Low	Medium	High
	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)
≤ 5 years	26 (51%)	18 (32.7%)	8 (16.3%)
6-10 years	43 (45.3%)	37 (39%)	15 (15.7%)
11-15 years	28 (31%)	21 (23.4%)	42 (45.6%)
≥ 16 years	31 (22%)	35 (25%)	74 (53%)

In our study among the women of marriage duration ≤ 5 years, 16.3% were highly empowered, 32.7% medium and 51% in low category, in group of marriage duration between 6-10 years 15% were in high empowered category, 39% medium and 45.3% in low empowered group, in 11-15 years class 45.6% were high, 23.4% medium and 31% low empowered, while in

group of marriage duration ≥ 16 years 53% were high 25% medium and 22% in low empowered category (Table III).

DISCUSSION

Access to education is a fundamental right of every individual. Women education empowers the women with increased autonomy in all spheres of life which also affects behavior, health seeking attitude and fertility pattern.⁸

Our study revealed that 46% of women in the study population were illiterate while only 20% were graduate or above. The literacy rate of female population (54%) in our study was slightly higher than the female literacy rate in Pakistan measured by Pakistan Social and Living Measurement (PSLM) in the year 2006-2007 which was 42%, which can be explained on the grounds that our study population belonged to urban area.⁷ Among illiterate group only 8% women were highly empowered as compared to 33.3% in primary/middle, 53.4% in matric/intermediate and 80.3% in graduate or above group. Education was positively related with the women's empowerment at household level and it was significantly associated as well ($p < 0.0000$). The similar positive relationship was found between these two study variables i.e. education and women's empowerment in a study conducted by Muhammad Shoaib et al, where 71.7% respondent's education status was matric and above, 15% middle and only 13.3% women were at primary level. While on the other hand, 54% women had higher level of empowerment at household level, 38.1% medium level while only 8.1% had low level of empowerment, which concluded that education of women had greater impact on their level of empowerment.⁹

Similar findings were observed in other studies.^{10,11,12} The empowerment in illiterate group may be low because of the reason that they only accept whatever their partner decide for them but on the other hand education gives a new orientation to women and liberate them.

In our study, 37% women were in the category of marriage duration ≥ 16 years, 24% in 11-15 years, 25% in 6-10 years and only 14% were in the group of ≤ 5 years duration. In a group of marriage duration ≤ 5 years, 16.3% women had high level of

empowerment as compared to 15.7% in 6-10 year, 45% in 11-15 years and 53% in ≥ 16 years category. Significant positive relationship was found between duration of marriage and women empowerment and there was significant association as well ($p < 0.0000$). Similar findings were noted in the study done by Khan TM et al, which reflected that women gets more empowered with increase in duration of married life.²

The study done by Tariq Mehmod Khan also revealed that conjugal age and respondents education showed highly significant influence on women empowerment with $p < 0.001$.² In the study, done by Kundu SK and Chakraborty A in India (2010) showed statistically significant relationship between duration of marriage and women empowerment (regression coefficient 0.267 at $p < 0.040$), which suggests that one year change of duration of marital life can affect up to 0.267 unit change of cumulative empowerment index.¹² This increase in empowerment with increase in conjugal age can be attributed to the fact that larger marital duration provides awareness and experience to women that help them to develop better understanding with their husbands and better marital adjustment.

CONCLUSION

On the basis of results shown in the study it can be concluded that there is highly significant association between the education of the women, marriage period and women's empowerment at household level in the study area.

Education is the basic human right of every individual but it is especially significant for girls and women. An educated woman is more likely to be aware of her rights, which further leads to increased empowerment in health decisions, child rearing and family care that will ultimately result in healthy life style changes and decrease in morbidity as well as mortality.

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