Gender Equality but Never-Ending Inequity in FATA, Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Conventional wisdom in women development generally supports the link between acceptance of unequal gender norms, which is reflective of their work participation rate, and income gaps. While this link is intuitive in the literature, the presumed impact beyond merely women empowerment, including women's socio-economic development, while lacking sufficient evidence for the case of FATA (Pakistan). This inhand study devolves on the factors which may have promising impact towards women empowerment, consisting upon a sample data of 962 female from secondary data sources i.e. PDHS 2017-18.

Design/Methodology/Approach: Survey based data of PDHS 2017-18 was used in this study. Moreover, Binomial Logistic Regression is applied as an econometric technique.

Findings: The disaggregated results confirm that women in FATA are less benefited as compared to men, particularly when it comes to financial status; affecting their household decision making and adding miseries to their socio-economic conditions. Not only that, the persistent gender gap in this region also shares a prominent link with their age, education, exposure to media, fertility preference and employment status.

Implications/Originality/Value: Lastly, the study scientifically concludes that access to education and employment is the only enabling factor to women's empowerment and achievement towards their socio-economic goals. On the same hand, above much depends on the attitude of the people towards gender equality, which may require intensive social reforms to change their behaviors.

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Introduction

Women's empowerment is an essential objective to engage them in economic life fully and achieve sustainable growth throughout the world (Khalid, 2020). Over the past five decades, the

idea of women empowerment has transformed from a welfare-oriented approach to equity and parity approach. It is a mechanism by which the weaker segments of society can gain greater control over their lives. Empowerment is all about having power or authority over resources and narrative. As per Sen and Batliwala (2000), it results in progress of fundamental abilities, self-confidence, and an all-out inner transformation of one's consciousness. In this manner, one can overcome all external obstacles. Kabeer (1998) emphasized that empowerment allows one to make independent life choices which are generally restricted by poverty and socio-religious norms. The ability to make independent life choices depends on three things mainly assets, agencies, and accomplishments. "Empowerment" is a broader concept and is used to describe various types of outcomes (Malhotra et al., 2002). According to Kutty (2003) empowerment of women is all about creating awareness and making them politically active, economically productive, and independent in a way that they can make intelligent choices. Women's empowerment is also about transforming lives in economic and social domains and to enable them to fully participate in decision-making. It affects their lives by providing them leadership training, coaching, and consulting. It also provides enabling tools to women to lead their communities, regions, and countries successfully.

Relationship between development and gender have been investigated by (Moser, 1993). Moser emphasized that economic development cannot be achieved without empowering women's. Moreover, numerous studies have tried to measure the inequalities such as gender inequality. Annand and Sen (1995) are among one of them and also measured the gender inequality. Furthermore, a new methodology has been introduced by (Pillarsetti and Gillivray, 1998) to construct and find out the determinants of gender inequality. Bardhan and Klasen (1999) evaluated the gender equality measures and claimed that both theoretical and empirical issues exists in methodology. Moreover, they advocated some reforms with a change of the earned income factor of GDI. As per their recommendations UNDP improved the method for measuring GDI.

The notion of empowerment is so comprehensive that calculating it has been challenging at all time. In view of this issue, numerous studies have been carried out to develop number of indicators to calculate this multifaceted idea (Kabeer, 1999). Despite the fact, differences exist to calculate this notion, similar results can be found in the literature. Various factors such as household decisions authority, expenditure choice have given much importance to formulate the "women's empowerment" (Hameed et al., 2014; Alam et al., 2015). Other factors like social status, available opportunities and norms also affects the empowerment (Abbas, 2020). From this point of departure, the current research endeavors to classify and recognize numerous factors of women's empowerment in FATA.

To study women's status in FATA is very important as the area is attributed to be a male dominant society, further, in Pakistan generally and in FATA specifically, those factors must be investigated which hinder the progress of women empowerment (Akram, 2018). Research shows that empowered women can make better decisions about healthcare, they can live a healthy physical and mental life (Roy & Chaudhuri, 2008). Although a greater number of women are now acquiring higher education but for top tier positions still, they are not considered as good as their male counterparts. Early marriages, female feticides and infanticide, dowry, bride burning, rape, molestation and kidnapping still haunt them. Number of crimes against women are increasing (Sharma and Gupta, 2004). Even in daily social, economic and political life women are not at par with males. Besides low literacy, many other factors have contributed to gender biases. In many parts of Pakistan, a newborn girl is still given less priority over a newborn boy. Studies show that bearing a girl child is less desirable and evokes less happiness than that of a boy child (Seth, 2001). It is deeply rooted into the society, with no exception of religion, cast and area. Since her birth, a girl is victimized in economics, social and daily life. (Lopez-Claros,

2005).

In 2002, the “Government of Pakistan” has initiated some programs such as “National Policy of Development and Empowerment” to increase the “women empowerment”. This program targeted to increase the political, economic and social empowerment (Bhattacharya, 2014). Half of the population in Pakistan is consist of women and still Pakistan stands at lowest position globally in “women empowerment”. Strengthening and authorizing them possible will develop society’s wellbeing and welfare. A lot of women in Pakistan are mistreated and offended by male especially in FATA where the customary Pakhtun culture treats the women at inhumane manner.

Literature on “women empowerment” and the factors affecting them in Pakistan is relatively scant especially the empirical literature. Moreover, this study is the first attempt to identify the determinants of “women empowerment” in FATA up to my knowledge. Keeping in view the above mentioned factors, the current study designed to highlight the empirical based socio and economic factors of “women empowerment” which are much needed to raise the status of women in FATA. Furthermore, this research also incorporated the financial inclusion as a determinant of “women empowerment” as the literature on the impact of financial inclusion on “women empowerment” is limited in Pakistan.

Literature Review

Numerous studies discussed women empowerment, but only a few examine the true concept of women empowerment. The previous research showed that women's education, participation of women in economic, social justice, economic opportunities, gender inequality, women having bank account, and labour force participation increase women's empowerment.

Noreen and Khalid (2012) discussed women empowerment by explaining the effect of women education, parents and women having any assets or property. The main factor for women’s empowerment is female education, but early age marriage and poverty are the factors which reduce girl’s education. (Wahid et al., 2020) discussed women empowerment by focusing on the political and socio-economic factors of women empowerment. The report presented females' age, schooling'ss' age, schooling level, working status, monthly income, resources to economic credit, female bank account, educational and health resources, investment in different saving organizations, residence’s area, and positive and statistically significant. Butt (2014) discussed females at indigenous frames’ level and women’s role in indigenous representation. Indigenous representation is one of the valuable instruments to empower women. In Pakistan, females are empowered but they are not empowered in actual standings. Females at the ordinary level are usually blocked, consequent, and seen as minimum concerns about their rights and role in political affairs. For real women’s empowerment, the resident illustration should be reinforced by expressive contribution and a greater percentage of women. This stage can be used primarily to train them for rational level of politics and have their due rights. Akinsanya (2011) create that females are followers in the growth of economy, but some determinants disturb the contribution of women in the economy. The report presented that women’s education conveys empowerment to females which can face challenges encountered in working & realizing other societal roles and occasions. Various studies have investigated the factors associated with women’s empowerment worldwide such as (Habibov et al., 2017) conducted a study in Azerbaijan and showed that women’s educational attainment and level of earnings equal to or higher than their partners is positively related to an increased level of empowerment. Bushra and Wajiha (2015) reveals that women education, economic involvement, opportunities and poverty are the significant determinants of women in Pakistan. Gupta and Yesudian (2006) conducted a study in India and found that women’s educational level, media exposure and age are significant predictors of women’s empowerment using multiple logistic analyses. Rahman et al., (2020) investigated that

women's education and age significantly impact women's empowerment among microcredit borrowers in Bangladesh. To identify the important elements of "women's empowerment", collected information from 500 ever married women of Chapai Nawabganj district in Bangladesh and performed. Logistic regression analysis. Their study reveals that women's education, media exposure, age at marriage significantly influence women's decision making power. Dey and Khudri (2015) showed that women's age, division, education, job status, religious belief, wealth index, and significantly influence women empowerment. The findings of two studies suggest that access to education, working status, and media exposure contributes significantly to promoting women empowerment in Bangladesh.

Methodology

Data

This research used survey statistics from the "Demographic and Health Survey of Pakistan" (PDHS) 2017–18. The research is further confined to only marrying women at all times. Demographic and health surveys are performed with funding from the United States Agency for International Development in various developing countries (USAID). These surveys are nationally representative and provide information on various health aspects, such as family planning, preferences for fertility. Moreover, these surveys also provides the maternal and child health, baby, child, adult and maternal mortality, HIV/AIDS awareness, nutrition and empowerment of women, domestic violence, and household socio-economic characteristics. The reference period for the study was 2017-18, and the FATA region is considered as the study area. The sample size was 962 women of reproductive age.

Model

WE = f (age, residence, education, Higher Education, bank Account, BISP, employment, violence, Print Media, Electronic Media, No of daughters, fertility preferences, wealth index, property)

The statistical model is specified as:

$$WE = \beta_0 + \beta_1 AGE + \beta_2 RES + \beta_3 EDU + \beta_4 HEDU + \beta_5 ACC + \beta_6 BISP + \beta_7 EMP + \beta_8 DV + \beta_9 PM + \beta_{10} EM + \beta_{11} DAU + \beta_{12} FP + \beta_{13} WI + \beta_{14} PRO + \mu_i$$

Variables Construction

To evaluate women empowerment this study used four proxy variables related to decision making in four categories. Categories include decision making about who decides to spend partners earning, who decides about visits to family/relatives, decision making regarding household spending and spending on health services. Respondents had to choose from 6 options provided to them including respondents alone, along with husband, along with other family members, husbands alone and family elders. Options were coded from 1 to 6 respectively. It was coded as 1 by combining these three categories. Again husband alone, someone else and others.it was coded as 0. So where women were involved in decisions coded as 1 and including other cases where women were not participating coded as 0.

Besides these proxy variables related to decision making study also assessed women empowerment using dichotomous dummy variables about ownership of assets by women. To assess ownership empowerment two question were asked. One question was whether she owns a home solely or together with someone else. Other question was whether she owns a piece of land on her own or jointly with someone else. Response was coded one if the answer was yes and zero otherwise. These responses were then combined in one variable about ownership of house/land whose response was recorded as 1 if she owned anyone of the assets and zero if she owned none of the assets. In regression analysis several independent variables were regressed on dependent variable where women empowerment was used as dependent variable. The present study used independent variables like age, residence, education, Higher Education, bank

Account, BISP, employment, violence, Print media, Electronic media, No of daughters, fertility preferences, wealth index, watching TV is used as a proxy for electronic media and frequency of reading newspapers that is named as print media. The wealth index, we can say its social status as it is a combination of radio, TV, refrigerator, bicycle, motorcycle, and car/truck. Employment status was categorized as 0 for not employed and 1 for employed. Fertility preferences were coded as 1 for having another, 2 undecided, 3 no more. The third category is a combination of Sterilized (respondent or partner and Declared in fecund). “Benazir income support program” and the bank account was coded as 0 if the respondent did not get this benefit and ‘1’ if getting this one.

Results and Discussion

Binary logistic regression has been applied to find the causing factors of empowerment because the dependent variable in our study is binary in nature. Moreover, this study also calculated the odd ratios to provide the policy in true sense.

Table 01: Health Care Decision in FATA

Socio-economic characteristics of respondent	Beta	Significance	Odds	95% C.I. for EXP(B)	
				Lower	Upper
Age in 5-year groups					
15-19	Ref				
20-24	-1.327	.002	.265	.113	.623
25-29	-1.843	.000	.158	.066	.381
30-34	-1.122	.013	.326	.135	.788
35-39	-1.607	.002	.201	.072	.557
40-44	-1.118	.096	.327	.088	1.220
45-49	1.364	.043	3.911	1.042	14.685
place of residence					
Rural	Ref				
Urban	.513	.088	1.671	.927	3.011
Highest educational level of respondent					
No education	Ref				
Primary	-.946	.134	.388	.113	1.337
Secondary	-.924	.087	.397	.138	1.142
Higher	.326	.511	1.386	.524	3.666
Bank account					
No	Ref				
Yes	.479	.433	1.615	.487	5.356
Husband education					
No education	Ref				
Primary	-.273	.479	.761	.357	1.623
Secondary	.028	.931	1.028	.552	1.914
Higher	.554	.124	1.740	.859	3.525
Respondent currently working					
No	Ref				
Yes	.631	.407	1.879	.423	8.347
BISP					
No	Ref				
Yes	.760	.035	2.138	1.054	4.335
Print media					
No	Ref				
Yes	-.351	.737	.704	.090	5.481
No of daughters					
No daughter	Ref				
One daughter	-.584	.135	.558	.259	1.198
Two daughters	.721	.049	2.057	1.004	4.215

Three daughters	.206	.651	1.229	.504	2.998
Four daughters	-1.067	.094	.344	.098	1.201
Above four daughters	-2.262	.046	.104	.011	.962
Domestic violence					
No	Ref				
Yes	-.305	.256	.737	.436	1.248
Fertility preference					
Have another	Ref				
Undecided	-.398	.069	.672	.437	1.032
No more	.423	.004	1.527	1.140	2.045
Electronic media					
No	Ref				
Yes	.573	.056	1.773	.984	3.193
Social status					
No	Ref				
Yes	.164	.668	1.178	.558	2.483
Own a property					
Does not own	Ref				
Own	.842	.036	2.321	1.055	5.104

Source: Author's compilation

In FATA, age is significantly associated with health care decisions. The women of the age group 44-49 years are 3 times more likely to make decisions than young women. Place of residence is significantly associated with empowerment. Urban women are more empowered to relate to health as compare to rural women. Educated women are more likely in decisions making. Having a bank account in FATA is not significant, but the women who have bank accounts are more likely to make decisions. The women whose husbands are highly educated are more independent in their decisions. They can make decisions quickly without any restrictions. Employment status has also an insignificant impact but likely in their decisions. Fata women are getting benefits of BISP and they are playing a significant role compared to those who are not taking this facility. Print media, domestic violence, and fertility preference have an insignificant impact on empowerment.

Table 02: Household Purchase Decision in FATA

Socio economic characteristics of respondent	Beta	Significance	Odds	95% C.I. for EXP(B)	
				Lower	Upper
Age in 5-year groups					
15-19	Ref				
20-24	-1.687	.000	.185	.074	.461
25-29	-2.042	.000	.130	.052	.326
30-34	-1.938	.000	.144	.054	.387
35-39	-3.043	.000	.048	.013	.175
40-44	-1.570	.028	.208	.051	.844
45-49	.438	.525	1.549	.402	5.969
place of residence					
Rural	Ref				
Urban	.163	.659	1.177	.571	2.423
Highest educational level of respondent					
No education	Ref				
Primary	-1.022	.181	.360	.081	1.607
Secondary	-.923	.123	.397	.123	1.285
Higher	-.628	.417	.534	.117	2.427
Bank account					
No	Ref				
Yes	.308	.635	1.360	.382	4.850

Husband education					
No education	Ref				
Primary	-.301	.480	.740	.321	1.708
Secondary	.041	.908	1.042	.519	2.092
Higher	-.005	.992	.995	.417	2.376
Respondent currently working					
No	Ref				
Yes	1.066	.191	2.903	.587	14.365
BISP					
No	Ref				
Yes	.842	.036	2.321	1.055	5.104
Print media					
No	Ref				
Yes	-.918	.510	.399	.026	6.124
No of daughters					
No daughter	Ref				
One daughter	-.382	.399	.683	.281	1.658
Two daughters	.670	.121	1.954	.839	4.554
Three daughters	.354	.499	1.424	.510	3.976
Four daughters	-.362	.598	.696	.181	2.676
Above four daughters	-1.833	.122	.160	.016	1.635
Domestic violence					
No	Ref				
Yes	-.246	.436	.782	.422	1.451
Fertility preference					
Have another	Ref				
Undecided	-.171	.662	.843	.391	1.817
No more	.748	.042	2.114	1.027	4.351
Electronic media					
No	Ref				
Yes	.430	.250	1.538	.738	3.203
Social status					
No	Ref				
Yes	.404	.405	1.498	.579	3.878
Own a property					
Does not own	Ref				
Own	2.236	.000	9.352	3.108	28.143

Source: Author's compilation

In major household purchases, the old age women of 45-49 years are more empowered than other women. Urban women and the women who have bank accounts are empowered in their decisions. Education, employment status, print media, number of daughters, and domestic violence are insignificantly associated with empowerment, but ownership of property and fertility preferences significantly impact empowerment in case of purchases.

Table 03: Visit to Family Decision in FATA

Socio-economic characteristics of respondent	Beta	Significance	Odds	95% C.I. for EXP(B)	
				Lower	Upper
Age in 5-year groups					
15-19	Ref				
20-24	-1.653	.000	.191	.079	.464
25-29	-2.448	.000	.086	.034	.222
30-34	-1.589	.001	.204	.082	.512
35-39	-1.866	.000	.155	.055	.434
40-44	-2.642	.002	.071	.013	.390
45-49	-.185	.777	.831	.232	2.981

place of residence					
Rural	Ref				
Urban	.100	.767	1.105	.571	2.139
Highest educational level of respondent					
No education	Ref				
Primary	-.568	.312	.567	.188	1.705
Secondary	-.665	.195	.514	.188	1.407
Higher	-1.358	.192	.257	.033	1.976
Bank account					
No	Ref				
Yes	.861	.163	2.365	.705	7.930
Husband education					
No education	Ref				
Primary	-.308	.410	.735	.353	1.530
Secondary	-.627	.059	.534	.279	1.025
Higher	-.145	.703	.865	.411	1.823
Respondent currently working					
No	Ref				
Yes	-.753	.406	.471	.080	2.786
BISP					
No	Ref				
Yes	.394	.309	1.482	.695	3.164
Print media					
No	Ref				
Yes	3.169	.000	23.783	5.261	107.520
No of daughters					
No daughter	Ref				
One daughter	.130	.770	1.139	.476	2.728
Two daughters	1.022	.023	2.778	1.152	6.701
Three daughters	1.121	.029	3.067	1.118	8.412
Four daughters	.698	.226	2.010	.650	6.222
Above four daughters	-.102	.896	.903	.197	4.145
Domestic violence					
No	Ref				
Yes	-.620	.025	.538	.312	.926
Fertility preference					
Have another	Ref				
Undecided	.235	.479	1.264	.660	2.421
No more	.494	.141	1.639	.848	3.168
Electronic media					
No	Ref				
Yes	.387	.258	1.473	.753	2.882
Social status					
No	Ref				
Yes	.150	.720	1.162	.510	2.649
Own a property					
Does not own	Ref				
own	2.537	.000	12.642	4.486	35.628

Source: Author's compilation

In the case of a visit to family or relatives, age is a significant part. The women who are living in urban areas are more likely in decisions making. Having bank accounts also give confidence to women in decisions. The women whose husbands are educated they show a significant role. Print media is significantly associated with empowerment. Domestic violence and ownership of the property have a significant impact on empowerment and more likely in decisions.

Table 04: Women's Participation in Decision making regarding spending on husband's earning in FATA

Socio-economic characteristics of respondent	Beta	Significance	Odds	95% C.I. for EXP(B)	
				Lower	Upper
Age in 5-year groups					
15-19	Ref				
20-24	-1.344	.002	.261	.110	.616
25-29	-1.686	.000	.185	.078	.442
30-34	-.940	.034	.391	.164	.931
35-39	-.942	.052	.390	.151	1.008
40-44	-1.117	.108	.327	.084	1.280
45-49	1.432	.031	4.186	1.144	15.324
place of residence					
Rural	Ref				
Urban	.511	.080	1.668	.941	2.954
Highest educational level of respondent					
No education	Ref				
Primary	-.470	.356	.625	.230	1.694
Secondary	-.646	.186	.524	.201	1.366
Higher	.618	.189	1.856	.737	4.672
Bank account					
No	Ref				
Yes	.452	.451	1.572	.485	5.088
Husband education					
No education	Ref				
Primary	.039	.915	1.040	.508	2.129
Secondary	.264	.384	1.302	.719	2.358
Higher	.370	.303	1.448	.716	2.932
Respondent currently working					
No	Ref				
Yes	1.723	.024	5.602	1.250	25.092
BISP					
No	Ref				
Yes	.862	.013	2.368	1.198	4.682
Print media					
No	Ref				
Yes	-2.368	.259	.094	.002	5.697
No of daughters					
No daughter	Ref				
One daughter	-.410	.296	.663	.307	1.432
Two daughters	.854	.020	2.349	1.142	4.834
Three daughters	.040	.932	1.040	.416	2.601
Four daughters	.033	.950	1.033	.370	2.886
Above four daughters	-2.221	.047	.108	.012	.967
Domestic violence					
No	Ref				
Yes	-.501	.051	.606	.367	1.001
Fertility preference					
Have another	Ref				
Undecided	-.277	.403	.758	.397	1.449
No more	.167	.579	1.182	.655	2.133
Electronic media					
No	Ref				
Yes	.361	.227	1.435	.799	2.579
Social status					
No	Ref				
Yes	-.077	.827	.926	.465	1.843
Own a property					

Does not own	Ref				
own	2.208	.000	9.095	3.094	26.734

Source: *Author's compilation*

Occupation can also offers an improvement to male counterparts concerning their capacity to control. Furthermore, working women's have a higher chance to take a part in different decisions and hurdles. Age, place of residence, employment status, BISP, number of daughters, domestic violence, and ownership of the property has a significant impact on empowerment. But the social statuses, ownership of property, and fertility preferences have an insignificant impact on decision making. In the case of fertility preferences, the women who favor no more children are empowered.

Conclusions and Recommendations

In order to discuss the status of women in FATA, Various indicators of empowerment are investigated by using the data from Pakistan demographic and health survey (PDHS, 2017/18). Decision-making power of women, exposure of media, major household purchases, freedom of movement, access to education, domestic violence, BISP, Bank accounts, and fertility preferences, etc. were the main focused indicators. After data analysis, it is observed that decisions related to health care of women, freedom of movement, major household purchases, and spending on husband's earnings influence age, education, employment status of women, place of residence, and fertility preferences.

The key Critical indicator in the process of women empowerment is decision making. In FATA, it is observed that empowerment of women has a positive relationship with the place of residence, women of old age, BISP, fertility preferences and ownership of property (Choudhry, 2019; Mustafa, 2019; Osiewalska, B. 2018; Strzelecka, 2017; Mubeen et al., 2019; Raza et al., 2021). In the decisions of health care, visit to family or relatives, major household purchases and spending on husband's earning, Education of women is positively associated except visit to family or relatives decisions. Social status also has a positive association except spending on husband earnings. In the case of household purchase decisions, the media has a significant impact on empowerment.

Moreover it is found that unequal gender norms are still dominant in the society, Results indicated the significant relationship between a woman's age and empowerment, i.e. Empowerment increase as age of women increase. Different studies in South Asia are in favor of the present study like (Acharya et al., 2010; Marphatia, A. A, 2021; Mallick, & Chouhan, 2021). Power relations inside the household is one of the main reasons for this relationship of age and empowerment Cornish et al., 2021).

Education of women is a strong indicator of empowerment is found in the study. It not only enhances empowerment but also increase self-confidence, skills and knowledge of the women (Laschinger, 2002; Mason, 2003; Cornwall, 2016; Klugman, 2014). At the same time it improves employment opportunities, as well as income generating activities (Shoaib, 2012; Mourshed, 2013; Fitzenberger, 2015)

Employment status had a positive and significant relationship with empowerment (Allendorf, 2007; Acharya et al., 2010; Yount, 2018). Employed women were more likely to be empowered in the household decisions than unemployed women.

It is obvious from the study that employment status has significant impact on empowerment. The women who are currently doing work, they are more empowered as compare to those women who are not working somewhere. Results are supported by many studies such as (Phan, 2016; Duflo, 2012). The empowerment of working women can be a source of their freedom of

movement and independence (Pakistan, U. W. 2016).

Empowerment of women is also connected with the wealth status. Empowerment increases as wealth of women increase. Present Study is also supported by previous study (Phan, 2016). To achieve the desire level of empowerment, there are many constraints. Among them social norms, family structure and lack of awareness are the main elements. FATA women are comparatively less empowered, they are not even enjoying their basic rights as other region's women do. In spite of many efforts taken by the government, status of women is not satisfactory.

Employment and education are main tools that can uplift the status of women in the male dominated society especially in FATA. However, achievement of these ends depend more on the attitude of the people and society as well. In this regard, government should play the role through the constitutional provision. In the absence of these steps, our purpose to empower the women in FATA cannot be fulfilled.

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