

## **Higher Education, Employment Opportunities and Women Empowerment in Pakistan**

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### **Abstract**

This article draws from a PhD study to explore potential relationship among higher education, employment opportunities (being indicators of globalization) and women empowerment in Pakistan. It precisely focuses on women's status, individual autonomy, family inter-personal relationships, and economic empowerment. The study was conducted by using the sequential, mix-method design. Initially data from 376 women were collected through survey followed by 26 in-depth interviews. The current paper is based on qualitative data acquired from 26 respondents from three-03 different domains of expertise (Parliamentarians, Journalists, and high-profile academicians/deans, vice-chancellors). The data was analyzed thematically, and transcripts were examined by the verbatim transcription analytical approach to look for themes and sub-themes. The findings show that women remain subjugated in Pakistan as they continue to be deprived of their rights and experience low status. Men remain in positions of power and prestige as they are the ones to occupy and utilize resources. Women remain under-represented in politics. However, in recent times, higher education and job opportunities have brought comfort to women's lives but they have to struggle hard to get empowered. The study concludes that providing women with higher education and work opportunities is inevitable if we really want to empower women in Pakistan.

**Keywords:** Higher education; employment; globalization; women empowerment; thematic analysis

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## Introduction

This paper is extracted from a PhD research project carried out by the first author and it analyzes the influence of Globalization on women's empowerment in Pakistan. *Though the larger study employed a mix method approach yet this paper will only report the qualitative findings from the project.*

Since last few decades globalization has significantly improved the lives of women worldwide, for most importantly the lives of those women in the developing world (Butale, 2015). The current wave is helping the women to involve in all domains of life i.e. socio-political, economic, recreational, and cultural (Straw & Glennie, 2012). However, women remain deprived in many spheres of life, including access to education, getting employment opportunities, health care facilities, and even their basic human rights. Although the low status, deprivation, harassment and exploitation of women have been practiced throughout history, such treatment has become more observed and widespread with globalization. Despite this optimistic viewpoint towards globalization that it has brought improvement specifically in women's life over the globe, globalization has another outlook with the power to create highly undesirable confrontational effects (Butale, 2018). Therefore, it is in this context that the following examination of the conception of globalization with all its prospects and consequences on the women's life and their empowerment is essential.

Although women hold a unique position in every society, they still belong to a disadvantaged class of society due to various social barriers and impediments. Women are usually the most exploited and least privileged members of households and as the primary caregivers of their families; they are often overburdened with domestic work for their families (Jayachandran, 2015). Notwithstanding their second-class status in several societies, women's issues have acquired growing importance in all countries as the impact on gender discrimination in the political, socio-economic and employment arenas have come to light.

Since the "UN Declaration of the Decade of Women" in 1975, attention and action on women's concerns have steadily increased and empowerment was one of the areas women's organizations, government agencies and international donor agencies focused on. The underlying assumption was that if women understood their conditions, knew their rights and learned skills traditionally denied to them, empowerment would follow. In a globalizing world, gender equality and empowerment of women are vital tools to achieve sustainable developments of

societies. A woman needs to be empowered in the social, political and economic spheres (UN, 2004).

In Pakistan, increased population growth coupled with shrinking employment opportunities caused the gulf between 'have' and 'have not' to widen (Stephan, 2018). The idea of liberalization of markets gave way to the free movement of goods, labor, ideas and services locally, regionally and internationally (Chandy & Seidel, 2016). Resultantly, as competition increased, more educational and professional institutions sprung up in the country and the quality of education improved. Now specifically for women the acquisition of education, work, and mobility is comparatively acceptable by society specifically in urban areas. Such socio-cultural changes have been leading far reaching effects for women regarding their empowerment and status in society.

Therefore, it is important for developing nations like Pakistan to have a clear grasp on the relationship of changing global world and address the disadvantaged group (women) which comprise about half of the country's population because Pakistan has not yet been able to harness the full potential of globalization (Farooq et al., 2019). However, with some strategic changes in their economic and higher education policies a transformation could be brought about. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) also acknowledge the importance of higher education and the target 4.3 of SDG-4 is to "By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university" (Owens, 2017). Only then would Globalization's impact on Pakistan be fully useful and the country could lead towards development. In this context, this study focused on the role of globalization in changing women lives through access to higher educational and employment opportunities.

### **Literature review**

The world is becoming more and more integrated. According to World Health Organization-WHO, globalization, or the increased interconnectedness and interdependence of peoples and countries, is generally understood to include two inter-related elements: the opening of international borders to increasingly fast flows of goods, services, finance, people and ideas; and the changes in institutions and policies at national and international levels that facilitate or promote such flows. Globalization has the potential for both positive and negative effects on development of countries (Kaur, 2018). However, Women's empowerment refers to increasing and improving the social, economic, political and legal strength of the women, to ensure equal-rights to

women, and to make them confident enough to claim their rights concerning socio-economic, family and individual autonomy (Shah, 2016).

The relationship of globalization and women's empowerment is not simply linear, there is a positive correlation between globalization, media, educational attainment and economic productivity, exercise of social and political responsibility and the authority to demand the respect of individual and groups' rights. It is also instrumentally valuable as it endorses economic development if women can develop their full potential as talented and productive employees, mothers, care givers, and often more responsible managers of households than men in many countries (King & Mason, 2001; Sen, 1999; UNIFEM, 2008).

At the 2016 World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, women's economic equality was a principal topic of discussion among world leaders. Economically, developing countries like Pakistan have limited resources that hinder their integration in the international market. Theoretically, liberalization, another cardinal principle of globalization, is a process ultimately aimed to make the export market profitable by encouraging competition, improving quality and providing employment. But such a process increased the unemployment rate, from an average of 3.5% during 1981-90 to 6.0% in 2015 (Economic survey 2014-15). Pakistan has regained access to international capital markets, and the country has received disbursements from the IMF and other development partners which all will further assist Pakistan in becoming economically stable but overall, no doubt has greater potential to open up the opportunities for women work participation in different arenas of life (Ortiz-Ospina & Tzvetkova, 2017).

Furthermore, families are morphing into nuclear families rather than joint families, a tendency that suggests that Pakistani culture is now moving towards individualism. Gender roles seem to be changing and women rights have become an important matter of discussion and apprehension as women in Pakistan today strive to learn better and achieve more, also evident globally (Kumar & Sharma, 2014). Now specifically for women the acquisition of education, work, and mobility is comparatively acceptable by society specifically in urban areas. According to the UNFPA (2014), gender equality implies a society in which women and men enjoy the same opportunities, outcomes, rights and obligations in all spheres of life. Such changes have been leading far reaching effects for improved status and their empowerment in Pakistan. Also, Ouedraogo and Marlet (2018) study shows a decrease in gender

disparities and positive association of globalization with gender development.

In addition to an overall increase of autonomy for women, there has also been an improvement in education. Education builds strong societies, is a “widely accepted humanitarian obligation” and an internationally mandated human right (Cohen, Bloom, & Malin, 2006). Receiving a quality education is more than a human rights issue; an uneducated population has a direct effect on the labor market and country’s ability to shift from an agrarian to industrial economy. However, a stagnant labor market, particularly for women, directly impacts country’s development and put family institution at the verge of poverty. Today, people lacking with higher education skills face a higher risk of poverty and poor employment options which in turn, contribute to social and economic inequality and marginalization in education (UNESCO, 2010).

For women, globalization has been more influential in terms of, bringing about women’s rights movements and empowering women to experience economic emancipation and total autonomy; on flip side, the advancement of women’s rights is occurring much slower. Supp (2009) calls this “too little globalization”, in which money and goods are crossing borders, but the key aspect to empower women – knowledge - is not. Without higher education skills, social progress is limited, not only for women, but for all vulnerable and marginalized people.

In addition to the literature arguing about the positive correlation contradictory views also exist. Previous studies of globalization’s effects on women’s rights have mostly focused on employment and wage ratios, but even if women’s earnings improve, they might suffer greater exploitation at work and at home (Neumayer,2010). Duflo (2012) suggests that fewer opportunities within the labor market may, in fact, contribute to women’s unequal treatment within the household and causes parents to have lower aspirations for daughters. It also reinforces the idea that women have less need for services such as higher education if there is no place for them outside home. In many world societies, traditional patriarchal gender roles dominate society, significantly influencing the way in which both men and women participate in the formal and informal markets. Traditionally, men are viewed as the head of the household, which also means that they withhold all decision-making power (Elias, 2010). Since men are placed in positions of authority and power, many resources and opportunities are automatically given to them e.g. decisions related to financial and family matters, utilization of opportunities i.e. higher education and employment etc.

(Castellani, 2014). Though, women are becoming more prominent, yet they are increasingly fighting long-standing prejudices. (Deb & Sen, 2016).

The traditional roles of women in Pakistan have been changing and they are now entering into a new era of autonomy. The basic objective of this paper is to examine the changing role of women due to higher education and employment opportunities being potential tools of globalization in our society. This concern is not merely academic but is central to the process of emerging development in Pakistan. There is a need to evaluate the influences of globalization on women's life and also to know the positive and negative impacts of it on the status of women in Pakistan at present.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The major objective of the study is to examine the role of Globalization on women's empowerment in Pakistan. However, the study has some specific objectives. These are:

1. To study the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents.
2. To examine the respondents' perceptions on the status of women in different spheres of life in Pakistan.
3. To explore the relationship between globalization and women empowerment in Pakistan.

### **Research Questions**

Following is the detail of current study research questions.

1. To explore if access to employment as a result of globalization has empowered women economically?
2. To find out if access to higher education as a result of globalization has empowered women individually and at family level?

### **Methodology**

The study was conducted by using the sequential, mix-method design, which was chosen as the most effective and appropriate approach to explore such phenomena. Initially data from 376 women were collected through survey followed by 26 in-depth interviews. The current paper is based on qualitative data acquired from 26 respondents from three-03 different domains of expertise (parliamentarians, Journalists, and high-profile academicians/deans, vice-chancellors).

### **Procedures and Techniques**

The qualitative data was collected through in-depth interviews of the selected respondents. The transcripts were examined to look for codes which assisted to develop themes and sub-themes. The findings of the qualitative data are presented in two sections. The first part elaborates the demographic characteristics of the respondents, while the second part addresses the major research questions. The analysis yielded 02-themes followed by 06 sub-themes concerning women empowerment in Pakistan.

### **Thematic Analysis as Research Approach**

Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes the data set in (rich) detail. However, frequently it goes further than this, and interprets various aspects of the research topic (Boyatzis, 1998). It is not relying on pre-existing theoretical frameworks and it lends itself to provide a detailed description of the whole data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Therefore, it is considered a rich and useful approach when we intended to explore new or under-researched areas and it is particularly a relevant approach for this current study. Thematic analysis provides a purely qualitative, detailed, and nuanced account of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The qualitative data analysis in this study utilizes reflective thematic approach consisting of more inductive, semantic, and critical/realist approaches. By using the reflective thematic analysis which is based on a six-phase process for analysis, the current qualitative data has gone through all phases of, familiarization with the data, coding, generating initial themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, & writing up the analysis.

### **Analytical Approach**

In qualitative research, there are two main analytical approaches have been using in social sciences including transcription and data extraction and analysis approach (Corden & Sainsbury, 2006). In current study transcription analytical approach has been employed to draw study findings. There are different types of transcription including verbatim, edited, and intelligent transcription, this study employee's the verbatim transcription analytical approach which is considered best suited for academic researches. Further, there are different types of verbatim transcription and present study opted the "Full Verbatim" type which

presents the quotes without stutters or pauses which don't affect the context of what is being said.

### **Data Collection**

All the approached participants showed their willingness and were helpful to participate in this study, and all the interviews were conducted in a responsive and cooperative manner. The results of this qualitative part of the study are centered on in-depth interviews of twenty-six (26) participants from various fields of life which has direct link with the current issue under investigation. Mostly interviews were conducted face to face however few among them were telephonically accessed and recorded their interviews because of the out of country commitments of the concerned respondents during the data collection time. In-depth interviews took almost one hour & a half to two hours, and were audio recorded with the permission of study respondents. At first in analysis the recorded audio data which was collected and then transcribed by the researcher herself as some advantages are perceived in by doing oneself transcription work includes gaining greater familiarity and deeper insight of the data though it was required a lot of time. Transcribed data was verified by rechecking with the audio recordings so could ensure that no important data was missing in the process of transcription of in-depth interviews. Checking transcripts against audio recordings were also provided the opportunities to annotate the text or any other alteration to better understand the point of views shared.

### **Writing up the Findings**

Writing is an essential of the analysis, writing up a full and rich analysis, in current study use of verbatim quotation has been done. Purpose of using verbatim quotations/extracts includes as the matter of enquiry; as evidence; as explanation; as illustration; to deepen understanding; to give participants a voice, and to enhance readability (Corden & Sainsbury, 2006). Analyzing qualitative data, inclusion of excerpts from transcripts shows a strong link between qualitative data, discussion, interpretation, and driving conclusions, discussed variously within concepts such as validity, reliability, credibility and audit ability. Next, respondents' quotes are provided to offer context and depth regarding study findings. Among different formats available to present verbatim quotations researcher selected the, "put together for comparison a number of quotations from different respondents" format for current study. So writing up the findings of this paper includes a balance



between the narration of the text by researcher and use of verbatim quotations from the transcribed audio data.

### **Setup-Quote-Comment (SQC) Model for Data Presentation**

The study results are organized by major themes, subthemes, narratives of the researcher coupling by respondents' quotes/extracts. For the qualitative results presentation and writing paragraphs purpose the SQC model is opted (Golden, Biddle & Locke, 2007). In qualitative researches data organization and results presentation has always been a challenging task so to make results more viable this study using the SQC model which helped researcher to present findings in a more systematic manner for the readers. The SQC is a simple model which helped researcher to present qualitative data in an organized and systematic manner in this paper.

### **Participants of the Study**

Respondents for the in-depth interviews were selected from three-03 different domains of expertise being an important stakeholder of the current study having strong relation with study as main aim of the study is to explore the relationship between globalization and women empowerment in Pakistan. It is evident from literature review that globalization has a strong influence in three major areas of life including economic, political, and social spheres so study respondents were selected keeping in view the study context and approached the parliamentarians, Journalists, and high profile Academicians (Deans, Vice-chancellors) from various parts of Pakistan. The study respondents having direct link with the current phenomenon under study as they are considered influential in decision & policy making processes, in point of view building and disseminating the ideas, content, and emerging perspectives related to globalization and women empowerment in Pakistan.

### **Use of Identifiers**

To provide context and depth to the results direct quotes are used from the in-depth interviews. Names have been changed to protect the original identity of the respondents so identifiers have been used in place of participants' name. Participants' number alongside shown as [Pp-1, Pj-2, Pa-3 etc...] however, (Pp) stands for participant who is parliamentarian, (Pj) stands for participant who is journalist, and (Pa) stands for participant who is academic. Further, it is to elaborate those

participants who are parliamentarian their number starting from Pp-1 to Pp-8, those who are journalists, their numbering starts from Pj-9 to Pj-16, and the academicians numbering starts from Pa-17 to Pa-26 as total 26 respondents were approached for in-depth interviews in the current study.

**Data Analysis**

Analysis involved search for understanding of various aspects of globalization that influencing women empowerment situation in Pakistan. At the first stage in analysis, a careful reading of all transcripts of the in-depth interviews has been done. The data were organized and analyzed systematically and transparently, building on the framework method for data display originally developed by Braun & Clarke. A thematic framework/map was developed for classification of data in form of themes and subthemes reflecting the original matters of enquiry from reading of the transcripts.

Table1

*Mapping of Thematic Analysis*

After analysis of the first part which comprise of demographic data of respondents, next section then goes on to look at the different themes and sub-themes emerged out of qualitative data gathered through in-depth interviews. The aim is according to this research, to explore influences of higher education and employment opportunities as tools of globalization on empowering women in Pakistan. Subsequently, the major findings have been analyzed in relation to the academic literature.

**Demographic Analysis of the Respondents (section one-01)**

This first section analysis begins with the presentation of demographic characteristics of the interviewees so can better understand background of the interviewed. All the participants discussed below (names in this study are pseudonyms) with the identifiers so their confidentiality could sustain. It is important to examine the unique

Theme	Sub-theme
1. Are Women in Pole Position?	1. Viewpoint about Women’s Condition 2. How Women are Perceived at Socio-cultural Level? 3. Women’s Situation in Economic Domain 4. Women’s Ranking in Political Sphere
2. Higher Education & Employment Opportunities	1. Individual Autonomy & Family Interpersonal Relations 2. Economic Empowerment

demographic characteristics of the respondents for ensuring the trustworthiness and authenticity of the study results which are the outcomes of their point of views on the research issue under study. However, collected information about the interviewees' background is briefly summarized here at this point.

Particular characteristics of the study participants likely influenced the data gathered and findings examined in this study. To begin with, eight-08 out of twenty-six-26 respondents were parliamentarians/politicians, next eight-08 were journalists, and remaining ten-10 belongs to academia. Politicians, journalists, and academicians are those stakeholders who are considered with strong influence on national issues, in case of current study, women empowerment in Pakistan.

Study respondents were associated with different institutions as per their professional affiliation; mostly politicians were ministers and Member National Assembly-MNAs representing different areas of Pakistan at the time of data collection. In addition to this, journalists were associated with print and electronic media as well as some of them were CEOs of web-TV and social media channels. However, across the country university's Vice-Chancellors and Deans were approached including universities of Federal (Islamabad), Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa-KP, Sindh, Balochistan and Gilgit Baltistan-GB.

For the current study respondents' group was heterogeneous as perspective of both the gender was important with respect to understand the phenomena from various lenses. The gender composition of interviewees revealed that out of twenty-six-26 respondents there were ten-10 female and sixteen-16 male members. Among them five-05 female and three-03 male politicians participated in the current study. Followed by, six-06 male and two-02 female journalists recorded their views on the issue under study. Finally, seven-07 male and three-03 female academicians shared their stance on the current issue. To ensure the trustworthiness of relevant data for present study it was attempted to approach senior and experienced respondents of their relevant field. Mostly respondents were having 11yrs to 15yrs of experience while some of them having duration of more the 20years of their career so far.

Contemporary women concerns are pivotal in shaping of global political debates, social transformations, and economic discussion of public and private spheres in developing countries. Keeping this scenario in context, the specialization of respondents covered various fields of studies including, political affairs, law, human rights, women & family affairs, religious affairs, human trafficking & gender empowerment for parliamentarians. Journalists expertise including, information &

communications, socio-cultural affairs, planning & development, news media & digital media, development & management, socio-political & economic affairs, also included the development specialist. Finally, academicians were predominantly from education & research, gender issues, socio-cultural affairs, planning & development, information & communications, and mass communication. Intriguingly, distinctions of specialization of the respondents provided depth to the results of study under investigation.

### **Presentation of Findings (section two-02)**

The following section presents the main findings from the analysis in the form of two themes and six sub themes. Italics quotes and extracts are spoken viewpoints of the interviewees because by this way these comprehended in a far better way than by the researcher's paraphrasing.

#### **Theme # 01: Are Women In Pole Position?**

Women status in Pakistan is heterogeneous because of their interconnection with other forms of exclusion in the society. However, current women's situation is influenced by a number of factors concerning socio-political and economic dynamics of the country which have been part of the current analysis. Since women and their empowerment is the main topic of current research, the concept is part of many of the themes in this analysis. At this point, however we look and analyze specifically at how the interviewees literally define and explain the status of women in socio-cultural, economic, and political spheres of life in Pakistan. For analysis purpose, explanation regarding women status by the respondents has been divided into following sub-themes:

- Viewpoint about Women's Condition
- How Women Perceived at Socio-cultural Level?
- Women's Situation in Economic Domain
- Women's Ranking in Political Sphere

**Sub-theme # 01: Viewpoints about Women's Condition:** Women are not having as good status as they should have because they are almost half of the country's population but now our total population which is exceeding 21crore and they must be around of 10.5crore so how many women are there to represent this half of Pakistan's population? Second we are trying to break-up our stereotypes but not yet successful in that.

Take, for example, this in-depth interview passage describing the scenario like this:

*“We have divided women stature into two tiers, one at the cosmetic level that they have representation in policies and legislation and at all those levels where the intention is only to present them. Other category of women is consisting of those who are from middle or lower class or we can say women from masses, they were neglected and they are neglected. Still these women are with their centuries old issues which are unheard and unaddressed. So for majority of Pakistani women the world is same old masculine without noticeable changes for them.”(Pa-22)*

To some extent women issues get heard but it's not representing the issues of women from masses. So as a consequence, women status has not so been changed as well not even same across the country. As is clear from the following excerpt:

*“In my opinion, the status of women in Pakistan is still low compared to other Asian counties. The rate of change in all spheres is quite slow.”(Pa-20)*

Further, they have been disregarded their due rights given by Islam as well as of modern world system. They have been gone through double subjugation that neither our traditional system has any space for them nor they are benefiting from this western global system. As illustrated by the point of view of the following respondents:

*“Still majority of women are far away from their basic human rights e.g. education, health care, respect, justice, and awareness etc. World powers have double standards for 3rd world countries like Pakistan e.g. via media exaggerates our issues particularly related to women status in a way which is not appropriate though in the western world women are not as protected and empowered as the way they are presented and exemplified to the world.”(Pp-3)*

*“Islam has given a very high status to women but on the flip side, unfortunately in Pakistan we have not given that status to women which they deserve in any case.” (Pp-5)*

Importance of women in any society is undeniably huge. Note how the following extracts, which represents the views of various interviewees' about the improvement of women's situation in Pakistan:

*“in today's world without women we can't run a family so how can we think of a country's development without active role of women.” (Pp-6)*

*“The status of women has improved in Pakistan. That does not mean all work done. We have a long way to go.” (Pp-8)*

*“So I can see in terms of education, in terms of human rights, in terms of an overall awareness, and their visibility in economic sector so we see there is a lot of improvement. But in comparison of west we are far behind.” (Pa-17)*

Women’s role in society has been tremendously changed and putting an impact on society today.

**Sub-theme # 02: How Women Perceived at Socio-cultural Level?:**

The socio-cultural context of Pakistani society is primarily patriarchal. Gender division in the society is on the ideology of two different worlds, the four walls territory is defined as a women’s legitimate ideological space and outer world is for male. Female have been segregated mostly on the basis of gender roles according to the social order. The Pa-23 depicts the emergent dynamics as:

*“Dichotomous stereotypical images regarding gender roles are common, and role development is less natural and more socio cultural based on predetermined notions. Masculine roles are instrumental that link family to the external world, whereas females manage domestic activities.”(Pa-23)*

In Pakistani society, family institution operates under the influence of patriarchy along with customs and traditions manifested in awarding more space to men. However, the spread of male domination is not even, rather it varies across classes, region, and the rural/urban divide. Patriarchal system is stronger in rural areas as compare to urban hubs in Pakistan. Though, there are improvements for urban women as they are becoming more educated and having opportunities of employment resulting in changes to their social status. In this context, participants’ views have been defined as:

*“Philosophical agency exercise has not increased in our society with reference to women. Our women are getting education and employment opportunities and their situation is changing now though we are still conservative.”(Pj-10)*

*“Now in recent times, situation is a bit changed, people have started giving attention to their women and sending their girls for higher education even to other cities.”(Pp-5)*

*“Furthermore, some gender discriminatory laws have been repealed as well as The All Pakistan Ulema Council (the largest groups of religious clergy in Pakistan) has given the Fatwa (legal pronouncement on Islamic Law) against honor*

*killing in Pakistan. However, there is still much to be done in Pakistan to bring improvement in the status of women.”(Pp-7)*  
*In urban areas, the women being more educated are involved in the various affairs of the society and family. The cultural constraints were relatively less in such cases and one can see relatively better image and contribution of the women in the social development. In rural areas, unfortunately the society remained mainly in the clutches of men and men dominated norms.”(Pa-18)*

We are now living in global era so we have to accept global norms and values because we can't live with certain traditions which are now outdated i.e. now we can't keep our girls away from education anymore as presented in the extract below:

*“For instance in terms of education, there were times when women were not encouraged to go to the schools and for higher education but now we can see a lot of difference there.”(Pa-17)*

So nothing is positive or negative in this global era it's just difference of point of views about society and lifestyle.

**Sub-theme # 03: Women's Situation in Economic Domain:** In social context, Pakistani women are not given the roles of producers and providers because of their low status. In return, resources have been allocated to male members of the society so they becomes in a better position to utilize them. They get better opportunities of education and skills and get enabled to compete in public arena; however women are imparted with domestic chores so their contribution goes unacknowledged. Lack of education and skills along with socio-cultural restrictions limits the chances to compete for resources in public domain for them. As is further clear in the following excerpts from different respondents' point of view on the women's situation in economic domain:

*“So, we can't bring improvement in women's lives without educating or training them. Like I have started in my constituency a small project of providing sewing machines to women so they get skilled, earn and contribute to family economy without stepping out of their domestic sphere. Unfortunately, our majority women are backward though they are participating in all fields of life and contributing with their full efforts to the family, agriculture, and economy but their role has not been acknowledged yet so far.”(Pp-6)*

Besides conservative cultural barriers another participant argued as:

*“The most neglected area is economic empowerment of women here in Pakistan. First of all to get job is a difficult task even if they gets the job then equal pay and treatment becomes a raised issue for them. After this when they get their salaries they don’t have right to use that money by their own. This is the biggest issue which is not been identified yet and no one wan a talk on this aspect of working women life. Gender parity at primary school level is almost 50:50 in Pakistan. However, at secondary level education this ratio is becomes 70:30 means 70% boys and 30% girls in education at schools and university level its now 80:20 ratio for male n female in Pakistan. But when we talk of employment, the ratio is 99:01 in Pakistan for paid jobs specifically in managerial or decision making positions in job market.”(Pj-11)*

However, increasing economic pressures compel the conservative middle class of Pakistan to allow women’s mobility and women work outside of their home territory. For men, exposure of the outer world is making it difficult to take economic burden alone without support of women. Note how the following excerpts, which represent the views of various interviewees’ about the active role of women in economy further:

*“With increased economic pressures a new working class of women seems to have emerged. Most of the educated young girls are employed by the corporate culture against jobs like those in calls centers, banks and reception desks at various offices. Some is having started their own small and medium size businesses while opening their own beauty parlor salons, running café’s and food delivery centers in urban areas (Munchies, Kitchen Cuisine).”(Pa-19)*

*“If we talk of women’s status in different fields so we can see Dr. Fouzia Saeed the former executive director of Lok Virsa a national institute for folk and traditional heritage in Pakistan is a woman. There are a number of educational institutions headed by women now; and likewise we had a woman governor of State Bank of Pakistan. So generally we can find women representation in all domains of economy, politics, and at socio-cultural levels in Pakistan, women are not refrained from any field.”(Pa-24)*



**Sub-theme # 04: Women's Ranking in Political Sphere:** Over the years women status has been studied in various perspectives, however from political standpoint it's always been an untouched area of analysis. Mainstreaming women in all walks of life is essential for the socio-economic development of any society. Politics and political activities are still considered as male domain and thus, putting woman aside. In this case the views of following respondents are quite relevant:

*"In Pakistan we have restricted our women only to the family and home spheres so their status and importance is also limited to these domains and not have any significant impact on country's economy and politics."(Pp-6)*

*"At political level among 146 countries we are on 56 or 57 number but keeping this scenario in view, there is a great disparity for women in all walks of life. If we look into our cabinet division, we don't have women representation there in decision making though they are member parliamentarian but not part of decision making process or of core team members."(Pj-11)*

On the other side, today's Pakistani women do enjoy comparatively better status than past e.g. women have held high offices such as Prime Minister, Speaker of the National Assembly, Leader of the Opposition, as well as Federal Ministers, and Judges. By coupling data with researcher's narration regarding today's women situation in politics illustrates that:

*"To me if we give space, awareness, and confidence to women they can do miracles, I can give you example of my wife who is now chairperson of local government in a district of Punjab-Pakistan and also running a mega project with an INGO in our rural areas of Punjab though she was a housewife but I encouraged her to come out of house and contribute in politics and she becomes an elected member. Now she is a favorite politician of our area."(Pp-7)*

*"one example can be of Bashir Ahmad Bilour (prominent political figure of ANP) when assassinated in a terrorist attack in Peshawar his wife contested and won the election from Peshawar and becomes a political member of Pashtun led areas. So there is improvement in women status but there is a long way to go and struggle for women due status given by Islam and state."(Pj-13)*

### **Theme # 02: Higher Education and Employment Opportunities**

Higher education and emerging new fields have provided an opening for women to come forward. Empowerment is an evolutionary process it takes time, as a society positive view towards women's point of views is required. So for the development of society it is important to support and bring women into main stream domains. As far as number of women increasing in higher education it also opening outlets in job sectors for them too. To assess the relationship of higher education with family interpersonal relations & individual autonomy further, employment opportunities in economic empowerment of women the following two-02 sub-themes emerged:

- Individual Autonomy & Family Interpersonal Relations
- Economic Empowerment

#### **Sub-theme # 01: Higher education, Individual Autonomy, and Family Interpersonal Relations:**

Higher education plays a pivotal role in empowering women especially at individual and family levels. Now emphasis on individual abilities i.e. self-efficiency, confidence, experience for getting into workforce is becoming pre-requisite. Globalization has created knowledge economy that crushed the centuries old patriarchal structure which mainly based on agricultural economy which empowered men in societies. In establishing this sub-theme on the basis of data collected, here presents the views of respondents explaining the mentioned sub-theme:

*“To me in today's world education and experience both are necessary to get good jobs and have prosperous career which obviously makes you well reputed and empowered in the society.”(Pp-4)*

*“Higher education has brought men and women at the same floor, now women are in position that can compete with men. We can observe now a huge number of women studying in universities and in different professions though still facing hurdles but encouraging thing is this that they have stepped into the real practical world now so one day will be of their ultimate empowerment.”(Pj-9)*

*“We have observed in the western world as well we have example of “Memon Community in Karachi” that whenever children have vacations or gap in their studies they have been offered internships in industries, in offices, in hospitals, in educational or vocational institutions so even during their studies they are getting experience of their relevant field of*

*studies. So when they come to the job market, it enhances their career opportunities and growth in the field.”(Pp-4)*

No doubt in past, women's have been excluded from the practice of well-paid jobs and high status occupations because of the lacking of appropriate skills and higher professional education. But scenario has been changed now as evident by following excerpts:

*“We can look to our female politicians they are highly educated working alongside with males and have honorable repute and status in the society, same examples can be found in many servicing professions e.g. medical, judiciary, education, and forces etc. of successful empowered women in Pakistan who are proud of their families as well as for themselves.” (PP-5)*

*“Now, their visibility is observable in different domains as well their jobs getting acceptability from society which is in their favor and will contribute in their strong standing in the society.”(Pa-22)*

*“It's so illuminating that how access to knowledge and skill opportunities have been changing women's life in our society. Education is opening up their eyes and mind and enabling them to be get aware about their potentials and the expectations of the world around them.”(Pa-26)*

Again, it is the urban women who have benefitted from globalization more. The use of technology, YouTube has also played its part in educating women as there are many trainings and online tutorials for them. Also women are standing up for themselves and now scholarships also encourage women to apply for higher studies abroad. Influences of higher education on the individual and family level empowerment of women are illustrated as:

*“Women's higher education and then entry to workforce has ultimately brought decline in birthrates which has improved maternal health situation in Pakistan. If a woman has fewer children so we can assume that she can in a better way socialize her children and take care of her family in a more effective manner. An educated mother has more say in decisions related to children and family affairs. If women have contribution in family economy, they are appreciated and treated respectably by their families as well as society. Even in cities women are getting married by their own choice within family and out of family.”(Pp-7)*

*“If we look at the life expectancy women live long life as compare to men but still head of family is male so as women live long and stay longer than men so there is no issue if they lead family matters. In this scenario if we educate and skilled them they can more productively serve the family and society.”(Pj-11)*

*“But I do believe education and financial contribution from women towards their families is putting dent on our orthodox social systems. Recently one of my cousins who is an architect by profession got married and it’s written in her “Nikah Nama/Marriage Contract” as a condition that she will peruse with her professional career after marriage. Such sort of examples are there now can be witnessed which is showing parents concern for their daughters professional education and career.”(Pj-13)*

*“So financial support of family is becoming responsibility of women and men even though they are earning are getting spare from this role of family. Family abandonment by males is a new dimension we are experiencing now particularly in our urban areas.”(Pp-3)*

Higher education itself a powerful tool of empowerment, and with specialization and self- efficiency now you can see women on high up positions i.e. director news and director current affaires are women in Pakistan Television-PTV, further examples illustrated as:

*“But we have some examples from private media channels like owner of HUM TV channel is a female (sultana Siddiqui) or Mehreen Jabbar Pakistani film and TV director and producer or Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy is a Pakistani journalist, filmmaker and activist so women can be good entrepreneurs with specialized educational skills.”(Pj-12)*

Globalization has increased the involvement of female and their access to labor force participation and this has been brought by female involvement in getting higher education. The increasing number of school, universities and other educational institutions can best be exemplified in this context as can view in following extracts:

*“In Pakistan, one can see enormous growth in the higher education institutions and centers across the country for females. Special scholarship programs have been initiated at Universities and HEC for providing opportunities of higher education to females. About 45% of total enrolment of 1.5 Million in Universities of public and private sectors are*

*females, which is an encouraging trend. With access to higher education, the subsequent highly qualified females of society are empowered to play their role in socioeconomic development.”(Pa-18)*

*“When we talk about women empowerment strategies in Pakistan, we have micro-financing institutions which provide loans for small business to women. So if women will be better educated they will run such home based businesses more effectively.”(Pa-26)*

It is very essential for the development of the country that women go hand by hand with men in all spheres of life.

**Sub-theme # 02: Employment Opportunities and Economic Empowerment:** As far as the employment opportunities are concerned so yes we can say that shift from agriculture to industrial and servicing mode has created job opportunities for women as they are considered cheap labor so in many industries you can observe them.

*“In marketing sector you may find women visibility as well in many other service sectors too e.g. banking, media, communication, insurance etc. we are becoming more services sector oriented society as compare to technologically advanced or industrialist so women participation in work force is increasing day by day. Though discrimination at workplace, maternity leaves, prolonged working hours and wage gap are the few modern time issues that women facing.”(Pj-10)*

*“Scenario is changing now; we have many women led organizations that are working excellently even if we compare ourselves with many other nations. Women are having great potential and because of their skills they are moving up day by day because if you give favor to someone it can't empower them so they are struggling hard and earning their prestige and position in the society.”(Pa-22)*

Empowerment means your share in decision making and education enables women to impart their role in it. Presently, significant role of women's in various sectors is an indication of improving environment for women and their empowerment in Pakistani society. Globalization leads to introduction of new technologies and strategies to streamline women.

*“Ministry of IT through its programs including “Ignite's Digiskill Program”, USF's program for bringing artisans online and establishment of National Incubation Centers are*

*few initiative that are changing the face of entrepreneurship and helping our youth including majority of women to start their own business. The support includes mentoring, technical assistance and initial funding. These initiatives has encouraged corporate sector to jump in and now most of the NICs are supported by telecos across the country. After Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi now an incubation center was established recently in Quetta. Many women lead startups are hosted in these NICs throughout the country. (Pj-14)*

*“They are employed to higher and prestigious positions in the society and involved in high level decision making.”(Pa-18)*

*“To me it’s not necessary that if women get higher education they must have to do jobs even on the cost of their family life. So most important in the process of empowerment is inclusion in decision making at every level at different domains of life. Higher education enables women to decide when and where what is important for them i.e. family, job, or anything else.”(Pa-24)*

On the other side, education always brings prosperity to any nation; there is no doubt in it and higher education broadens up the horizon of employment opportunities eventually. In our patriarchal context, if a woman has higher education and job but she leave our normative lifestyle so this education and job can’t be empower her in Pakistani society.

*“If we look into the economic scenario of Pakistan, economically women are not independent even if they doing jobs and earning even I am talking about the high-ups’ women who are holding good positions and having high qualifications. So if women are not financially independent they can’t be in position to make decisions about themselves or about anything else and you will always be remaining dependent and bounded.”(Pp-2)*

*“Statistics shows that increase rates of divorce and delaying marriages are now becoming emerging social issues of Pakistan linked with women’s higher education and earning.”(Pp-5)*

*“Higher education intake of male and female is 80:20 and in jobs specifically at key positions there ratio is 99:01 in Pakistan. Women are struggling but there are certain hurdles for them to get empowered. In Pakistan, wealth distributed among men traditionally i.e. family assets so women*

*dependency is there irrespective if they are getting higher education and doing jobs.”(Pj-11)*

*“No doubt education and employment opportunities for women can empower women but male dominance/ male chauvinism is there in our society which restricts women to be fully empowered even though they are having degrees and jobs. As well as there are pressures from family and in-laws for women on taking decisions independently about themselves in our society.”(Pp-13)*

*“this cliché sphere or free economy kind of thing, we talk of reduction of state’s role which means that if the state has given everything to private this means they would cut the subsidies they would cut the social side of, then there women could be the victim of this globalization.”(Pa-17)*

## **Discussion**

The study under investigation was primarily focused on assessing influences of higher education and employment opportunities on women empowerment in Pakistan. Clearly, there is a significant relationship identified between higher education, employment opportunities, and women empowerment (Habib et al., 2019). An educated woman is more confident of her ability to make a decision or voice an opinion, and more likely to insist on participating in family discussions and enter the workforce (Parvazian et al., 2017). Findings revealed that when a woman has economic empowerment, she becomes in a better position to control economic resources, voice over household decisions, and more self-reliant. She then has the potential to become a leader and change agent within her community and beyond (Tallburi, 2015). The study confirmed that highly educated women have more employment opportunities and enjoy a greater sense of autonomy and self-esteem. Beyond the immediate benefits for an individual woman to attend university education, the societal benefits of educating them may be one of the most important paths to sustainable development (Nadeem & Asif, 2018).

The findings illustrate that, women are becoming more prominent, yet increasing numbers, women are fighting long-standing prejudices. Women still faces enormous pressure to conform to social norms - conforming to traditional roles within families poses as much of a barrier to access higher education and work opportunities as the still-too-thick glass ceiling at outer world (Akhter et al., 2016). Though women have made great strides in the corporate world in the last three

decades, women from all income classes are still too often discouraged by family members from having careers that infringe too much on family life (Deb & Sen, 2016).

Previous literature evidences that educational skills, information and awareness via media, and political support of women's active participation in outer sphere have brought improvement in women's lives (OSCE, 2017; Yalala N, 2015; UN-Women, n.d.). Globalization yielding variant socio-political and economic outcomes for people across the globe so is evident for women empowerment too in Pakistan. Global debate of sustainable development is emphasizing on gender inclusion in all spheres of life as it is not possible by letting down any of the stakeholders of society to grow and rise in today's world (Leire Pajin, 2014; "MDG-5", n.d.; Silvia Modig, 2018) same findings articulated in current study.

The findings about one of the objectives to assess women status revealed that there is considerable diversity in the status of women, support for women or raise voices for them are not same for the women of different classes and areas (ADB, 2000; Isran, 2012). Though, Islam gives respectable status to women and never declare female inferior to men (Rashid, 2013). Due to globalization we can witness not only in Pakistan but also in other parts of developing world that disparity among both genders is reduced and the condition of women in the family and society has improved in recent years (Suguna, 2011). Results further leads that they are playing their role in education, economy, in social fabric, politics, and in every domain of life very effectively, though facing difficulties but are determined. If we look at the women in Pakistani scenario there are certain changes in favor of women and equally there are things which are disservice for them. In present situation we can say women status is improving due to certain socio-political pressures from the outer world and the top most is economic pressure on families.

The results related to research questions highlighted that globalization has affected women's development and empowerment in Pakistan. Empowerment only can come if women will be educated otherwise it will minimize employment opportunities for women in this era of mass globalization. We can see now, even to get education from abroad and going alone and travel internationally is acceptable for women in Pakistan same is for paid work opportunities. Study findings further confirms i.e. harassment at workplace, majority not in education, lack of opportunities, lack of equality, and glass ceiling etc. still there and women still have a long way to go. Globally, the situation is also the



same for women as 2.7 billion are legally restricted from having the same choice of jobs as men. Out of 189 economies which have been assessed in 2018, economic scenario for women found very bleak (World Bank, 2018). However, services sector has opened up a window for women to come up with their potentials because before that doing job was a taboo for women in Pakistan. On employment of the females after acquiring higher qualification, the women are playing very effective role in the decision making at individual & family level also improving their socio-economic conditions.

### **Conclusion**

The traditional roles of women in Pakistan have been changing and they are now entering into a new era of autonomy. Higher education gives understanding capability while employment enables to stand confidently and move upward in society. Our women become more rational beings now, more logical and practical as compare to traditionally perceive. Education and paid jobs are not only economically empowering women but also enhancing their social status and decision making powers. They are now more active in economic domain and trending the concept of women entrepreneurship in Pakistan. But in Pakistan if family (i.e. father, husband, brother, and son) is supportive women then can only be fully empowered in any field of life yes education and paid jobs has its own contribution. Still our women are there in jobs and we talk a lot about it but they don't have spending power of their income, this is the aspect of empowerment that we are not still highlighted in our national debates about women emancipation. It is beyond any doubt that women play a significant role in development of society. History bears the testimony to the greatness of women as vibrant members of society. But, it is unfortunate that their efforts have not been given due recognition in society. In the name of various customs, rituals and practices, women are being deprived of the legitimate rights. This concern is not merely academic but is central to the process of emerging development in Pakistan. If we acknowledge their contribution it will not only empower women rather our families and societies will get empowered globally.

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