



## Economic Empowerment and Social Status of Pakhtoon Working Women

Dr. Noor Jehan<sup>a\*</sup>, Jalal Khan<sup>b</sup>, Dr. Muhammad Kamran Khan<sup>c</sup>, Shagufta Shaheen<sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Associate Professor, Department of Economics, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, Pakistan. <sup>b</sup>MPhil Scholar, Department of Economics, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, Pakistan. <sup>c</sup>Assistant Professor, Institute of management Sciences, University of Haripur, Pakistan. <sup>d</sup>Col. Shagufta Shaheen, Armed Forces Nursing Services (AFNS), Combined Military Hospital Lahore.

\*Email: [noorjehan@awkum.edu.pk](mailto:noorjehan@awkum.edu.pk)

---

**Abstract:** This research work was performed to understand the relationship between social status and economic empowerment of Pakhtoon working women. The study used an online questionnaire which was directed at Pakhtoon women only. However, an attempt was made to keep the Pakhtoon context in the picture as well. Hence Northern Pakistan was taken as the universe of the study to assess the relationship in a Pakhtoon context. There were 100 responses out of 500 requests. The data was analyzed through SPSS software. Descriptive statistics and correlation methods were used for this study. The results showed that a working Pakhtoon woman's social status in the form of social inclusion, social acceptance, and social relations is highly correlated with her economic empowerment. It is concluded that financial independence and empowerment were the way toward the social inclusion of women in Pakhtoon society. It also creates good relations for her in society and she is socially accepted in personal and group capacity. It is recommended to give women permission to earn and include them in decision-making.

**Keywords:** Women economic empowerment, Social acceptance, Social relations, Social inclusion, Pakhtoon society

---

### 1. Introduction

Women's empowerment has become a popular slogan throughout the world. It has been researched for its causes as well as its consequences. It has been perceived differently in different cultures. Normally it can be referred to acceptance and allowing a woman born outside the decision-making spheres into it. It can be said that women need a place in society as decision-makers not just as decision takers hence included. Inclusion is crucial for the growth of human behavior to achieve equivalent chances and positions to achieve their objectives and targets. The current circumstance of women in Pakistan need to adhere to sustainable development goals of equity and equality. Women have been kept behind in training and development because of their status in society, and equivalent rights (Chitrakar, 2009). Denial of inclusion has obstructed women from gathering information, realizing equivalent openings for labour, prestige, basic headship abilities, realizing themselves to be a gainful resource for the child's growth, etc. In Pakistan, there are cultural and social issues, traditions, strict religious grounds, low education, and lack of open-mindedness that add to women's weak position in society. If empowered, she can break fear and become self-confident. But the women in rural areas are mostly segregated and alienated. They are unable to share

and talk about their problems and their stake remains low. There could be many micro and macro-level elements that can empower her.

Women have been poorly trained, and the government lacks the vision to raise women at an early stage of life. As political regimes fail to raise women's status in society to a level where they are empowered and included, many non-government organizations spread awareness and training around the country for women's empowerment. Many ideological groups, with the help of many organizations, made their efforts to open schools for girls. (Desai & Andrist, 2010) states that there was gender orientation dissimilarity at the primary and secondary levels. Necessary training ought to be made mandatory for the females till they arrive at the age of 16. Since the making of Pakistan, women's empowerment has been ignored. They have been deprived of their lawful rights to have an equal status as well as opportunities to grow as a person. They have also been confined from the improvement process and societal components including health, necessities, training, education, information, access to power & and authority, and basic leadership. This issue has not been addressed in a truly comprehensive manner since 1947. There is an increasing trend of working women in various government and non-government institutions. Even various clothing brands and private schools are run by women entrepreneurs. Governments have also concentrated on separate female universities to increase higher education. However, patriarchy is still the norm in society. Pakistan is a developing country, and many issues are faced by our country but most important is social acknowledgement. There is a need to ascertain whether earning woman also means an independent woman.

### **1.2 Religion, Women's Empowerment, and Society**

Pakhtoon are predominantly Muslim by religion. The social setup though is strictly religious, the tradition overwhelms tradition. The holy Quran discusses the rights of women in the purview of their rights to inheritance, and their value as mothers, wives, and daughters. Sections of the holy Quran like An-Nissa, Al-Maida, and Noor give a great emphasis on women's rights and empowerment. The first wife of Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him, Hadija was an influential entrepreneur and decided about her wealth representing the earner as right to spend as well. However, Pakhtoon women adhere to strict norms like purdah while going to work but their powers as decision-makers are seldom acknowledged. There is no doubt that the trend of women working outside/inside the home to earn is increasing in Pakistan and few women are also among famous entrepreneurs. However, most of society is still characterized by large gaps between men and women. If a woman begets a job, there is less likelihood that she may also be able to earn as much as a man and she can spend her earnings the way she wants. Even in the case of education, not only women but men are also dominated by elders'/parents/guardians' opinions and aspirations. A girl is not supposed to apply for every job. There are specific jobs that are considered feminine. It is assumed that earning ability can give women status in society and we may be considered an integral part of micro decision-making. While it is true for many (or almost all) men, the status of working women in this respect is unclear. The question as to whether working makes a woman empowered in fiduciary terms and whether it leads to her inclusion in the decision-making process is yet to be known comprehensively. This study is important as it will explore the status of working women in terms of inclusion and empowerment. The results will help us understand the matter as well as new insights into empowerment concepts. It will also shed light on the connection between earning ability, empowerment, and inclusion. The results can help in policy rethinking.

### **1.3 Research Question**

This study poses the following questions about women's empowerment and social inclusion.

- a) Whether working women' economic empowerment ensures her status in the society?
- b) Does Women Economic empowerment relates to her better social status in the society?

### **1.3 Hypothesis**

To answer these questions, we hypothesized as follows:

H<sub>1</sub>: A working Pakhtoon woman' economic empowerment does not relate to her status in the society.

H<sub>0</sub>: A working Pakhtoon woman' economic empowerment is related to her better status in the society.

## **2. Literature Review**

Literature has addressed the topic of women's empowerment from different perspectives. Acharya et al., (2010) investigated women's family positions and their role in basic leadership. They used multivariate logistic regression to assess the effect of various socioeconomic variables and basic leadership. They concluded that rural women need explicit strengthening programs for which extensive planning and action are required. In another study, Varghese, (2011) discussed the national policy of the Sultanate of Oman and its need for a strategic plan related to human resource development as devised by the Ministry of Economic Development. The strategy incorporates women's advancement. The authors discuss the basic family leadership capacity of women and their monetary management skills. The ability of Omani women to create opportunities for strengthening their status in society. The paper used quantitative techniques by utilizing regression. The dependent variable of the study was complete women's empowerment while there were five independent variables. Results confirm that most of the women in the Sohar region understand their obligations and their rights. The authors suggested some policy points for the uplift of women in the Sohar region.

In the context of Bangladesh, Khan and Ara (2006) emphasizes a gender-explicit approach to bringing women into the mainstream to advance in the world. The issue was not recognized, and it took time for the authorities and politicians to work on policy changes for women's empowerment. The data about neighboring nations shows that Bangladesh has done some work for women at grassroots levels compared to them. They concluded that women's engagement in the economic sphere is necessary for their empowerment. In the same connection, a study was undertaken by Malik and Courtney (2011) for Pakistan to know the effect of educational expenditure on women's empowerment. The study utilized quantitative and qualitative data techniques. The theme of the study was related to advancement in education which was taken as an indicator of women empowerment. The results showed that the predominant societal structure and man-centric culture pose great impediments to women's empowerment. The researcher also pointed to the failures in implementing laws that were directed at women's strengthening. Culture is dominant over the laws, and it poses a great constraint. Regardless of these, the research outcome showed that educational advancement opens a new arena for women and their empowerment. Such steps also ensure gender equality in Pakistan.

Chaudhry et al., (2012) talked about issues in the developing Islamic world i.e. women empowerment. Pakistan being a developing democratic and Islamic country is faced with multifarious challenges in the arena of women empowerment. The Sample size is 200; female respondents are selected for the survey using a stratified random sampling technique. This paper aims to eliminate the popular misconception about Islam acting as an obstacle in the path of women's empowerment using analysis based on the primary data from a remote district of Southern Punjab. The results of the analysis reflect that Islam promotes women's empowerment by laying immense emphasis on their access to education, media, better health facilities, family planning, and prohibition of violence against them. They conclude that Islam as a religion ensures the provision of maximum rights to women. The paper identifies our old-fashioned social norms, retarded traditions, and obliviousness to the true spirit and teachings of Islam as the main impediments in the way of woman's empowerment.

Kabeer (2012) aimed to explore women's economic empowerment about inclusive growth with a focus on women's employment. The reason for focusing on employment is due to the facts gathered from the literature which suggests that women's employment along with education is positively affecting economic growth as well as the forward effect of gender equality. Talking differently, it is not just the availability of jobs and the presence of a job market, but the existence of gender bias in the job market that limits their capacity to acquire or retain jobs. The author suggested a wage-equal approach, an opportunity to have self-employment opportunities, and information about different job postings. The results of the study show that women prefer to go for high wages if there are high wages and for self-employment, if the work environment is bad in case, they possess start-up capital and market access. There are also chances when there may be a conflict of interest between successful entrepreneur women and waged work women. There are also imposed constraints in the public domain like laws that reflect gender discrimination, various policies, powerful actors' attitudes, and behaviors towards women which include state officers, employers, and people working in trade unions, peers, and traders.

Women's empowerment gained importance with time. As Bushra and Wajiha (2013) termed it as the most influential factor in society, it has gained a lot of importance in developing countries. Their study attempted to assess the factors that influence women's empowerment in Pakistan. The data was collected from 200 females in a

college in Lahore. The results showed that education, participation of women in economic activities, availability of economic opportunities, and poverty all have effects on women's empowerment. Apart from other important variables, an independent variable named "maintaining a bank account" was also included and it turned out to be extremely influential towards improving women's empowerment. The data was analyzed by SPSS software. The results recommended the availability of economic opportunities for women that can enhance their status in society. Participation and holding bank accounts are also very effective tools for achieving women's empowerment.

Boateng et al., (2013) address the issue of general assistance to women in uplifting their social status. The paper aimed at recognizing public issues that affect government efforts in empowering women. According to the authors, empowerment is creating such an environment where women can use their abilities to the fullest while taking responsibility for their lives and professions. The social order of the society can be reinforced by giving women rights to resources. This research gathered data from questionnaires that were self-administered. The number of respondents was 30 women who participated in politics. The focus of the study was on the constitution of the ideological groups to which women belonged. Their monetary status, their occupation, and whether they were employed.

Ashraf and Ali (2018) took financial prosperity as an independent variable to find its effect on women's status in Pakistan. The variable of interest was the share of budgetary improvement and economic hardships. The data was secondary in nature spanning a period from 1980 to 2014. They used different tests for checking stationarity including Philip-Peron, Dicky Fuller F test, and Dicky Fuller Generalized Least Square. The variables were all stationary at different levels and hence the use of Autoregressive Distributive lag was applied for cointegration. The variables of interest were the monetary, social, and political status of women in Pakistan. The results were reported, and recommendations were made. The recommendations support improvement in the financial structure of Pakistan.

Batool and Batool (2018) focused their research on the employment side of women. The main interest of the research was tertiary paid jobs. Other variables including age, and occupation may affect women's empowerment. The data was collected from two cities of Pakistan, Multan, and Lahore. The sample consisted of 1000 respondents. The researcher developed the Composite Women's Empowerment Index for measuring women's empowerment. A T-test was used for analysis. Results showed that women are more empowered in Lahore than in Multan. Women working in paid jobs were also comparatively more empowered than those in unpaid jobs. The index showed that women become empowered with age and with training and education. In another study by Chakraborty et al., (2019), the Self-Improvement Gathering technique was applied to compare the job differences between rural and urban women. Job openings and employment in rural areas have a positive effect on the well-being of women especially those who belong to poor families. Self-improvement gatherings can create a good environment to empower women and guarantee an effort for better salaries. Research also stresses the importance of government involvement in women's empowerment in the form of small business opportunities. The researcher also stressed the role of non-government organizations and multi-national organizations to uplift rural women. Multinational organizations were suggested to perform showcasing, publicizing, marketing, and dissemination of various efforts for women's empowerment. The responses gathered were tested for internal consistency through Cronbach's alpha. The results of the study suggested that businesses create job opportunities, increase salaries in the market, and increase savings.

According to (*Facts and Figures*, n.d.) of UN Woman WEE has an important contribution towards gender equality. It ensures equal participation of women and benefits derived from "decent work" and "social protection". When women are economically empowered, they can access the market and is in control of their resources (time, life, body), they have agency and are meaningful participation in decision making processes (from home to global spheres). In a blog by Hina Shaikh on International growth center website titling (*Women Economic Empowerment Is Key to Pakistan's Development*, 2023), the figures shows that although there is a 38.8% labour force participation by women globally, it is only 20% in Pakistan. Hence Pakistani women have the lowest labour force participation rate in South Asia. Pakistan's position is very poor on all indices related to gender. According to global gender gap report Pakistan's rank is 145/156 in women's economic participation, 135/165 in women's educational attainment, 143/165 for health survival, and only 95/5 in political empowerment. There is a 34% gender pay gap according to international labour organization.

Khalid et al., (2020) examined extent of WEE in Punjab from rural and urban perspective by using Alkire et al. (2013) index. They used HIES data set for 2013-14. According to the outcomes, the extent of women empowerment in Punjab is almost 39% contributed by independence as a main contributor while the least contributor was the ownership of assets. There was a difference of 34.43 % for urban women being more empowered than rural women. Islamabad ranked high while Dera Ghazi Khan ranked lowest. The study further assessed the effect of some socioeconomic variables while using logistic regression in which wage differences contributed negatively towards women empowerment.

Wahid et al., (2020) focus of research was to know the significant factors for WEE in Peshawar. The sample size was 350 and outcomes suggests that WEE is elevated if a woman have educational enrollment, have power in decision making, have access to economic opportunities and can take part in decisions about household assets. Socio-cultural constraints have a negative effect on the WEE.

Jabeen et al., (2020) evaluated about traditional economic activities of women and its role in household economy while earning and savings. The area of the study was Khyber district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province with a sample size of 480. Cultural norms restrict about 72% of economic activities of the sampled women to indoors. Decision making was mainly controlled by males due to patriarchal culture. The awareness level of women was increased due to efforts of NGOs and government which provided these women credit, awareness, and training. The value of economic independence was known to these women; however, the physical and mental health of women was affected due to work burden and issues with time management. It was concluded by the researcher that socio-cultural, religious, demographic, and economic elements hinder productive capabilities of women.

### **3. Research Methodology**

#### **3.1 Population and Sample**

District Mardan was the population of the study which is predominantly Pakhtoon. The sample was selected randomly. The questionnaires were distributed among 500 women but only 100 were returned.

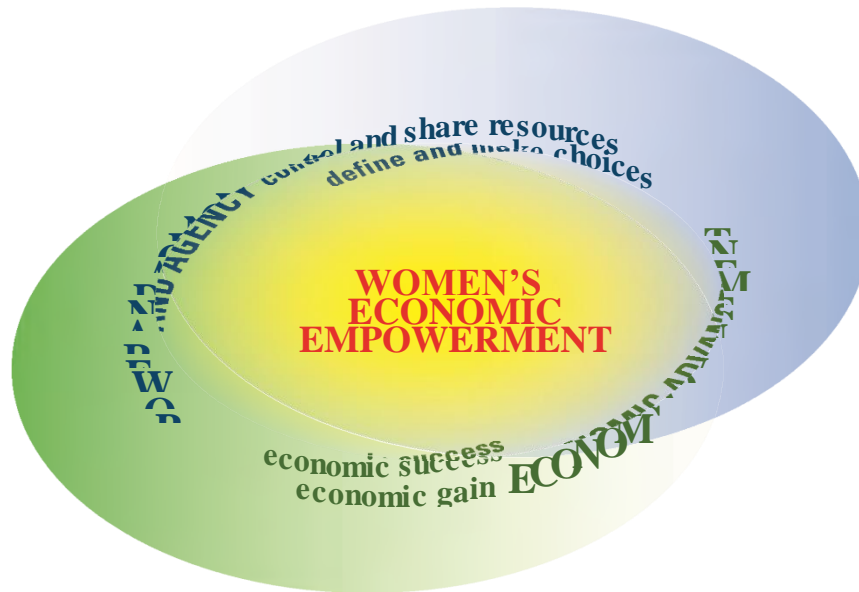
#### **3.2 Theoretical Framework**

This research relates social inclusion with women's economic empowerment. World Bank has defined social inclusion as

1. “The process of improving the terms for individuals and groups to take part in society”, and
2. “The process of improving the ability, opportunity, and dignity of those disadvantaged based on their identity to take part in society”.

Women’s Economic Empowerment Definition by the international center for research on women (ICRW) states that a woman will become economically empowered when she possesses the ability to progress and grow economically as well as achieve the authority to make her own economic decisions and act on these economic decisions. To be successful and progress, women require skills and sources to compete in markets. Additionally, she must possess equal and fair access to economic institutions. Similarly, women need to possess power and agency to take benefits from all economic actions for which they must have the power to make decisions about and take control of their profits and resources.

Two components of women's economic empowerment (WEE) economic advancement and second power and agency are shown in Figure 1. It shows that these two components are connected hence are necessary for achieving a better standard of living for women and their families. The other component shows that the ability to control and use her resources i.e. the power to use and share her resources, and her ability to choose (choices she may make) i.e. her agency power will make her better able for advancement (Golla, ICRW, 2011).



Anne Marie Golla/ICRW

Figure 1: Women's Economic Empowerment  
Source: ICRW

In another definition, Brody et al. (2015), differentiated four main types of empowerments including, (1) economic empowerment which shows that a woman can access resources, can own resources, and is in control of them. (2) Political empowerment shows that she can participate in the decision-making process that relates to resource access, rights to resources, and her entitlement to them in the community. Hence, she must have legal rights and she has the independence to participate in politics (3) social empowerment is a woman’s ability to control decision-making within the household which is not pecuniary in nature. (4) The fourth type is called psychological empowerment which refers to a woman’s ability to choose and practice this choice.

Table 1 shows the effects/outcomes of various types of social inclusion. The economic dimension of inclusion is economic, and it is most segregated in slums necessitating the need for economic focus in areas where poverty is concentrated. The social aspects are most important for communities that are divided based on race and ethnicity. Political inclusion is required in situations where restrictions are present. Table 2 in Annexure A shows the indicators of Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE). Power and agency indicators have sub-factors that state that it consist of control over assets both at the individual level and at the community level. Agency o entails decision-making at the individual and community levels, autonomy and mobility, self-confidence or self-efficacy, gender norms, and gender roles at the individual and community level are parts of the power and agency indicator.

Table 1: Social Inclusion: Contextual Effects and Mechanisms of Segregation

Dimension	Segregation	Mechanisms	Outcomes
Economic	Concentrated poverty; slums; gated communities	Distance from jobs; no or low-quality education, public services, housing; environmental degradation; non-working role models	Employment; schooling; health; intergenerational mobility
Social/cultural	Racial/ethnic segregation or diversity	Peers; family structure; social networks; risky behaviors; stores, churches, institutions	Intergroup relations; trust, cohesion, efficacy; isolation, disorder, crime

Political	Restricted public space; safety/protection; rights	Interaction with strangers; trust; protection or exposure to violence; policing; rule of law; civil rights to speech, association, etc.	Voting; civic and political participation
-----------	--	---	---

**3.3 Conceptual Framework: Relation between Women's Economic Empowerment and Social Inclusion**

The research is based on the concept that women's economic empowerment is positively related to social inclusion. Rank correlation was used to assess this relationship. The Spearman's rank correlation is used for assessing the strength and direction of a relationship between two variables. This tool is used for measuring the monotonic association of two variables. The formula is given as:

$$\rho = 1 - \frac{6 \sum di^2}{n(ni^2 - 1)}$$

in this equation, di shows the difference between two ranks of each observation, n represents the number of observations, right-hand side of the equation  $\rho$  is known as the rank coefficient called as rho which is between -1 and +1. Where a rank of +1 is a perfect association, 0 shows no association and -1 shows an excellent association respectively. The diagrammatic representation given in Figure 2.

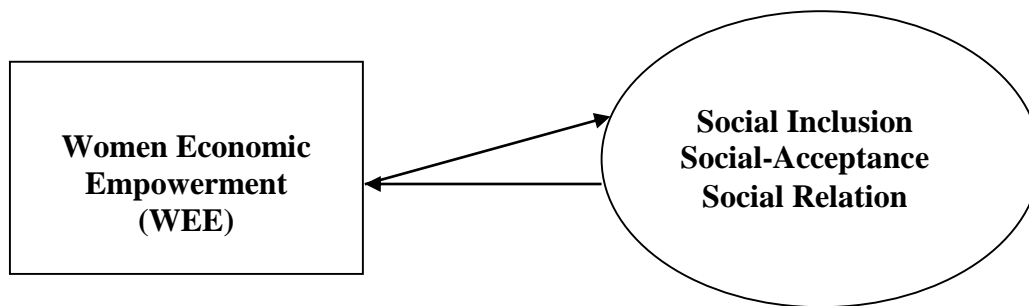


Figure 2: Conceptual Framework

**4. Results and Discussions**

**4.1 Description of the Sample**

This section is related to the analysis of collected data to answer research questions. The first part shows a descriptive analysis and its corresponding discussion. According to Table 1, the age of the respondents for the current research starts from 20 years. More than half (54%) of the respondents were in the age group between 30 years to 40 years. Similarly, 24% of respondents were in the age group from 20 years to 30 years and the remaining 22% were in the age group from 40 years to 50 years respectively. The respondents in this study were mainly teachers who constituted 49% of the sample as shown in Table 1. There were 28% of doctors and some 22% were doing other jobs. It also sheds light on the occupations of working women in Mardan. The tendency is to have teaching jobs. It also shows that the culture is either to work as a teacher or doctor for a female. Fewer women opt for other jobs.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of the Respondents

Occupational Status			Age of the Respondents		
Occupation	Frequency	Percent	Age limit	Frequency	Percent
Teacher	49	49	20 to 30	24	24
Doctor	28	28	30 to 40	54	54
Other job	23	23	40 to 55	22	22

Status of Loan			Education Status		
loan taken	Frequency	Percent	Education	Frequency	Percent
Yes	44	44	14-year Education	11	11
No	56	56	16-year education	51	51
Total	100	100	Above 16 years of education	38	38
			Total	100	100

Limit	Number of sisters		Number of brothers	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
1 to 5	8	8	14	14
5 to 10	90	90	83	83
10 to 19	2	2	2	2
Total	100	100	100	100

Table 1 also relates to information about the education of the respondents' women. According to Table 1, almost half i.e. 51% of the respondent women were master's degree holders having sixteen years of education. There were also a great number of women possessing more than 16 years of education (i.e. 38%). There were also 11% of women possessing 14 years of education. The same table shows that the respondents in the majority have 5 to 10 sisters (90%) and brothers (83%). It shows that the respondent's background consists of large family members. There was also information asked about loans taken and the responses show that 44% of the respondents have taken loans (Table 1).

#### 4.2 Assessing the Correlation between Women's Economic Empowerment and Social Status

To know the strength and direction of the relationship between WEE and social inclusion, WEE and social relations, and WEE and social acceptance, a pairwise correlation was calculated via STATA-17. The results are shown in 2, table 3, and table 4 respectively. According to Table 2, there is a negative but insignificant relation between WEE and a working woman's feeling terrible and alone. However, she has a strong pairwise correlation between WEE and feeling accepted. WEE is also strongly and positively correlated with the feeling of a working woman as part of society and her ability to see friends. The results are a clear indication that working women's economic empowerment in the study area (Mardan) is highly correlated to her perception of being socially included. We can say that it is not enough for a working woman to earn and have economic empowerment, she will be better off when she feels included in society. The same table gives an idea that a strong relationship exists between subjective assessment of a working woman that she is part of society, and that she is accepted. Seeing friends is also positively related to feeling accepted ( $r=0.421$ ) and feeling part of society ( $r=0.266$ ). When a woman can see her friends, she feels an integral part of the society. She also feels accepted. Hence social inclusion needs to be considered from a woman's economic empowerment perspective but also from the underlying elements of social inclusion. The results show that if a woman feels alone, she won't feel empowered. She will also have no prominent feelings of being socially accepted, she may not see her friends, and may not consider herself a part of the society in which she is living.

Table 3: Pairwise Correlations between Women's Economic Empowerment and Social Inclusion

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
(1) women's economic	1.000				



Empowerment					
(2) social inclusion	-0.106	1.000			
Feeling terrible alone	(0.210)	)			
(3) social inclusion	0.472*	0.087	1.000		
Feeling accepted	(0.000)	(0.303)	)		
(4) social inclusion	0.378*	0.113	0.277*	1.000	
Feeling part of society	(0.000)	(0.183)	(0.001)	)	
(5) social inclusion	0.476*	0.165	0.421*	0.266*	1.000
Seeing friends	(0.000)	(0.050)	(0.000)	(0.001)	)

\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$

Table 3 shows another aspect of a Pakhtoon working women's social status and its relationship with WEE. There is a comparatively very high and significant relationship between a women's feeling of her usefulness to society and WEE. The coefficient of correlation is 0.56 which is highly significant at 1% significance level. The correlation coefficient in the case of a woman's feelings of being valuable is 0.646 which shows that the strongest association of women being economically empowered is related to her being valued. There is also a relationship between WEE for the sampled working woman and her ability to visit new places ( $r=0.467$ ), between WEE and a working woman's ability to see other cultures ( $r=0.382$ ), her ability to be involved in groups ( $r=0.331$ ). Social relations in the form that a woman feels safe give her more economic empowerment. A working woman feels economically empowered when she feels safe in social relations. In the case of pairwise correlation between different elements of social relation, the subjective measure of feeling valued is positively correlated with the perception of being useful for society with a correlation coefficient value of 0.495. Visiting new places and useful for society, useful for society and visiting new places, seeing other cultures and being useful for society, useful for society and group involvement, feeling safe and useful for society, and useful for society and doing cultural activities all these pairwise correlations show a positive and statistically significant relationship. Hence various elements of social relations are closely related, and one element supports the other.

Table 4: Pairwise correlations between Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) and Social Relations

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
(1) women's economic Empowerment	1.000							
(2) social relation Useful for society	0.562*	1.000						
(3) social relation Feeling valued	0.646*	0.495*	1.000					
(4) social relation Visits new places	0.467*	0.379*	0.385*	1.000				
(5) social relation Seeing other cultures	0.382*	0.189*	0.362*	0.209*	1.000			
(6) social relation Groups involvement	0.331*	0.261*	0.302*	0.187*	0.063	1.000		

(7) social relation Doing cultural activity	0.209* (0.013 )	0.201* (0.017 )	0.353* (0.000 )	0.209* (0.013 )	0.063 (0.457 )	0.215* (0.011 )	1.000
(8) social relation Feeling safe	0.354* (0.000 )	0.433* (0.000 )	0.407* (0.000 )	0.255* (0.002 )	0.128 (0.131 )	0.344* (0.000 )	0.195* (0.021 )

\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$

In the case of social acceptance, WEE for the research sample of working women is positively and significantly correlated with her acceptance by friends ( $r=0.386$ ), a clear understanding of her rights ( $r=0.393$ ), the ability to express her rights ( $r=0.412$ ), and her participation in charity work ( $r=0.299$ ) respectively. However, there is no prominent association between a working woman’s economic empowerment and sports and physical activity participation. The importance of friends in a woman’s life is evident from the results. A woman’s acceptance by her friends is highly correlated with WEE as the coefficient of correlation is 0.386 ( $p < 0.01$ ). Additionally, a strong correlation is evident between her acceptance by friends and their understanding of her rights ( $r=0.507$ ), her acceptance by friends, her ability to express her rights clearly to them ( $r=0.370$ ), and friends’ acceptance and participation in charity work respectively ( $r=0.212$ ). The correlation value of 0.486 shows that it's not the clarity of one’s rights but its expression that is important. Collectively both have a great influence. Similarly, charity work is associated strongly with WEE, acceptance by friends, clear identification of rights, expression of rights, and participation in physical activity. In other words, when a woman is socially accepted, she can do charity work easily and she is also economically empowered.

Table 5: Pairwise Correlations between Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) and Social Acceptance

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
(1) women's economic empowerment	1.000					
(2) social acceptance (friends)	0.386* (0.000 )	1.000				
(3) social acceptance (Clear rights)	0.393* (0.000 )	0.507* (0.000 )	1.000			
(4) social acceptance (Rights expression)	0.412* (0.000 )	0.370* (0.000 )	0.486* (0.000 )	1.000		
(5) social acceptance (Charity work)	0.299* (0.000 )	0.212* (0.012 )	0.203* (0.016 )	0.364* (0.000 )	1.000	
(6) social acceptance Sports participation	0.133 (0.116 )	0.090 (0.290 )	0.058 (0.491 )	0.077 (0.367 )	0.434* (0.000 )	1.000

\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$

### 5. Conclusion

The research aim was to assess the relationship between a working woman’s economic empowerment and her social status (as explained by three facets viz social inclusion, social relations, and social acceptance) in district Mardan of Northern Pakistan. The study is unique in the sense that it addresses the economic empowerment of working women who are thought to be economically empowered as they earn. So presumably, the economic empowerment of working women is correlated with social status from social inclusion, social acceptance, and

social relations. All the variables were shown from certain statements taken from the literature. As far as social inclusion is concerned, there is a strong relationship between different facets of social inclusion like seeing friends, feeling accepted, and feeling part of society. However, a negative relationship exists between WEE and social inclusion when a working woman feels alone. Hence, social inclusion for working women is highly related to her economic empowerment as well. In other words, economic empowerment and social inclusion of a working woman go side by side. One supports the other. An economically empowered working woman is also socially included or in other words, a socially included woman is economically empowered. In the case of social relations, WEE is highly connected with all the elements of social relationships like seeing friends, visiting new places, feeling useful to society, seeing new cultures, doing cultural activities, group involvement, and feeling safe. Hence a socially related working woman is economically empowered as well, or an economically empowered woman is socially related as well. The same are the results for social acceptance except for participation in sports or physical activities which though has a positive correlation with WEE, is statistically insignificant. It shows that a working woman who participates in sports and physical activities does not necessarily relate to her economic empowerment though it has a positive association. The crux of this study is that working women are at the same time economically empowered and socially included in district Mardan and a strong positive relationship exists between the two variables. Hence social status of a working woman is highly correlated with her economic empowerment.

## References

- Acharya, D. R., Bell, J. S., Simkhada, P., van Teijlingen, E. R., & Regmi, P. R. (2010). Women's autonomy in household decision-making: A demographic study in Nepal. *Reproductive Health*, 7(1), 15. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1742-4755-7-15>
- Ashraf, I., & Ali, A. (2018). Socio-Economic Well-Being and Women Status in Pakistan: An Empirical Analysis. *MPRA Paper*, Article 88972. <https://ideas.repec.org/p/pramprapa/88972.html>
- Batool, S. A., & Batool, S. S. (2018). *Role of Contextual Factors in Women's Empowerment*.
- Boateng, I., Nkrumah, A., & Boateng, P. (2013). Political Leadership as a Tool for Women Empowerment in Ghana: Challenges. *Arabian Journal of Business and Management Review*, 27–36.
- Bushra, A., & Wajaha, N. (n.d.). *Assessing The Determinants Of Women Empowerment In Pakistan: \* A Case of Two Colleges of Lahore*.
- Chakraborty, A., Sharma, P., & Chaturvedi, D. C. (2019). *Increasing Impact of Self-Help Groups on Women Empowerment and Poverty Alleviation: A Study of Reliability* (SSRN Scholarly Paper 3407126). <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3407126>
- Chaudhry, I. S., Nosheen, F., & Lodhi, M. I. (2012). Women Empowerment in Pakistan with Special Reference to Islamic Viewpoint: An Empirical Study. *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences*, 32(1), Article 1.
- Chitrakar, R. (2009). Overcoming Barriers to Girls' Education in South Asia. *United Nation Children's Fund (UNICEF ROSA)*.
- Desai, S., & Andrist, L. (2010). Gender scripts and age at marriage in India. *Demography*, 47(3), 667–687. <https://doi.org/10.1353/dem.0.0118>
- Facts and Figures: Economic Empowerment*. (n.d.). UN Women – Headquarters. Retrieved April 5, 2024, from <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/economic-empowerment/facts-and-figures>
- Jabeen, S., Haq, S., Jameel, A., Hussain, A., Asif, M., Hwang, J., & Jabeen, A. (2020). Impacts of Rural Women's Traditional Economic Activities on Household Economy: Changing Economic Contributions through Empowered Women in Rural Pakistan. *Sustainability*, 12(7), Article 7. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12072731>
- Kabeer, P. N. (n.d.). *Women's economic empowerment and inclusive growth: Labour markets and enterprise development*.
- Khalid, M. W., Samargandi, N., Shah, A. H., & Almandeel, S. (2020). Socio-Economic Factors and Women's Empowerment: Evidence from Punjab, Pakistan. *International Economic Journal*, 34(1), 144–168. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10168737.2019.1677742>
- Malik, S., & Courtney, K. (2011). Higher education and women's empowerment in Pakistan. *Gender and Education*, 23(1), 29–45. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540251003674071>

- Varghese, D. T. (2011). Women Empowerment in Oman: A study based on Women Empowerment Index. *Far East Journal of Psychology and Business*, 2 No 2 Paper 3 February(3), 37–53.
- Wahid, F. e, Jaffri, M., Ullah, H., & Mohmand, M. I. K. (2020). Economic Empowerment of Women in Socio-Cultural Perspectives in Federally Administrative Tribal Area (Pakistan): A Case Study of Kurram Agency. *Review of Economics and Development Studies*, 6(2), Article 2. <https://doi.org/10.47067/reads.v6i2.201>
- Women economic empowerment is key to Pakistan's development*. (2023, March 13). International Growth Centre. <https://www.theigc.org/blogs/gender-equality/women-economic-empowerment-key-pakistans-development>