

**MS THESIS**

**EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON WOMAN'S  
EMPOWERMENT IN PAKISTAN: AN EXPLANATORY  
STUDY**



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## **DECLARATION**

I confirm that this thesis solely represents my work, and nothing is plagiarized. The contribution of the supervisor and others to the research and the thesis was consistent with normal supervisory practice.

External contributions to the study are accredited.

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## THESIS APPROVAL CERTIFICATE

It is certified that we have read this thesis submitted by Huma Maryam. We judge that this is a sufficient standard to warrant acceptance by the International Islamic University, Islamabad for the MS in Media and Communication Studies.

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## **DEDICATION**

**I SINCERELY DEDICATE THIS WORK TO MY FAMILY, ESPECIALLY MY PARENTS, WHO HAVE SUPPORTED ME, GUIDED ME, LOVED ME, AND PRAYED FOR ME THROUGH EVERYTHING ALHAMDULILLAH.**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Woman empowerment is a vital issue in international and national politics. This study aims to analyze the current situation of women using social media in Pakistan. The focus is on fulfilling their role in empowering women at political, economic, and social levels. The goal of this study is to raise awareness about women's rights and improve the visibility of issues related to them in online campaigns. In addition, it explores how digital feminism and empowerment theories support our framework. Through a quantitative research method, 526 survey questionnaires were studied which were filled by the female users of social media in Pakistan's twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi. We have analyzed the data by using SPSS.

**Keywords:** Social Empowerment; Political empowerment; Economic empowerment; Women empowerment; social media.

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Introduction**

Social media is a term that combines the words "social" and "media", in which "social" pertains to the act of interacting and sharing statistics with others, while "media" refers to the numerous channels or systems used to distribute and circulate statistics, including television, radio, and newspapers. Essentially, social media encompasses forms of electronic communication that occur in real-time. It offers a digital platform for individuals to generate, transmit, distribute, converse, and trade information, viewpoints, reflections, concepts, experiences, insights, and perspectives using various applications in real-time. This computer and Internet-based technology enables virtual communication and encourages the sharing of ideas, information, entertainment, and ideas among individuals and communities. (Mayfield, 2008).

Social media serves as a means of interaction and communication among individuals, encompassing both personal relationships and professional connections. It facilitates rapid and immediate communication and feedback, making it invaluable in the business realm. Users of social media platforms actively participate in content creation and usage. This includes sharing various documents, audiovisual media, images, and information through various web-based applications. With its web-based nature, social media provides a platform for users to connect with others and share content that is not only engaging and entertaining, but also informative, thus benefiting local and global communities. It is essential to notice that social media is continuously evolving, and continually adapting to the converting landscape of the digital world (Greenwood, Perrin, & Duggan, 2016).

The concept of women's empowerment, defined as an active, multidimensional process that enables women to realize their full identity and potential in all aspects of life (Sahay, 1998).

This phenomenon gives women the opportunity to choose and fight for the outcome of their choice without fear of the consequences. This empowerment is necessary for a better future for women themselves and their families, societies, and countries, allowing them to make their own decisions regarding personal growth (Malik, 2023).

Over the past few decades, the uptake and use of social media has increased dramatically in Pakistan. Social media is a new tool, weapon, or platform that allows women to discuss, communicate, express opinions, organize events, and take action online. Social media is an emerging trend and a powerful channel to engage local and global communities in broader conversations about women's rights and to motivate and encourage governments and policymakers to achieve gender equality. It is very useful to get help and support from social media tools and applications such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. (Kadeswaran, Brindha, & Jayaseelan, 2020).

Women are empowered through education, technological modernization, entertainment, and economic empowerment. Social media has become an engine of social change, promoting and supporting women's empowerment in many ways, including mobilizing international attention to women's rights and fighting discrimination and stereotypes around the world. Social media provides a platform for women to discuss their issues and concerns through blogs, chat rooms, online events, online discussion forums, and online communities that are not shared in mainstream media. (AlAmmary, 2022).

The growth of social media has created vistas for Pakistani girls to advantage extra facts; to specific their judgements, opinions, and needs; and to inform their stories in their voices. Despite enormous efforts by way of people and companies to empower ladies, social media seems to play a more influential role. In any case, there's regardless an absence of precise comprehension of the effect of web-based entertainment on young ladies' social, financial, and political strengthening in Pakistan. There may need to recognize the hyperlink between social media that conveys the voices of Pakistani women and their empowerment. There is also a need for comfortable digital areas to ensure that prone women can take part freely and promote entry toasa empowering records. Despite recognizing the importance of relationships, few empirical studies have focused on this issue from a gender perspective (Paoloni & Demartini, 2016).

Some have emphasized the differences that subsist between the relationships established by female entrepreneurs compared to male businessmen (Gutiérrez & Cumplido, 2008). Therefore, this study examines the current status of social media use among women in Pakistan, involving

preferences, goals, and limitations of social media use, the strike of social media, and the perceptions of women. The article will focus on how to use social networks to empower women.

## **1.2 Background of the Study**

Pakistan has a large youth population. The 14-24 age group accounted for 28.69% of Pakistan's total working-age population. While the young people are creating trends that influence our society. Young people form an important part of age-oriented organizations in all countries. Behavior has a huge impact on business operations. It is also important to assess young people's attitudes towards the need to improve current activities. It's either optimistic or the opposite as if their actions are helping the project. Test their attitude in a country like Pakistan where male influence is much greater (Vardhan, 2020). Behavior has a major influence on the actions of a society. To enhance the existing operations, it is imperative to evaluate the mindset of the younger generation. This is overly optimistic or suggests that their actions will benefit the project. In a country like Pakistan, where male influence is strong and harassment of women is a serious problem, it is particularly important to examine their mindset. (AlAmmary, 2022).

Pakistan's population comprises nearly 51 % of women, but their labor-force participation rate is only 24%. The gender disparities in employment rates are one of the largest in the world. The poor engagement of women in economic activity, coupled with other major problems, contributes to the slow advancement of the Pakistani economy. In a country where there is little willingness to provide equal studying and working opportunities to half of the population, the involvement of women in societal advancement is unavoidable. Women frequently face difficulties in finding adequate and decent employment prospects, even when they desire to go forward and take an active role in their personal and social development. The country's conventional social structure makes it difficult for most women to excel professionally by exploring different opportunities (Begum Sadaquat & Sheikh, 2011).

Women can achieve their full identity and power through an active, diverse empowerment process (Gangwani, Alruwaili, & Safar, 2021). Empowerment refers to an individual's social, political, and mental capacity (Kadeswaran et al., 2020). It typically involves the empowered individual becoming more confident in their talents (Soomro, Abdelwahed, & Shah, 2022). Women's empowerment influences societal developments to create a fairer economic and social structure (Hassanzadeh, 2018). The media plays a crucial role in the global progress and emancipation of women (Speer, 2000). Additionally, several scholarly investigations have underscored the correlation between the media and women (Yoopetch, 2020).

Significant effects on the NGOs' and government's efforts to empower women will result from the growth in young people women. Women play a very limited economic role in Pakistan. Women have lower labor-force participation rates. The vast majority of women worldwide are unpaid agricultural laborers. In Pakistan, the majority of women's labor is in informal settings. In Pakistan, women make up a petite percentage of the government sector. Women's job quotas are also disappointing in Pakistan. Women's finances were not adequately organized due to a lack of economic engagement and capacity (Tufekci & Wilson, 2012).

By disposing of limitations associated with connectivity, political thought, civil disobedience, and social and financial status, social media websites have converted how people interact with one another. Additionally, the place of the job has gone through a fast transformation because of the brand-new alternatives supplied through social media (Cascio & Montealegre, 2016; Haddud, Dugger, & Gill, 2016). Social structures have enabled companies to hook up with customers worldwide, promote products, construct networks, rent new teams of workers members, and raise sales at some point in the beyond ten years ( Paliszkiewicz & Koohang, 2016). The availability of information and human interaction are improved by social media ( Logan, 2019).

Social media, a subset of digital media, has altered how employees and business owners interact and provide new business assistance options for women. These technologies also help customer service, publicity, and awareness-raising for goods or businesses, attracting new clients, searching for new markets or brands for goods and businesses, networking and relationship-building, or employee hiring. Researchers have concentrated on challenges relating to social networking sites in recent years (Merchant, 2012; Mital & Sarkar, 2011). Digital platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and others have altered daily life and, recently, increasingly, the business world.

### **1.3 Problem Statement**

Empowering women has become a critical concern, with social media playing a significant role in their lives. Its impact on women's empowerment is as essential as that of the broader community. Development and communication are key factors in fostering women's integration into society. However, some argue that this is irrelevant to national growth, as many believe women lack equivalent skills (Arat, 2015; Carmichael & Mazonde, 2016). To enable women to fully participate in all aspects of society, it is essential that they be granted more power.

In Pakistan, women have made active contributions to the nation's advancement, but they remain underrepresented in leadership positions across government, politics, and the private sector (Kabeer, 2005). Research indicates a need for further investigation into how social media

influences women's empowerment, particularly in understanding its significance in advancing women's roles within society. Social media plays a crucial part in shaping public discourse on women's rights and promoting feminism. Yet, rural women have historically lacked visibility on these platforms.

Over time, women in rural areas have become more aware of their rights, and progress has been made in reducing the gender pay gap. However, many people still hold negative views on social media's role in this regard. Some argue that social media perpetuates negative portrayals of women, emphasizing their vulnerabilities (Afsheen & Idrees, 2022). This study seeks to explore the evolution of social media's role in empowering women in Pakistan, aiming to identify gaps and provide recommendations for further progress.

## **1.4 Significance of the Study**

This research will contribute to current research on the impact of social media on women's empowerment in Pakistan. Social media has shown its capacity to raise awareness, hold people accountable, and provide a forum for women to grow. (Shirky, 2011). The benefits of this include addressing the role of social media for the betterment of women, gender inequity, empowering women, and eradicating prejudice and unjust stereotypes. There were 109 million women in Pakistan as of 2021. The number of women in Pakistan has seen a significant increase over the past 50 years, from 29 million to 109 million, at a growing annual rate that reached 1983 at 3.54% and then fell to 1.95% in 2021 ( Véron, Kneipp, & Rogers, 2008). While there are, only 22% of women are social media users.

The common belief in society is that women's empowerment enables them to compete with males. Women won't, however, view themselves as being on an equal footing with men until they believe it themselves (Garcia, 2011). This study aims to investigate how social media can help women to be empowered in three categories of activities political, economic, and social. This research will also contribute to the mixing of media theories, including feminist theory, empowerment theory, and structural oppression theory.

In summary, this study will showcase the significance of social media in facilitating the empowerment of women in Pakistan. It will serve as a foundation for pertinent governmental bodies and legislators to undertake further measures to empower women in this era of digital advancements.

## **1.5 Objectives of the Study**

The following main goals of this research study are to be attained:

1. To study the economic impact of social media on women's empowerment.
2. To examine the influence of social media on the social aspects of women's empowerment.
3. To study how social media affects the political aspects of women's empowerment.

## **1.6 Research Question**

I proposed the following research questions to make the research objective of the study simpler.

**RQ1** What are the economic aspects of women's empowerment that social media can enhance?

**RQ2** What are the social aspects of women's empowerment that social media can enhance?

**RQ3** What are the political aspects of women's empowerment that social media can enhance?

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Review of Related literature**

##### **2.1.1. The Gender Gap**

Several scholars have examined the connections between personality traits, prevailing beliefs, and social media usage (Amichai-Hamburger & Vinitzky, 2010; Muscanell & Guadagno, 2012). Technology preparedness and gender differ significantly, which is associated with various attitudes toward technology (Caison, Bulman, Pai, & Neville, 2008). Lin & Yu, 2008 looked into how gender affected Taiwanese teenage internet usage. The findings confirmed that in this generation, there are fewer gender inequalities in Internet usage.

The behavior of people in most societies is based on gender (Raffaelli & Ontai, 2004). Women experience prejudice, particularly in underdeveloped or developing nations where children are trained to behave under gender stereotypes by adults (Hong, Veach, & Lawrenz, 2003). According to others, removing gender stereotypes may increase access to education, which will help lessen poverty (Aslanbeigui, Pressman, & Summerfield, 2003). Eliminating cultural biases against women is another way to end gender inequality (Marzano & Lubkina, 2019).

The gender disparity in Pakistan increased by 0.7 percentage points within a year. In a report released by the World Economic Forum, Pakistan was placed 153rd out of 156 countries in terms of survival and health, 152nd in economic involvement and opportunity, 144th in educational attainment, and 98th in political empowerment. The gender parity score for Pakistan was 0.553 in 2006 and 0.556 in 2021, showing that the country has made no progress. Bangladesh, Pakistan's neighbor, has made notable progress in closing the gender gap. It will rank the nation 65th out of 156 globally in 2021 (Shah, Aziz, & Ahmad, 2015).

##### **2.1.2. Empowerment**

The literature contains numerous definitions of empowerment (Ibrahim & Alkire, 2007). Empowerment is an assemble that connects a person's strengths, competences, natural assist structures, and proactive behavior toward social policy and social adjustments. The empowerment principle and research come together individually nicely with large social and political surroundings. Empowerment shows that man or woman with others to obtain goals, efforts to advantage get entry to assets, and a certain critical knowledge of the socio-political surroundings as simple components build. Empowerment is the method of transferring from a country of helplessness to a nation of relative manipulate over his existence, destiny, and essential



understanding of their environment. This transition can take place itself in development now not most effective in perceived capability control, but additionally in the actual capability to control.

Powerful individuals can take charge of their own lives, develop skills, and solve problems by being aware of their condition, organizing collaboratively to better it, and accessing possibilities (Poddar, 2013). Empowerment entails improving a person's capacity for strategic decision-making, particularly when this capacity had previously been withheld from them (Kabeer, 1999). To effectively promote their well-being, women must confront the existing culture and conventions (Ibrahim & Alkire, 2007). This process is known as female empowerment. According to Wallerstein and Bernstein, (1988) it is a procedure that fosters people's engagement in taking charge of their lives in their surroundings and society as a whole. Empowerment is a concept that is difficult to define and is better understood by its lack of existence than by its presence, according to various researchers.

Given the clear link between the financial and social situation of women and financial progress and growth, it is important to improve the economic and social situation of women, especially in developing countries. emerging and underdeveloped. Empowering women will contribute to economic growth by expanding their economic contributions in areas such as education, health care, labor participation, and political rights. This empowerment will bring more opportunities for women and better social protection for the entire population (Simsek, 2014). Female empowerment may be viewed differently in different societies, it is generally agreed that it is stronger when women are more educated and have greater employment possibilities (Mason & Smith, 2003).

## **2.2 Conceptual Framework**

### **2.2.1 Economic Empowerment**

The capacity to decide how to allocate and regulate money resources gives someone economic empowerment. It provides resources necessary for people to live beyond basic sustenance to those with little means (Pereznieta & Taylor, 2014). Economic empowerment gives them a chance at financial security, expanding their options for the main life.

In Pakistan, the importance of women's vital role in the country's economy has begun to be emphasized on social media platforms to raise awareness among women. Over the years, the Pakistani government has demonstrated that its commitment to providing equal employment opportunities for men and women is vital to the economy (Mirani, 2021). In Pakistan, women make up 50% of the population. Women significantly influence any nation or state's economic

progress. If the difference between the categories is reduced, the gross domestic product of the country can increase significantly (Gold et al., 2020). Similarly, Pakistan can experience significant change if women are given more power. Based on countless evidence, experts have proven that the difference between castes is a major cause of low economic growth. Countries with high rates of gender discrimination have lower growth rates in gross domestic product than countries with low rates of gender discrimination (Altuzarra, Gálvez-Gálvez, & González-Flores, 2021).

According to the 2023 Global Gender Gap Report from the World Economic Forum, Pakistan ranks 142nd out of 146 countries. The country is one of the bottom five in the gender gap rankings globally, highlighting significant disparities, particularly in political empowerment and economic participation (Dawn, 2023). Regarding women's workforce participation, Pakistan ranks quite low in female labor force participation, with only 23% of working-age women being part of the workforce. Mobility restrictions and the wage gap remain major obstacles to their progress . Furthermore, about 48% of women in Pakistan still lack the ability to make independent decisions about their health, reflecting deep-seated challenges in gender equality (Dawn, 2023).

### **2.2.2 Social Empowerment**

The process of gaining the independence, authority, confidence, and other resources needed to bring about change and pave the way to a better future is called social empowerment which can strengthen the individual and collective levels of society (Kapoor, 2019). Acquiring the necessary internal and external means to make personal choices, such as determining dietary preferences, selecting a place of residence, and other decisions that grant us the power to shape our surroundings and lifestyle, can serve as an illustration of individual social empowerment. In contemporary society, social media has attained widespread prevalence. It has engendered addiction among a significant portion of the population, encompassing individuals of all age groups, including the youth, women, children, and adults. Nonetheless, social media also yields numerous favorable outcomes, facilitating remote learning opportunities for students and enabling seamless online transactions for business professionals. Similarly, social media plays a very important role in women's lives (Laxmita, Setyaningsih, & Purwani, 2021).

Today's woman is getting much useful information because of social media. They can easily see the whole world on one screen. Khursheed, Khan, & Mustafa, 2021 explain that if the woman of today is compared to the woman of the past, today's woman is braver. She has self-confidence, even if she is not very educated, but she has all kinds of information. A woman has

her own personality. To improve, one can adopt any successful personality as a role model through social media (Khursheed, Khan, & Mustafa, 2021).

Through social media, women have become aware of their rights to a great extent. They may know better how to assert their rights through social media. Therefore, a woman can gain awareness about herself from the education of her children through social media (Mogaji, Hinson, Nwoba, & Nguyen, 2021).

### **2.2.3 Political Empowerment**

Women play an important role in our society and politics. Through political empowerment, people who do not already have access gain access to various forms of power, such as resources, skills, and status. Incompetence in democratic decision-making processes is a precondition for political empowerment (Sharma, 2020). This often requires a voice at local and national government levels. Numerous studies have shown that the higher the proportion of women involved in politics, the more vocal they are about the harassment of women and the fulfillment of basic requirements for gender equality (Altuzarra et al., 2021).

As women's participation in decision-making processes increases, along with that their political responsibility. Leadership in many countries around the world is now in the hands of women. For example, in the United States, Kamala Harris holds the position of Vice President. In Bangladesh, Hasina Wajid continues to serve as prime minister, while in New Zealand and Germany, Jacinda Ardern is back as prime minister. Chancellor Angela Merkel was elected chancellor (Sharma, 2020). These examples prove that women are raising flags of success everywhere in developed or developing countries.

In Pakistan, day by day, it is becoming increasingly aware that even in this modern age, women are being kept away from politics and public life. Therefore, in recent years, women have been seen in some high positions (Shami, 2009). This series started with Ms. Benazir Bhutto, who became Pakistan's first woman Prime Minister and the entire Muslim world (Ahmad & Bano, 2019). Her outstanding efforts for the country's development, prosperity, and peace in the region are recognized in the country and worldwide.

### **2.2.4 Social Media**

Digital media now includes social media as an important component. This phrase has many definitions. For example, Xie and Stevenson (2014) define social media platforms as online communication tools that facilitate social interaction. Social media can be defined as a collection of internet-based applications that are built upon the theoretical and technological principles of

Web 2.0. These applications facilitate the creation and exchange of content that is generated by users (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Social media is a platform that encourages and supports engagement from media users in creating and distributing content (Steenkamp & Hyde-Clarke, 2014). Online communities gather through the use of social media, which facilitates the creation and effortless dissemination of various forms of content such as text, photographs, videos, and audio. These communities engage in the exchange of information and knowledge. (Safko, 2010). User-generated content refers to a significant element of social media that is generated through user interactions. The advent of social media has greatly facilitated the creation and dissemination of information and entertainment. Various forms of social media include social networking websites, media-sharing platforms, and micro blogs, among others (Xie & Stevenson, 2014).

Social network sites (such as Google+, Linked-In, or Facebook, which was shut down for private users on April 2, 2019) are built on social structures comprising a group of people and organizations that form connections via interaction. Users can host, post, manage, and share multimedia files (audio, video, and photos) on media-sharing platforms (such as YouTube). Micro-blogging is a broadcast media that facilitates the sharing of micro-posts (a tiny piece of material) in the form of condensed phrases, photos, or video links (Twitter is the most popular platform) (Paliszkiewicz & Koohang, 2016). Although there are privacy problems, social media sites serve as web-based platforms that encourage contact and the sharing of information or material among people in virtual communities (Koohang, Paliszkiewicz, & Nord, 2018).

Additionally, social media networks offer many advantages in other fields. Individuals have several reasons for using social media. It is crucial to understand the motivations behind social media use to assess the impacts that result (Valkenburg, Peter, & Schouten, 2006). Therefore, much research was conducted to explain why people utilize social media. This research mostly highlighted reasons such as information and knowledge seeking, surveillance, amusement, time-passing, escape, socializing, self-status enhancement, self-exposure, identity establishment, and usefulness (Johnson & Kaye, 2004). While it has listed socializing, recreational activities, self-status searching, and information as the objectives of Facebook usage, Sheldon reported six motives, which are relationship forming and maintenance, hobby, being a member of a virtual community, fun, coolness, and companionship (Park, Kee, & Valenzuela, 2009).

According to recent research, social media is now widely utilized for socializing, preserving and deepening connections, learning new knowledge, and easing stress (Bagozzi & Yi, 2012). A thorough analysis of the literature revealed that, although being operationalized in various ways, socialization, escape, personal, emotional, and informational objectives persisted.

The current study also used these five reasons for using social media to assess how it affected Pakistani women's psychological health.

## 2.3 Theoretical Framework

### 2.3.1 Empowerment Theory

According to the empowerment theory, the comprehension of societal issues can be optimally achieved by examining the notion of structure and repressive social, political, and economic environments. Empowerment theory also encompasses interpersonal and behavioral elements. The interpersonal component pertains to individuals' cognitive processes regarding their capacity to exert influence on social and political systems. (Zimmerman, 2000). The behavioral component refers to how people act to create or maintain oppressive social, political, and economic environments.

The definition of empowerment offers ways to quantify the concept in various contexts, examine the process of empowerment, and set empowerment apart from other ideas like self-esteem, self-efficacy, and locus of control (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995). One definition of empowerment is useful, but appears to be limited to the individual level of analysis:

“Empowerment may be seen as a process where individuals learn to see a closer correspondence between their goals and a sense of how to achieve them and a relationship between their efforts and life outcomes” (Wilkinson, 1998).

Another definition explicitly includes interactions between people and the environment.:

“Empowerment is a process that involves mutual respect, critical reflection, caring, and group participation to give vulnerable people an equal share of valued resources” (Zimmerman, Israel, Schulz, & Checkoway, 1992).

Social media can have a variety of effects on women's empowerment in Pakistan, including the following:

- **Information Access:** Social media platforms give women living in Pakistan access to a variety of information, including news, educational resources, and self-help material. Women who have greater knowledge and understanding of a variety of domains, such as their rights, health, and economic prospects, will be more empowered.
- **Networking and Support:** Women can interact on social media with groups and individuals who share their views on gender equality and women's rights. Through networking, women

may receive emotional and social support, feeling more in charge of their lives and inspired to do so.

- **Economic Empowerment:** To promote skills, businesses, and products, social media serves as the best platform for women of Pakistan, hence participating in their economic empowerment (Hassan, Sobaih, & Elshaer, 2022). While online marketing and E-commerce can produce opportunities for women to gain financial independence and to generate income.
- **Challenging Gender Norms:** Women can challenge and alter stereotypes and traditional gender norms by the positive use of social media. By sharing wide and empowering narratives, they play an important role in changing societal attitudes and giving rise to inclusive views of women's roles in society.
- **Political Engagement:** Social media have a role in women's engagement in political processes by allowing them to participate in campaigns, discussions, and advocacy related to gender equality and women's rights. It also provides the best platform for women to express their thoughts on policies that discourage them from their betterment (Moroojo, Shafiq, Hingoro, & Baqar, 2023).
- **Safety and Awareness:** social media may help spread awareness of safety issues including harassment and violence against women. This can encourage women to exercise caution and seek assistance when needed.
- **Education opportunities:** Schooling and skill-building opportunities can be found on social media, which is especially helpful for women who may not have as much access to traditional schooling. Developing their abilities and expertise can enable them to avail more opportunities.
- **Amplifying Voices:** Social media is the best platform for the women of Pakistan to raise their voices and share their stories, experiences, and concerns with a wider audience present on social media. This can lead to awareness of women's issues and solve the problems (Hassaan, Baber, & Shoukat, 2023).

It's crucial to remember that social media does not always have a beneficial impact on Pakistani women's empowerment. There are additional difficulties and dangers, such as internet bullying and privacy issues. Additionally, not all women have equal access to social media because access can be restricted by factors including digital literacy, socioeconomic status, and cultural norms (Abdullah & Hamid).

### 2.3.2 Feminist Theory

Feminist theory is the study of how gender inequality functions. It attempts to understand the various ways in which women and men are socialized, as well as their experiences within society. Through its examination of these issues, feminist theory can help to create a better understanding of the ways that sexism plays out in our lives. Feminist theory is an important tool for political and intellectual activity, as it seeks to promote social justice and equality for women. Many people mistakenly think that the goal of feminist theory is to promote the supremacy of women over men and that it only concentrates on girls and women (Madsen, 2000).

In fact, feminist theory has always sought to highlight the forces that generate and promote oppression, inequality, and injustice in society. This theory encourages the pursuit of justice and equality for all by doing this. Feminist theory focuses on understanding how systems and mechanisms operate on people based on sex, gender, racism, discrimination, equality, difference, and choice. A critical paradigm is used to uncover the truth about these conditions. The belief that insight can be gained by studying existing relationships is a prerequisite for feminist theory research (Sands & Nuccio, 1992).

Digital feminism is a type of feminism that deals with feminist ideologies and activism on the internet. It is a relatively new phenomenon that has gained popularity in the 21st century due to the widespread use of the internet. Most feminist scholars would agree that digital feminism is one of the most important advances in feminism in recent decades (Jouët, 2018).

In Pakistan, social media can have the following effects on women's empowerment according to feminism;

- **Collective Action:** The necessity of collective action is emphasized by feminist thought. Social media makes it simpler for women to come together, fight for their rights, and affect change by facilitating the formation of online groups and networks that can rotate around women's issues.
- **Voices may be amplified:** Social media platforms give women of Pakistan a platform to speak up and share their demands, issues, and experiences. Social media can be used by women to oppose discriminatory practices, patriarchal norms, and traditional gender roles. As Khan, Rasool, and Ameen, 2023 interpreted it through a feminist perspective, social media is an important factor in women's empowerment in Pakistan.
- **Intersectionality:** According to feminist theory, particularly intersectional feminism, a variety of characteristics, such as race, class, and ethnicity, influence how women perceive the world. Women can showcase the intersectionality of their identities through social media,

share their distinctive experiences, and promote unity among various groups (Osman & Rafique, 2023).

- **Education and Awareness:** social media may be a useful instrument for promoting feminism, women's rights, and gender equality. Additionally, it can offer educational resources that empower women to know their rights and speak up for themselves.
- **Visibility and Leadership:** social media can give women the chance to be seen and to take on leadership roles. Women may change the previously male-dominated leadership landscape by becoming digital influencers, thought leaders, and role models.
- **Eliminating Negative Stereotypes and Representations:** social media gives women of Pakistan a platform to change negative stereotypes and portrayals of women in the media and society. Women may produce and distribute information that more diversely and positively represents them.
- **Economic Empowerment:** According to feminist views, a key element of women's empowerment is economic empowerment. Social media gives women the opportunity to promote their businesses and expertise, enhancing their financial independence (Ali Alhazmi, 2023).
- **Combating Online Harassment:** Although it's a serious problem, cyberbullying and violence against women online can also be brought to light through social media. These platforms can be used by feminist activists to promote safer online environments.
- **Worldwide Solidarity:** Women in Pakistan are connected to the worldwide feminism movement through social media. It makes it possible for feminists from all over the world to share thoughts, plans, and support, which strengthens the larger fight for gender equality (Rizwan et al., 2022).

### 2.3.3 Structural Oppression theory

According to the structural oppression theory, racism, patriarchy, and capitalism all contribute to the inequality and oppression of women. Socialist feminists concur with Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels that capitalism exploits the working class, but they also want to extend this exploitation to gender. It exists intersectionality theory use a variety of factors, including class, ethnicity, race, gender, and age, to explain oppression and inequality (Armstrong, 2020). These provide important insights that not all women experience oppression in the same way, and that different forces oppress people of color and other marginalized groups in different ways. Structural oppression of women manifests itself in society in the form of a wage gap between men and women. This shows that men regularly earn more than women for the same job, even if other factors such as education level and experience are the same. Furthermore, women of color are



punished more heavily relative to their white male incomes, and this phenomenon is reinforced by racist stereotypes (Sidanius & Pratto, 2001).

Following are some examples of how structural oppression theory might be used to interpret social media's influence on women's empowerment:

- Social media can give women of Pakistan access to data and resources that run against established hierarchies of power. They can access instructional materials, learn about their rights, and keep up with gender-related topics.
- Social media platforms give marginalized women an opportunity to express their stories and boost their voices, potentially challenging repressive systems in the process. They can draw attention to problems like discrimination, gender-based violence, and economic inequalities.
- Social media makes it easier for groups and networks of women with similar experiences to emerge. These groups can provide assistance and solidarity, assisting women in overcoming institutional discrimination and moving toward empowerment (Aksar et al., 2023).
- Social media can be used by women to promote and campaign for changes in the laws and customs that uphold oppression. They have the power to plan campaigns and affect public opinion.
- Women can use social media to alter and fight preconceptions and societal norms that support oppression. Through the exchange of various stories and viewpoints, people can challenge and alter accepted gender norms (Khan et al., 2023).

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

The research design incorporates two study methodologies, namely quantitative and qualitative analysis. Researchers have the option to utilize either one of these methods. Quantitative analysis involves a statistical examination of numerical data. The majority of the data used in this research will be quantitative and come from primary source. A sample population will be given surveys to collect the primary data. These surveys will include closed-ended questionnaire allowing the study to gauge people's opinions on how social media affects women's empowerment. Through a link analysis framework, the connection between social media and women will be established in terms of how people's reactions vary. To carry out this study, the researcher employed a quantitative research methodology. Surveys from a sample will be collected as part of this study. Data will be gathered using the self-administered survey. A survey will be conducted online to gather data.

#### **3.2 Population**

In the present study, the researcher examined adult pakistani women who are active social media users. The study aimed to explore their online behaviors, interactions, and impacts on their daily lives. A sample of participants was recruited through an online survey, ensuring a diverse group of respondents. The data collected was then analyzed to draw meaningful insights into the role of social media in their lives. The findings offer valuable contributions to understanding the influence of social media on women in Pakistan.

#### **3.3 Sampling**

In this study, a total of 650 questionnaires were distributed to individuals ranging in age from under 20 to over 60. Out of these, 525 completed questionnaires were used for further analysis, resulting in an 80% response rate.

##### **3.3.1 Sampling Techniques**

In this study, convenience sampling was utilized to efficiently collect data from a diverse age range of participants, specifically those aged under 20 to over 60. This method was chosen because it allowed for easy and quick access to a readily available group of individuals, ensuring that the data collection process was manageable and cost-effective.

### 3.4 Operational Definitions

In this study, the researcher suggested the relationship among four variables.

#### **Independent Variable:**

The independent variable for the current research was:

- Social Platforms

#### **Dependent Variables:**

The dependent variables for the current research were:

- Political empowerment
- Economic empowerment

#### **Social empowerment**

##### **3.4.1 Social Empowerment**

Social Empowerment in this study is defined as the enhancement of women's social status and capabilities resulting from their engagement with social media. This empowerment is examined at two distinct levels. **Inside the House**, it includes changes in interpersonal relationships, such as improvements in communication and conflict resolution with family members. It also involves assessing women's access to educational resources and opportunities facilitated by social media, their experiences of gender-based discrimination, and their awareness and response to domestic and child abuse, including available support networks. **Outside the House**, social empowerment is evaluated by experiences of online harassment and its impact on women's social interactions and public presence. Additionally, it includes the examination of how social media has influenced women's understanding and challenge of traditional patriarchal structures

##### **3.4.2 Economic Empowerment**

Economic empowerment refers to the advancements in women's financial and professional status due to social media usage. This includes several aspects: the impact of social media on women's income levels or sources, such as through online freelance work or business ventures. It also covers the acquisition of new skills and knowledge from social media that contribute to income-generating opportunities. The study measures how social media facilitates access to job opportunities and promotions, and how it enhances women's ability to choose and pursue diverse income sources. Furthermore, economic empowerment is assessed by women's

involvement in financial decision-making within their households and their experiences with workplace harassment, including how social media aids in addressing such issues

### **3.4.3 Political Empowerment**

Political empowerment is defined as the increased engagement and influence of women in political processes as a result of social media usage. This encompasses women's knowledge of the political system, including their understanding of political structures and processes gained through social media. It also includes their participation in voting and their involvement in political activities such as meetings, rallies, and discussions, facilitated by social media. Additionally, the study examines experiences of harassment or threats related to political participation and the role of social media in reporting or mitigating these challenges.

### **3.4.4 Social Media Usage**

Social Media Usage refers to the frequency, duration, and type of engagement with social media platforms by women, specifically in relation to its impact on their political, social, and economic empowerment. In this study, three main dimensions are considered frequency, duration, and types of engagement. Frequency refers to how often women access social media, measured by the number of days per week and the number of times per day they log in. Duration captures the average amount of time spent on social media each day, providing insight into how deeply they are involved. Types of Engagement include various activities performed on social media, such as creating and sharing content, interacting with others through likes, comments, and messages, and consuming information related to political, social, and economic topics. Additionally, the definition covers the platforms used, which specifies which social media networks are engaged with, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or LinkedIn. This operational definition allows for a detailed analysis of how different aspects of social media usage influence and intersect with women's empowerment across political, social, and economic activities.

## **3.5 Instruments**

The primary instrument for data collection in this study will be a structured questionnaire, meticulously designed to capture comprehensive information about social media usage and its effects on various dimensions of women's empowerment. This questionnaire will be segmented into several key sections to provide a thorough analysis. The **Demographic Information** section will gather essential details on participants' age, education, occupation, and socioeconomic status to contextualize the data and understand the background of the respondents. The **Social Media Usage Patterns** section will focus on measuring the frequency and duration of social media use,

including the types of engagement such as content creation, interaction, and information consumption, as well as identifying the specific platforms utilized.

To assess **Social Empowerment**, the questionnaire will include questions aimed at evaluating changes in interpersonal relationships, access to educational opportunities, experiences of discrimination, and awareness of issues such as domestic and child abuse. It will also explore experiences of harassment and the participants' understanding of patriarchal structures. For **Economic Empowerment**, the instrument will include items designed to gauge various aspects such as income levels, the acquisition of new skills or knowledge through social media, access to job opportunities, decision-making rights concerning finances, and experiences of harassment in the workplace. Finally, the **Political Empowerment** section will feature questions to assess participants' knowledge of the political system, voting behavior, participation in political activities, and experiences of harassment related to political engagement. This structured approach will enable a detailed examination of how social media impacts women's empowerment across these critical areas.

### **3.6 Data Collection and Procedure**

Out of 650 distributed questionnaires, 526 were completed and returned, leading to an 80% response rate. This high response rate indicates that the convenience sampling approach effectively reached and engaged a substantial portion of the intended sample, providing a solid basis for analysis despite the non-random selection process.

The online survey was recorded by Google Forms and the link was sent to participants via WhatsApp and email. Surveys include form-based surveys. The questionnaire included 10 questions regarding demographic information and the current study. The researcher distributed a questionnaire to his sample of 526 people from the age of 15 to the age of 60. The researchers took five days to collect the data. Researchers analyze data after it is collected.

### **3.7 Data Analysis**

After the data was collected, the researchers conducted a thorough analysis by reviewing the responses for consistency and completeness. They then categorized the data based on demographic factors and study-related variables. Statistical methods were applied to identify trends and patterns. Key insights were summarized, providing valuable information about the population's characteristics and the study's main findings.

### **3.8 Ethical Considerations**

1. Explained how to fill out the survey and answered all questions on the survey.
2. Participants were assured that the requested data would be kept confidential and would not be used for any other purpose than academic purposes. Therefore, it does not constitute a breach of confidentiality.
3. All data were collected with the permission and consent of the participants.

## CHAPTER 4

### DATA PRESENTATION & ANALYSIS

#### 4.1 Demographics Analysis

Demographic analysis is the study of population characteristics such as age, gender, income, and education to inform decision-making.

*Table 1 Demographics Analysis*

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage
Single	315	60%
Married	184	35%
Divorced	11	2.1%
Widowed	15	2.9%

Age	Frequency	Percentage
Under 20	117	22.3%
20-29	217	41.3%
30-39	78	14.9%
40-49	63	12.0%
50-59	41	7.8%
60+	9	1.7%

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Student	207	39.4%
Employed	132	25.1%
Unemployed	42	7.8%

Own business	30	5.7%
Retired	5	1%
Housewife	110	21%
Education	Frequency	Percentage
Secondary	74	14.1%
Intermediate	76	14.5%
Bachelors	183	34.9%
Masters/ MS or higher	192	36.6%

N=525

The demographic analysis reveals a diverse sample, with the majority of respondents being single (60%) and aged between 20-29 years (41.3%). The largest occupational group consists of students (39.4%), followed by the employed (25.1%) and housewives (21%). In terms of education, most respondents hold a master's degree or higher (36.6%) or a bachelor's degree (34.9%).

## 4.2 Social Media Usage Pattern

*Table 2 Social Media Usage Pattern*

Frequently used social media platforms	Frequency	Percentage
Instagram	173	32.90%
Facebook	77	14.60%
YouTube	173	32.90%
LinkedIn	49	9.30%
Snapchat	54	10.10%



<b>Avg Duration of SM Use in a Single Setting</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Up to 30 min	124	23.60%
30-60 mins	125	23.80%
1-2 hours	135	25.70%
2-4 hours	62	11.80%
4+ hours	80	15.00%
<b>Platform User Use at SM More Frequently</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Mobile Phone	499	94.90%
Tab	8	1.50%
Laptop	9	1.70%
Desktop	10	1.90%
<b>Activity Involve While Using SM</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Reading Content	173	32.90%
Viewing Images	78	14.80%
Chatting	173	32.90%
Posting content	49	9.30%
Posting Images	53	10.10%
<b>Purpose to Use SM</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
To Chat with Friends and Family	90	70.00%
To get news and update of recent happening	181	34.50%
For Entertainment and leisure	116	22.00%

To Connect and Interact with other	62	11.70%
To Promote Business	77	14.80%

N=525

The most frequently used social media platforms are Instagram (32.9%) and YouTube (32.9%), with most users accessing social media on mobile phones (94.9%). The average duration of social media use is 1-2 hours per session (25.7%), and users primarily engage in reading content or chatting (both 32.9%). The main purpose for using social media is to chat with friends and family (70%), while getting news and updates (34.5%) and entertainment (22%) are also significant.

### 4.3 Computations

The questionnaire was designed to assess the opinion of the respondents regarding the Three main variables including Social Empowerment, Economic Empowerment, Political Empowerment. In the questionnaire, a total of 41 statements were placed to elaborate the variables. The responses of each variable were measured on the Likert five-point scale (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree).

#### Computed Variable: Social Empowerment

*Table 3: Social Empowerment*

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<b>Social Empowerment</b>	32.2%	50.7%	12.28%	1.7%	0.4%

The first computed variable was Social Empowerment which comprised of the following Eighteen statements: I feel that I am respected by my family members, I feel that I am respected by my friends, I am satisfied with my status/position in the world, I am comfortable when interacting with close family members, I am comfortable when interacting with large groups, I am comfortable when interacting with officials\outsiders, I can easily go to the market whenever I need to make a purchase, I can easily go to the bank whenever I need, I can easily go to the hospital/clinic/doctor whenever I need, I can easily go to visit my friends whenever I want, I can

easily go to visit my relatives whenever I want, I have equal opportunities to participate in any decision- making process at home, I have/ I can study the subject of my choice, I have/ I can enter into a profession of my choice, I can confidently give my opinion in family, My family gives due regard to my opinion, I can easily talk to my family members when I am faced with a problem, My family is willing to help me make decisions Findings indicated that out of the total 525 respondents, 173 (32.2%) respondents strongly agreed that they are socially empowered by social media usage, 272 (50.7%) agreed, 69 (12.8%) remained neutral, 9 (1.7%) disagreed with this whereas 2 (0.4%) strongly disagreed to this.

### Computed Variable: Economic Empowerment

Table 4: *Economic Empowerment*

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Economic Empowerment	19.7%	43.9%	20.4%	6.0%	0.4%

The Second computed variable was Economic Empowerment which comprised of the following Twelve statements: I have an independent source of income, I have complete control over my income, I have freedom to spend my earning as I see fit, I have an independent bank account, I have complete control over my personal savings, I participate in decisions about household savings, I participate in decisions about large occasional household purchases such as land, transport vehicles etc., I participate in decisions about routine household purchases such as food for daily consumption, I participate in decisions about borrowing to be used by my family, I participate in decisions about lending from my family savings, I can easily find employment according to my skill and qualification, As an employee I can be paid equally for a job as compared to a male performing similar roles and responsibilities. Findings indicated that out of the total 525 respondents, 106 (19.7%) respondents strongly agreed on this statement, 236 (43.9%) agreed, 149 (27.7%) were neutral, 32 (6.0%) disagreed with this whereas 2 (0.4%) strongly disagreed to this statement.

## Computed Variable: Political Empowerment

Table 5: Political Empowerment

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Political Empowerment	7.3%	30.9%	37.1%	22.2%	0.4%

The Third computed variable was Economic Empowerment which comprised of the following Twelve statements: I have always voted during elections, My family encourages me to participate in the voting processes, My family does not dictate which candidate to vote for during elections, I can/ I have the freedom to participate in the canvassing process during the election campaign, I can/ I have actively participated in political activities such as demonstrations and protests, I can/ I have actively participated in political activities such as fund raising, I can/ I have the freedom to become a candidate in elections, My family would support my decision to enter into politics if I do so, I can easily become a member of political party that I want, I often engage in discussions about political issues with my family members, I often engage in discussions about political issues with my friends. Findings indicated that out of the total 525 respondents, 39 (7.3%) respondents strongly agreed on this statement, 166 (30.9%) agreed, 199 (37.1%) were neutral, 119 (22.2%) disagreed with this whereas 2 (0.4%) strongly disagreed to this statement.

## 4.4 Research Questions

### RQ1 Does increase in social media usage result in higher levels of empowerment.

Table 6: Correlation between Social media usage and levels of empowerment

	Empowerment
Social media usage	.216**

N=524, \*\*  $p < 0.01$  two-tailed

The correlation analysis shows a statistically significant but weak positive relationship between social media usage and empowerment ( $r = 0.216$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This indicates that as social media usage increases, individuals tend to feel more empowered, although the relationship is not

particularly strong. With a sample size of 525, the results suggest that while social media usage may contribute to higher levels of empowerment, other factors likely play a role, and the effect is not overwhelming. The significance of the correlation highlights that this trend is unlikely to be due to chance.

**RQ 1a Does increase in social media usage result in higher levels of social empowerment.**

*Table 7: Correlation between Social media usage and levels of social empowerment*

	Social Empowerment
Social media usage	.154**

N=525, \*\*  $p < 0.01$  two-tailed

The correlation analysis between social media usage and social empowerment shows a statistically significant but weak positive relationship ( $r = 0.154$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This indicates that as social media usage increases, there is a slight increase in individuals' feelings of social empowerment, though the relationship is not very strong. With a sample size of 525, the results suggest that while social media usage may have some influence on social empowerment, it is likely not a major factor. The statistical significance indicates that this correlation is not due to chance, but the weak strength implies that other factors are more important in determining levels of social empowerment.

**RQ 1b Does increase in social media usage result in higher levels of economic empowerment.**

*Table 8: Correlation between Social media usage and levels of Economic empowerment*

	Economic Empowerment
Social media usage	.158**

N=525, \*\*  $p < 0.01$  two-tailed

The correlation analysis between social media usage and economic empowerment reveals a weak but statistically significant positive relationship ( $r = 0.158$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This suggests that as social media usage increases, there is a small increase in individuals' levels of economic empowerment. However, the correlation is relatively weak, indicating that social media usage is only a minor factor influencing economic empowerment. With a sample size of 525 and the

statistical significance of  $p < 0.01$ , the results are unlikely to be due to chance, but other factors are likely to play a more substantial role in determining economic empowerment.

**RQ 1c Does increase in social media usage result in higher levels of political empowerment.**

*Table 9: Correlation between Social media usage and levels of political empowerment*

	Political Empowerment
Social media usage	.119**

N=525, \*\*  $p < 0.01$  two-tailed

The correlation analysis between social media usage and political empowerment shows a moderate positive relationship ( $r = 0.119$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This indicates that increased social media usage is associated with a slight rise in individuals' political empowerment, but the effect is minimal. The weak correlation suggests that social media usage plays only a minor role in influencing political empowerment. With a sample size of 525 and a statistically significant p-value of less than 0.01, the relationship is unlikely to be due to random chance, but other factors likely have a more substantial impact on political empowerment.

**RQ2 Is there a variation in empowerment levels based on the respondent's occupation?**

*Table 10: Female Empowerment and Occupation*

Age Group	N	Mean	SD	Df	F	Sig.
student	207	3.5314	.69515			
employed	132	4.1742	.53140			
unemployed	41	3.5366	.71055			
own business	30	3.9000	.54772	5/519	22.239	.000
retired	5	4.4000	.54772			
housewife	110	3.4909	.63166			

The analysis of variance (ANOVA) indicates a significant variation in female empowerment levels based on occupation, with an F-statistic of 22.239 (df = 5/519) and a significance level of  $p < 0.001$ . This means that empowerment levels differ meaningfully across various occupational groups. On average, employed women reported the highest levels of empowerment ( $M = 4.17$ ), followed by retired women ( $M = 4.40$ ) and women running their own businesses ( $M = 3.90$ ). In contrast, students ( $M = 3.53$ ), unemployed women ( $M = 3.54$ ), and housewives ( $M = 3.49$ ) reported lower empowerment levels. The significant p-value suggests that these differences are unlikely to be due to chance, indicating that occupation plays a key role in determining empowerment levels among women.

### **RQ3 Is there a variation in empowerment levels based on the respondent's educational qualification?**

*Table 11: Female Empowerment and Educational Qualification*

<b>Age Group</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Df</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
secondary	74	3.2838	.67276			
intermediate	76	3.5132	.75707			
bachelors	183	3.6393	.65548	3/521	29.555	.000
master/MS or higher	192	4.0313	.57801			

The ANOVA results indicate a significant variation in female empowerment levels based on educational qualification, with an F-statistic of 29.555 (df = 3/521) and a significance level of  $p < 0.001$ . This suggests that education has a meaningful impact on empowerment levels. Women with a master's degree or higher report the highest levels of empowerment (mean = 4.03), followed by those with a bachelor's degree (mean = 3.64) and intermediate education (mean = 3.51). Women with secondary education have the lowest reported empowerment levels (mean = 3.28). The significant p-value indicates that these differences are not due to chance, highlighting that higher educational attainment is associated with greater empowerment.

**RQ4 Is there a variation in empowerment levels based on the respondent's preferred social media site?**

*Table 12: Female Empowerment and Preferred Social Media Site*

<b>Age Group</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Df</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Instagram	173	3.6936	0.66805	4/520	7.318	0.000
Facebook	77	3.7922	0.74934			
YouTube	173	3.5549	0.65914			
LinkedIn	49	4.1224	0.72551			
Snapchat	53	3.8113	0.65212			

The ANOVA results show a significant variation in female empowerment levels based on the respondents' preferred social media site, with an F-statistic of 7.318 (df = 4/520) and a significance level of  $p < 0.001$ . This indicates that the choice of social media platform influences empowerment levels. Women who prefer LinkedIn report the highest levels of empowerment (mean = 4.12), followed by those who favor Snapchat (mean = 3.81) and Facebook (mean = 3.79). Users of Instagram (mean = 3.69) and YouTube (mean = 3.55) report lower levels of empowerment. The statistically significant p-value suggests that these differences are not due to chance, highlighting that professional-oriented platforms like LinkedIn may be associated with higher feelings of empowerment compared to other social media sites.



## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

#### **5.1 Discussion**

Social media has emerged as a crucial tool for opening up countless opportunities for women, allowing them to express their independence, self-actualization, and financial autonomy. This growing trend of Pakistani women leveraging social media to start various types of businesses is a positive aspect of empowerment. By using platforms like Instagram and Facebook, women can effectively use their skills and abilities, enhancing their financial independence and confidence (Baig et al., 2018). Social media usage patterns are also noteworthy, with Instagram and YouTube emerging as the most frequently used platforms. This preference aligns with broader trends in social media consumption, where visual and video content play a central role. The high reliance on mobile phones for social media access (94.9%) highlights the pervasive nature of mobile technology in everyday life. Additionally, the typical social media usage duration of 1-2 hours per session underscores the significant but manageable role of social media in respondents' daily routines. Users primarily engage in reading content and chatting, reflecting social media's role as a tool for connection and information exchange, with the main purpose being to stay in touch with friends and family.

This study reveals a rich and varied sample, predominantly composed of young adults aged 20-29 years, with a significant proportion of students. This age group and educational status reflect a period of life where individuals are often exploring career paths, further education, and personal development. Pittard (2024) explains that the advanced educational background of most participants, with a majority holding a bachelor's degree or higher, suggests a well-informed and potentially highly engaged respondent pool. Similarly, our study sample reflects this trend, allowing us to apply similar conclusions to our findings. The usage patterns of social media among men and women have been widely studied, with numerous studies highlighting the differences in how genders engage with these platforms. For instance, research by Perrin & Anderson (2019) revealed that male and female social media users exhibit different motivations and behaviors. Men tend to use social media for networking, making new friends, seeking potential dates, and playing games, while women often use it for maintaining relationships and posting public messages (Muscanell & Guadagno, 2012; Rousseau & Puttaraju, 2014). These patterns indicate that

while both genders are active on social media, the way they utilize these platforms can differ significantly.

Social media provides women with the tools they need to participate in various social, political, and economic activities. Different platforms, however, have varying impacts on women's empowerment. LinkedIn, for example, is associated with the highest empowerment scores among its users. This professional networking platform is designed to foster business connections and discussions about gender equality in the workplace. A woman using LinkedIn might engage in conversations about breaking the glass ceiling, share articles on women in leadership, or participate in groups focused on promoting women's careers. These activities help reinforce her professional identity and contribute to her sense of empowerment (Akpuokwe, Chikwe & Eneh, 2024). On the other hand, platforms like YouTube and Snapchat, which are more entertainment-focused, show lower empowerment scores. While YouTube can be a powerful tool for education and activism, much of its content is geared toward entertainment, which may not directly contribute to empowerment perceptions. A user might spend hours watching beauty tutorials or vlogs, which, while enjoyable, do not necessarily promote a sense of empowerment in the same way that professional or activist content might (Boulianne, Hoffmann & Bossetta, 2024).

The positive correlation between social media usage and overall empowerment ( $r = 0.216$ ) suggests that increased use of social media is associated with a greater sense of empowerment. However, this relationship is not strong, indicating that while social media can contribute to empowerment, its influence is relatively modest. The weak correlations with social ( $r = 0.154$ ), economic ( $r = 0.158$ ), and political empowerment ( $r = 0.119$ ) further emphasize that social media is just one of many factors affecting empowerment. This implies that other variables, such as personal circumstances, socio-economic status, and individual aspirations, play a more significant role in shaping one's sense of empowerment. ANOVA results reveal that occupation and educational qualification significantly impact empowerment levels. Employed individuals report the highest levels of empowerment, followed by those in retirement and running their own businesses. This finding highlights the role of stable and prestigious occupations in enhancing empowerment. Students, unemployed individuals, and housewives report lower levels of empowerment, reflecting potential challenges and limitations associated with these roles. The significant variation in empowerment levels based on occupation underscores the importance of employment status and professional roles in influencing individuals' empowerment.

Educational qualification also plays a crucial role in empowerment, with individuals holding a master's degree or higher reporting the highest levels of empowerment, followed by those with a bachelor's degree. The lower levels of empowerment among those with secondary education suggest that higher educational attainment is associated with greater opportunities and self-efficacy, contributing to enhanced empowerment. This finding aligns with the notion that education equips individuals with the knowledge and skills needed to navigate personal and professional challenges effectively. The analysis of preferred social media platforms reveals significant variation in empowerment levels based on the type of platform used. LinkedIn users report the highest levels of empowerment, indicating that professional and career-oriented platforms offer substantial empowerment benefits. This is followed by Snapchat and Facebook users, with Instagram and YouTube users reporting lower levels of empowerment. The significant differences in empowerment levels based on social media platform preference suggest that the nature of social media interactions plays a role in shaping empowerment. Professional platforms like LinkedIn may provide more opportunities for career development and networking, leading to higher levels of empowerment compared to social or entertainment-focused platforms.

To illustrate the influence of social media on women's empowerment, consider the #MeToo movement, which gained significant traction on platforms like Twitter and Instagram. This movement empowered women worldwide to speak out against sexual harassment and assault, leading to a broader societal shift in how these issues are perceived and addressed. Women who participated in this movement by sharing their stories or supporting others likely experienced a heightened sense of empowerment, knowing that their voices were being heard and that they were contributing to meaningful change (Han, 2021). The study also highlights the importance of age as a factor in social media consumption. The findings show that most women who use platforms like Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter are between the ages of 18 and 25, with older women more likely to be interested in Facebook. This supports previous research that has shown significant differences in social media use by age (AlAmmary, 2022; Perrin & Anderson, 2019). For instance, younger women might be more inclined to use Instagram and LinkedIn for career advancement and professional networking, while older women might use Facebook to maintain personal relationships and stay connected with family and friends.

Social media has also proven to be a valuable tool for economic empowerment, particularly in enabling women to start and grow businesses. According to Cesaroni, Demartini and Paoloni (2017), social media can aid women in starting a business and

increase their participation in the labor force, which remains inadequate. Recent academic research (Salem & Mourtada, 2012; Wally & Koshy, 2014) has shown that many women have started their businesses using platforms like Instagram, which is much simpler than having a physical location for a company. This trend is particularly significant in Pakistan, where social media platforms are essential for boosting women's economic empowerment.

This study offers important insights into the relationship between social media usage and empowerment across various dimensions. By highlighting the modest impact of social media on empowerment, the study emphasizes that while social media can play a role in enhancing empowerment, it is not a primary driver. This understanding is crucial for developing more comprehensive strategies to promote empowerment that consider a range of factors beyond social media. In sociology, this study contributes to the understanding of how digital interactions and social media usage intersect with concepts of empowerment. It provides a nuanced view of how social media influences various forms of empowerment and highlights the role of other factors, such as occupation and education, in shaping individuals' sense of agency and self-efficacy. For fields such as education and career counseling, the findings underscore the importance of supporting educational and professional development as key factors in enhancing empowerment. The insights into how different social media platforms affect empowerment can also inform strategies for leveraging social media in ways that support personal and professional growth.

Overall, this study adds to the broader discourse on empowerment in the digital age, offering valuable information for policymakers, educators, and practitioners aiming to foster environments that enhance individuals' opportunities and capabilities. By recognizing the multifaceted nature of empowerment and the role of various influencing factors, this research provides a foundation for developing targeted interventions and support systems that address the diverse needs of individuals in contemporary society.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

This study provides a comprehensive examination of how social media usage relates to various forms of empowerment, as well as the impact of demographic factors such as occupation, education, and preferred social media platforms. The findings reveal that while social media has a modest positive association with overall empowerment, its influence is relatively weak compared to other factors. Social media usage correlates moderately with general empowerment and weakly with social, economic, and political empowerment, indicating that while it can contribute to empowerment, it is not a predominant factor. The

ANOVA results highlight significant variations in empowerment levels based on occupation and educational qualifications. Employed individuals and those with higher levels of education report higher levels of empowerment, underscoring the importance of stable and prestigious occupations as well as advanced educational attainment in enhancing individuals' sense of empowerment. Additionally, the preference for professional social media platforms like LinkedIn is associated with higher levels of empowerment, suggesting that career-oriented interactions may offer more substantial empowerment benefits compared to other types of social media engagement.

Overall, the study emphasizes that empowerment is influenced by a combination of social media usage, occupational status, educational background, and the type of social media platforms used. While social media can play a role in empowering individuals, its impact is moderated by these other factors. This suggests the need for a multifaceted approach to promoting empowerment, one that incorporates not only social media but also focuses on enhancing educational and professional opportunities. In conclusion, this study contributes valuable insights to the discourse on empowerment in the digital age. By identifying the relative contributions of social media, occupation, and education, the research provides a foundation for developing strategies and interventions aimed at enhancing empowerment. It underscores the importance of a holistic approach that addresses various dimensions of individuals' lives to foster greater empowerment and self-efficacy in contemporary society.

### **5.3 Limitations and Suggestions**

While this study provides valuable insights into the relationship between social media usage and empowerment, it has several limitations that should be considered. First, the cross-sectional nature of the research means that causal relationships cannot be established. While correlations are identified, it is unclear whether social media usage directly influences empowerment or if other underlying factors contribute to these associations. Second, the sample is predominantly composed of younger individuals and students, which may limit the generalization of the findings to other age groups and professional backgrounds. A more diverse sample could offer a broader perspective on how social media affects empowerment across different demographics. Another limitation is the reliance on self-reported data, which can be subject to biases such as social desirability or inaccuracies in self-assessment. Future research could benefit from incorporating objective measures or third-party assessments to complement self-reported data. Additionally, the study focuses primarily on the quantitative aspects of social media usage and empowerment,

potentially overlooking qualitative factors such as personal experiences and perceptions. Including qualitative methods in future studies could provide a deeper understanding of how social media interactions influence empowerment on a more personal level.

To address these limitations, future research should consider longitudinal designs to track changes over time, providing insights into causal relationships between social media usage and empowerment. Expanding the sample to include a wider range of ages and professional backgrounds could enhance the generalization of the findings. Additionally, integrating both quantitative and qualitative methods could offer a more comprehensive view of the impact of social media on empowerment. By acknowledging and addressing these limitations, future studies can contribute to a more nuanced and accurate understanding of the role of social media in shaping empowerment.

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## APPENDIX

### QUESTIONNAIRE

Questionnaire is part of an MS level academic research study to investigate ***“The effects of Social Media on Women’s Empowerment in Pakistan”***. It is assured that the data generated will be kept confidential.

Your cooperation would be highly appreciated

1. **Do you use social media? Yes (please proceed) If not, kindly do not proceed.**
2. **Marital Status:**

	Single	Married	Divorced	Widowed
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3. **Age:**

under 20	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
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4. **Occupation:**

Student	Employed	Unemployed	Own Business
Retired	Housewife		
5. **Education:**

Secondary	Intermediate	Bachelors	Masters/MS or higher
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6. **Frequently used social media platform (you can select more than one).**

Instagram	Facebook	YouTube	LinkedIn	Snapchat
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7. **How frequently do you visit social media sites in a day?**

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Regularly
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8. **How often do you check your device for notifications?**

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Regularly
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9. **What is the average duration of your social media activity in a single sitting?**

Upto 30 mins	30-60 mins	1-2 hours	2-4 hours	4+ hours
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10. **On which platform do you use social media most frequently?**

Mobile	Tab	Laptop	Desktop
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11. **Which activities are you involved in while using social media? (You can select more than one).**

• Reading content	• Viewing Images	• Chatting
• Posting content	• Posting Images	
12. **Why do you use social media? (You can select more than one).**

• To chat with friends and family	• To get news and updates of recent happening
• For entertainment and leisure	• To connect and interact with other professionals
• To promote business	

**For the following statement check (✓) most appropriate answer in the table**

Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly Agree

13. I feel that I am respected by my family members.

14. I feel that I am respected by my friends.
15. I am satisfied with my status/position in the world.
16. I am comfortable when interacting with close family members.
17. I am comfortable when interacting with large groups.
18. I am comfortable when interacting with officials\outsiders
19. I can easily go to the market whenever I need to make a purchase.
20. I can easily go to the bank whenever I need.
21. I can easily go to the hospital/clinic/doctor whenever I need.
22. I can easily go to visit my friends whenever I want.
23. I can easily go to visit my relatives whenever I want.
24. I have equal opportunities to participate in any decision- making process at home
25. I have/ I can study the subject of my choice
26. I have/ I can enter into a profession of my choice
27. I can confidently give my opinion in family
28. My family gives due regard to my opinion.
29. I can easily talk to my family members when I am faced with a problem.
30. My family is willing to help me make decisions
31. I have an independent source of income.
32. I have complete control over my income.
33. I have freedom to spend my earning as I see fit.
34. I have an independent bank account.
35. I have complete control over my personal savings.
36. I participate in decisions about household savings.
37. I participate in decisions about large occasional household purchases such as land, transport

vehicles etc.

38. I participate in decisions about routine household purchases such as food for daily consumption.
39. I participate in decisions about borrowing to be used by my family.
40. I participate in decisions about lending from my family savings.
41. I can easily find employment according to my skill and qualification
42. As an employee I can be paid equally for a job as compared to a male performing similar roles and responsibilities.
43. I have always voted during elections.
44. My family encourages me to participate in the voting processes,
45. My family does not dictate which candidate to vote for during elections
46. I can/ I have the freedom to participate in the canvassing process during the election campaign
47. I can/ I have actively participated in political activities such as demonstrations and protests
48. I can/ I have actively participated in political activities such as fund raising.
49. I can/ I have the freedom to become a candidate in elections
50. My family would support my decision to enter into politics if I do so
51. I can easily become a member of political party that I want.
52. I often engage in discussions about political issues with my family members
53. I often engage in discussions about political issues with my friends.