

**ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN PERSONAL,  
RELATIONAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL  
EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN BALOCHISTAN**



**Researcher**

**Farida Yaseenzai**

**180-FSS/PHDEDU/F20**

**Supervisor**

**Prof. Dr. Samina Malik**

**Department of Teacher Education  
Faculty of Education  
International Islamic University Islamabad  
2025**

**ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN PERSONAL,  
RELATIONAL, AND ENVIRONMENTAL  
EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN BALOCHISTAN**



**Researcher**

Farida Yaseenzai

**180-FSS/PHDEDU/F20**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of  
PhD in Education

**Department of Teacher Education  
Faculty of Education  
International Islamic University Islamabad  
2025**

**Dedicated**

To

My Husband and my Respected Teachers

## **SUPERVISOR'S CERTIFICATE**

The thesis titled “Role of Higher Education in Personal, Relational, and Environmental Empowerment of Women in Balochistan” submitted by Ms. Farida Yaseenzai Reg. No. 180-FSS/PHDEDU/F20 in partial fulfillment of PhD degree in Education, has been completed under my guidance and supervision. I am satisfied with the quality of student's research work and allow her to submit this for further process as per IIUI rules and regulation.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Supervisor:**

Prof. Dr. Samina Malik



## APPROVAL SHEET

**ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN PERSONAL, RELATIONAL, AND ENVIRONMENTAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN RAJCHISTAN**

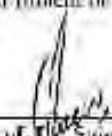
By:

**Farida Yousafzai**

**180488/PHDEDU/F20**

This thesis has been accepted by the Department of Teacher Education, Faculty of Education, International Islamic University Islamabad in partial fulfillment of the degree of **PhD Education**.

Supervisor:

  
Prof. Dr. Samina Malik

Internal Examiner:



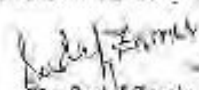
Dr. Farzila Afnan

External Examiner I:



Prof. Dr. Muhammad Iqbal Yousaf

External Examiner II:



Dr. Sadaf Zameer Ahmed

Dated: 14-03-2025



Chairperson  
Department of Teacher Education  
International Islamic University  
Islamabad - Pakistan



Dean  
Faculty of Education  
International Islamic University  
Islamabad - Pakistan

## **AUTHOR’S DECLARATION**

I, Miss. Farida Yaseenzai Reg. No. 180-FSS/PHDEDU/F20 as a student of PhD in Education at International Islamic University, Islamabad do hereby declare that the thesis entitled “Role of Higher Education in Personal, Relational, and Environmental Empowerment of Women in Balochistan”, submitted for the partial fulfillment of PhD in Education is my original work, except where otherwise acknowledged in the text has not been submitted or published earlier and shall not in future, be submitted by the researcher for obtaining any degree from IIUI or any other university or institutions.

***Farida***

**Farida Yaseenzai**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I offer my heartfelt praise to Allah the Almighty, the Most Gracious, and the Most Merciful, for His boundless blessings granted to me throughout my studies and in the completion of this thesis may Allah's infinite blessings be upon His final Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), his noble family, and his esteemed companions.

The researcher feels profound pride and gratitude in expressing her deepest appreciation to her supervisor, Prof. Dr. Samina Malik. Her supportive approach, invaluable suggestions, academic guidance, and unwavering educational and professional support, combined with her encouraging attitude, were instrumental in successfully completing this research work. Prof. Malik's contributions are immensely commendable and unforgettable. Her compassionate guidance has been a source of constant inspiration throughout the demanding research process.

The researcher also wishes to extend heartfelt thanks to Dr. Shamsa Aziz, Former Chairperson, Department of Teacher Education (DoTE), Faculty of Education, IIUI. She consistently opened her doors to facilitate me and generously spent a great deal of time discussing and sharing new ideas for this research.

Additionally, the researcher deeply appreciates Dr. Zarina Akhtar Assistant Professor, DoTE and Prof. Dr. N. B. Jumani (late). The lessons learned from these esteemed educators have consistently supported the researcher at every step of this research and in all learning-related tasks. Their invaluable insights and encouragement have been pivotal to the researcher's academic and professional growth.

The researcher is also profoundly grateful to Dr. Fouzia Ajmal, Assistant Professor, DoTE, Dr. Humaira Akram, Assistant Professor, DoTE and Dr. Fatima Batool, Assistant Professor, DoTE and Dr. Fatima Maqsood, Assistant Professor, DoELM for their ongoing guidance and support throughout this research. Their expertise and mentorship have been invaluable in shaping the direction of this study.

The researcher is deeply indebted to her esteemed husband, whose unwavering support in all aspects made possible. She is also grateful to all her friends for their encouraging behavior throughout.

**Farida Yaseenzai**

## ABSTRACT

The research aimed to examine the contribution of higher education to the empowerment of Balochistani women. The researcher explored the extent to which higher education empowered women on personal, relational, and environmental levels. On a personal level, the researcher examined how education influenced Balochistani women's decision-making power and self-autonomy within the domestic sphere. On relational and environmental levels, the researcher investigated the impact of education on women's ability to advocate for themselves, participate in politics, achieve financial independence and stability, and engage in household decision-making. This study also aimed to unpack the multitude of reasons that continue to confine Balochistani women to the domestic sphere of society despite receiving higher education. The target population included 4875 graduate women from three randomly selected divisions of Balochistan: Quetta, Loralai, and Kalat. A total of 341 women who graduated between 2011 and 2020 from these areas were selected for the sample. The women on the job were contacted through workplaces such as hospitals, education institutes, corporate offices, etc. Data were collected through a questionnaire for quantitative analysis and a semi-structured interview guide for qualitative analysis. The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, while the qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings underscored the transformative impact of education on various aspects of women's lives, highlighting the need to promote educational opportunities for empowerment. Women described how education enabled them to participate in economic activities, from managing home finances to contributing ideas to family businesses, emphasizing the role of education in enhancing their economic agency. This research provides valuable insights for stakeholders, including women seeking empowerment and organizations and policymakers working to address the challenges faced by educated women in Balochistan, particularly within the context of rigid cultural norms. To maximize the impact of educational initiatives, it is recommended that access to higher education be enhanced through targeted scholarships and outreach programs, particularly in rural areas. Additionally, integrating empowerment-focused themes into the curriculum, along with providing career support and creating mentorship opportunities, can further promote women's social, economic, and political participation in the region.

**Keywords:** *Higher Education, Women Empowerment, Balochistani women, Personal Empowerment, Relational Empowerment, Environmental Empowerment*



## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

LIST OF TABLES	IV
LIST OF FIGURES	V
LIST OF APPENDICES	VI
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	VII
<b>CHAPTER 1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1    Background of Study	1
1.2    Statement of the Problem	4
1.3    Objectives of the Study	5
1.4    Research Questions	5
1.5    Delimitations of the Study	6
1.5    Significance of the Study	6
1.7    Conceptual Framework	7
1.8    Operational Definitions	10
1.9    Research Methodology	12
1.10   Summary	14
<b>CHAPTER 2</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	<b>16</b>
2.1    Introduction	16
2.2    Empowerment: Definitions	18
2.3    Concept of Power: General Overview	19
2.4    Critical Consciousness of Women Empowerment	21
2.5    Aspects of Women Empowerment	22
2.6    Women Empowerment in Pakistan: Historical Perspectives	24
2.7    Breaking the Glass Ceiling	31

2.8	Women Leadership: Glimpses of Progress and Persistent Inequities	32
2.9	Women’s Empowerment: Global Perspective	36
2.10	Higher Education and Women Empowerment: Global Perspectives	52
2.11	Higher Education in Balochistan: General Overview	58
2.12	Promoting Women’s Economic Empowerment	62
2.13	Obstacles of Women Empowerment: in Pakistani Context	66
2.14	Modern Perspectives on Women's Empowerment	74
2.15	Summary	76
<b>CHAPTER 3</b>		<b>77</b>
<b>RESEARCH METHODOLOGY</b>		<b>77</b>
3.1	Research Design	78
3.2	Population	79
3.3	Sample of the study	80
3.4	Instruments	82
3.5	Data Collection Procedure	88
3.6	Data Analysis	91
3.7	Ethical Consideration	92
3.8	Summary	93
<b>CHAPTER 4</b>		<b>95</b>
<b>DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS</b>		<b>95</b>
4.1	Quantitative Data Analysis	96
4.2	Qualitative Data Analysis	118
4.3	Overall Integrated Analysis	154
4.4	Summary	157

<b>CHAPTER 5</b>	<b>158</b>
<b>SUMMARY, FINDINGS, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>158</b>
5.1    Summary	158
5.2    Findings	159
5.3    Discussion	184
5.4    Conclusions	190
5.5    Recommendations	191
5.6    Recommendations for Further Research	193
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>194</b>
<b>APPENDICES</b>	<b>199</b>

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1 Reliability coefficient	13
Table 3.1 Population of the study	77
Table 3.2 The Sample Size of the study	77
Table 3.3 Sample the for Qualitative Data	78
Table 3.4 Categorization of Statements	81
Table 3.5 Reliability coefficient of research interview	83
Table 4.1 Demographic and Professional Profile of Survey Respondents	93
Table 4.2 Self-confidence	95
Table 4.3 Empowerment and Autonomy Through Higher Education	96
Table 4.4 Individual Knowledge	97
Table 4.5 Opinions and Attitudes on Women's Economic Role	98
Table 4.6 Attitudes Toward Non-Acceptance of Gender-Based Violence	99
Table 4.7 Control over Household Assets	101
Table 4.8 Involvement in Household Decision Making	102
Table 4.9 Independent Income	103
Table 4.10 Control over Time	104
Table 4.11 Influence on Community	105
Table 4.12 Experience of Gender-Based Violence	106
Table 4.13 Environmental Empowerment	107
Table 4.14 Ability to Influence at the Political Level	108
Table 4.15 Cumulative <i>M</i> score of Women Empowerment	109
Table 4.16 Alignment of Objectives, Main Variables, <i>M</i> Score, Findings	111

## **LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework	7
Figure 3.1 Convergent Parallel Design (Creswell & Clark 2018)	79
Figure 3.2 Instrument Developed on Dimensions of Women Empowerment	80
Figure 3.3 Thematic Analysis	92

## LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A: Questionnaire for Survey	199
Appendix B: Interview Guide	203
Appendix C: Graduates women Data from UoB	210
Appendix D: Certificate of Validation-1	211
Appendix E: Certificate of Validation-2	212
Appendix F: Certificate of Validation-3	213
Appendix G: Cumulative <i>M</i> Scores for Personal Empowerment	214
Appendix H: Cumulative <i>M</i> Scores for Relational Empowerment	216
Appendix I: Cumulative <i>M</i> Scores for Environmental Empowerment	218
Appendix J: Cumulative <i>M</i> Scores for Individual Empowerment	220
Appendix K: Cumulative <i>M</i> Scores for Individual Empowerment	222
Appendix L: Cumulative <i>M</i> Scores for Educational Impact	224
Appendix M: Environmental Empowerment	226
Appendix N: Relational Empowerment	230
Appendix O: Environmental Empowerment Qualitative Responses	232
Appendix P: General Questions	233

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

AIML	All-India Muslim League
BPFA	Beijing Platform for Action
CEDAW	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
DAIs	Degree Awarding Institutions
ESOMAR	European Society for Opinion and Marketing Research
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GEM	Gender Empowerment Measure
GDI	Gender Development Index
GMIS	Gender Management Information System
HEC	Higher Education Commission
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
HDI	Human Development Index
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IIUI	International Islamic University Islamabad
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KP	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MPL	Muslim Personal Law
NCSW	National Commission for the Status of Women
NDEP	National Development and Empowerment Policy
NEPP	National Education Policy of Pakistan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
N.W.F.P	North-West Frontier Province
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
P&D	Planning and Development
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals

SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
UN	United Nations
UoB	University of Balochistan
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNPO	Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
WEE	Women Economic Empowerment



# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of Study

Empowerment is a complex and multidimensional term that defies easy definition (Paterson, 2018). Its multidimensionality encompasses the social, economic, psychological, and political aspects of an individual's life (Pettit, 2012). Women's empowerment can be explained as the ability of women to transform social and economic structures to their convenience and to fully contribute to those decisions that affect their lives, which could be achieved with the help of coaching, consulting, and leadership training. (Suja, 2012). Empowering women revolves around making them self-reliant by offering them all the freedoms and opportunities that have typically been denied to them in the past because they were women (Devi, 2019; Mahsud & Ali, 2020).

Women's empowerment is typically measured across several dimensions, including economic participation, political empowerment, educational attainment, health, and overall well-being (Claros & Zahidi, 2015). Even though it is believed by many theorists that higher education positively raises women's status, whether they contribute to the income of the family or not, it is important to note that a woman of Balochistan can only pursue higher education with the permission of the man of the household.

Higher education can significantly transform women's lives and bring long-term social change by promoting their status in family and society; raise awareness of their rights; increase self-esteem; improve self-efficacy; reduce dependency; raise the children better; improve their mobility; open up career opportunities; increase knowledge about gender equality, self-confidence and awareness are indicators of the empowerment process (Graham, 2018). Several studies carried out on empowerment of women have demonstrated that these modules are often developed in and as an outcome of higher education (Yousefy & Baratali, 2011). In our society, as can be observed, educated and earning women are much better off than uneducated workers. Nevertheless, that only happens if they are given the liberty to avail chances of employment.

UNESCO has published its education report that states, “Pakistan is one of three countries in the area where women are twice as likely as men to miss the most opportunities” (Muneer, 2021). For example, women's participation in political parties in Pakistan are very low compared to men's parties, the ratio is said to be 25% vs. 82%, which is exacerbated when women parliamentarians in Pakistan appear to be bound by patriarchal philosophies and practices despite being empowered enough to make it to the parliament. In Pakistan, where most women are confined to the domestic sphere, participation in higher education can bring about social change (Adil et al., 2021). In this context, Pakistan's concept of empowerment appears to be merely theoretical and without any practical implications. When considering the background of their development, it has been persistently slow paced in terms of women's empowerment in Pakistan, the Pakistani government has ratified its international commitments and launched important national/international initiatives to improve the status of Pakistani women, but there is still a long way to go.

In 2002, the Government of Pakistan introduced several targeted policies including the National Development and Empowerment Policy. Commitments to various international commitments, such as the Millennium Development Goals (Goal 3) and the Sustainable Development Goals (Goal 5) and NEP 2017, aims to improve education policies, particularly the economic, social and political empowerment of women. Despite these policies and measures, women in Pakistan are still suffering from unequal power relations and many women belongings to remote areas have no right to decide their own lives. The country is one of the least empowered countries in the world, although almost half of the population are women, empowering women has never been the focus, which can actually improve the overall wellbeing of the society (Abbas et al., 2021).

In the Global Gender Gap record, the status of Pakistan is 153 out of 156. According to UN Women, 53.6% of women in Pakistan are underprivileged in terms of guidance, training, education as well as employment, as compared to the 7.4% of men (Muhammad et al., 2021). The overall female literacy rate in Pakistan is 48% and the male literacy rate is 70%; similarly, in provinces, the literacy rate is as follows; In Punjab, 72% male and 54% female literacy rate; Sindh has 67% male and 44% female; KP goes as 72% male and 36% female; and in Balochistan 56% male and 24% females have some sort of education, Balochistan being the province carrying

the lowest literacy rate amongst all provinces (World Bank, 2019). The HEC and national commission on the status of women empowerment NCSW on September 05, 2018 identified the areas of collaboration between both organizations in promoting gender equality and empowering women through higher education (HEC, 2017) The province of Balochistan stands poorly against all the available resources where most women are kept underprivileged in the context of many facilities including work/employment, higher education, to be strong economically and (Habib et al., 2019; Hassan, 2020; UNPO, 2020).

There is a strong control of the economic, social, and political identity and position of women with their empowerment. The positionality and autonomy of women in Balochistan is highly reliant on the men around them and they can only move to spaces that their fathers, brothers or husbands allow them into. To delve deeper into the idea of researching whether it is just the lack of education or other factors too that contribute to keeping women subjugated, it is important to understand the rigid culture of Balochistan. The social formations of the region are influenced by a tribal culture, and the feudal lords in Balochistan act as the regulators of policies. Which brings us to the statement that these feudal lords only let things happen if it serves their purpose.

Quite clearly, the area of Balochistan has a traditionally patriarchal system where disparities between both genders are deliberately maintained upon the belief that women are subordinate to men (Moghadam, 1992). There are several other perceptions too that hinder women's mobility in society. Some of these factors are that women are believed to carry the honor of the household, and to avoid any disgrace to the family name, their actions are restricted. For the people in Balochistan, the role of women is limited as a housewife and for that she does not require any formal education. Many of the conservatives are of the opinion that education or higher education somehow ruins the personality of the women, therefore, the only way to keep their essence intact is by keeping them confined within their households.

The province of Balochistan is known as the richest in terms of natural resources but undeveloped in terms of education and awareness. Even in the 21st century, the literacy rate of Balochistan is very low; a lot of girls are unable to get basic education because of several cultural values and norms that prepare them for domestic roles solely. A major issue for these young girls would be their early

marriages, many of which are forced by their parents and other family members, so they may not be able to study any further (Adil et al., 2021). Where maximum women are still reserved depressed from education, gender equity, lawful civil rights, societal growth, forces at work, political development, and decision-making process and employment. Even if girls get to take the basic education in schools, they are not encouraged advance in education and go for higher studies or plan a career or even have proper vocational education. This is sometimes due to insufficient colleges, universities, and vocational training institutions in their areas, and because they are not allowed to leave their village or city as per the patriarchal structures, they never make it to universities (The Nation, 2021). Thus, there is a dire need to provide women of Balochistan with equal educational opportunities to make them mentally strong, and so they can be well aware of their social, political, economic, and educational rights that would eventually lead to their empowerment.

The effort was justified on a diverse number of compact grounds about highlighting the significance of female higher education as a key source of their overall empowerment and enabling them as productive individuals in society. Education empowers women, but it varies across different contexts. The context of Balochistan is unique. When compared to the rest of the country, women in Balochistan usually experience adverse socio-economic conditions that limit their social mobility, their decision-making power, and their access to financial resources because of the patriarchal and cultural norms of the society. Several prior researchers supported the notion that higher education opportunities for women can promote women's empowerment in Pakistan (Adil et al., 2021). Even though 73 colleges and five universities provide higher education facilities, these institutions are not contributing to women's empowerment at a satisfactory level, particularly in Balochistan. However, the problem that banishes women into the lower strata of society stems from the repressive culture of the area.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Women in Balochistan face systemic discrimination across three interrelated domains: personal, relational, and environmental. At the personal level, they lack autonomy over their decisions, time, and financial resources, limiting their independence. The relational domain involves restrictions on their right to an independent income, control over household assets, and participation in decision-

making. Additionally, their awareness of gender-based violence and their ability to respond remain critical aspects of empowerment. At the environmental level, deeply entrenched stereotypes and restricted mobility prevent women from advocating for change, engaging in political representation, and voicing their concerns, further constraining their empowerment. Despite the increasing number of women attaining higher education, many women still struggle against cultural and societal barriers that hinder their empowerment. Stakeholders; women, policymakers, and NGOs, highlight the need for institutional reforms, community awareness initiatives, and policy interventions to ensure that higher education translates into meaningful empowerment. This study, therefore, investigates whether and to what extent higher education contributes to the personal, relational, and environmental empowerment of women in Balochistan.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study were to:

1. Determine the role of higher education in the ‘Personal Empowerment of women in Balochistan.
2. Investigate the influence of higher education on promoting the ‘Relational Empowerment’ of women in Balochistan.
3. Explore the contribution of higher education to the ‘Environmental Empowerment’ of women in Balochistan.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

The main questions of the study were:

1. To what extent is higher education improving women’s self-confidence and personal autonomy?
2. How does higher education improve individual knowledge, opinions, and attitudes on women’s economic role in Balochistan?
3. To what extent does higher education play its role in the non-acceptance of gender-based violence among women in Balochistan?

4. To what extent is higher education enabling women to control their household assets, involvement in decision-making, independent income, and control over time?
5. How are the higher educational endeavors of women helping them influence the community?
6. How well is higher education preparing women to deal with gender-based violence?
7. What is the role of higher education in empowering women in terms of access to services and resources and the ability to influence at the political level?

### **1.5 Delimitations of the Study**

The study was delimited to the following aspects:

- Three divisions of Balochistan: Quetta, Loralai, and Kalat
- University of Balochistan (UoB), Quetta
- The women who had completed their bachelor's degrees or higher between 2011 to 2020

### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

The study significantly enriches existing literature by raising awareness about women's higher education in Balochistan, challenging traditional gender norms, and promoting a more inclusive society. Focusing on Balochistan's unique sociocultural dynamics, it underscores the necessity of context-specific educational interventions. Higher education empowers women by enhancing their knowledge, skills, and confidence, enabling informed decisions regarding their lives, careers, and health. Educated women often become agents of positive change within their families and communities, investing in their children's education and well-being, thereby fostering inter-generational empowerment. Moreover, higher education equips women to address environmental challenges, promoting sustainable practices and contributing to environmentally conscious communities.

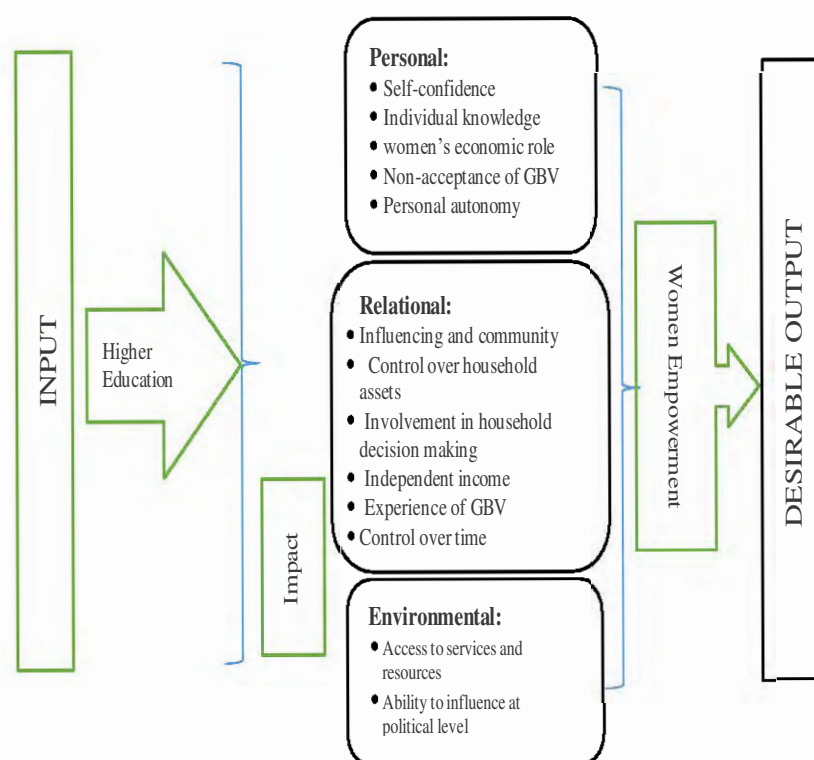
The research offers valuable insights for policymakers and NGOs aiming to enhance women's access to higher education in Balochistan. Notably, the Balochistan Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy 2020-2024 seeks to ensure equal

rights for women, including their inclusion in socio-political spheres. Additionally, NGOs like the Balochistan Rural Support Program (BRSP) have implemented educational projects to reach marginalized girls, such as community schools in remote areas. The study provides recommendations to make such interventions more targeted, addressing specific challenges faced by women in the region and fostering a supportive educational environment.

## 1.7 Conceptual Framework

**Figure 1.1**

*Conceptual Framework*



*Figure 1. Conceptual Framework*

A conceptual framework in research is a structure that outlines and organizes the key concepts, variables, relationships, and assumptions that form the foundation of a study. It provides a roadmap for understanding the research problem and guides the design, conduct, and interpretation of the research. The conceptual framework serves as a theoretical model that helps researchers conceptualize their research questions and hypotheses within a broader context. Hence, Oxfam's impact evaluations framework served as the baseline of the study, anchoring it within a broader context of understanding empowerment. According to Young (1997), empowerment enables

women to take control of their own lives, set their agenda, organize to help each other, and make demands on the state for support and on society itself for change (Ashraf & Farah, 2007). Long before the word 'empowerment' became popular, women were speaking about gaining control over their lives and participating in making the decisions that affect them in the home and community, in government, and in international development policies. However, a critical challenge lies in the fact that very few have a clear conception of empowerment (Rahman, 2013). The researcher aims to address this challenge by taking an initiative to clarify the concept of empowerment based on several scholars' views, while utilizing Oxfam's framework for impact evaluations as a foundational reference point, a framework that has also been recently utilized by other authors (Afrouzi, 2024).

### ***1.7.1 Application of Oxfam's Empowerment Framework in the Study***

The researcher employed the Oxfam Women's Empowerment Framework to systematically examine the role of higher education in women's empowerment in Balochistan. Oxfam's framework provided a multidimensional approach to empowerment, emphasizing how personal, relational, and environmental factors contributed to women's agency, decision-making, and access to resources. Adopting this model ensured a comprehensive assessment of empowerment that extended beyond individual development to broader societal and structural influences.

### ***1.7.2 Key Components of Oxfam's Framework***

Oxfam's framework defined empowerment as a dynamic process, encompassing three interrelated dimensions:

#### **i. Personal Empowerment**

- Referred to an individual's sense of self-confidence, autonomy, and awareness of rights.
- Included economic independence, self-perception, and the ability to challenge societal norms.

#### **ii. Relational Empowerment**

- Examined women's ability to negotiate and make decisions within families, communities, and workplaces.



- Addressed household decision-making power, financial control, and influence in social networks.

### **iii. Environmental Empowerment**

- Focused on women's access to services, political participation, and influence over institutional structures.
- Included availability of healthcare, education, and engagement in governance and policy-making.

These dimensions aligned directly with the objectives by offering a structured approach to examining how higher education influenced women's autonomy, household roles, and societal participation.

#### ***1.7.3 Application in the Study***

The Oxfam framework served as the foundation for:

- Structuring Research Variables: categorized findings under personal, relational, and environmental empowerment, ensuring clarity in analysis.
- Defining Research Questions: The framework guided the investigation of how higher education shaped self-confidence, decision-making, and access to opportunities.

#### ***1.7.4 Guiding Data Collection and Analysis***

Quantitative Analysis: utilized survey indicators (*M* scores, frequency, percentages) to measure empowerment across three dimensions.

Qualitative Analysis: Thematic analysis captured women's personal experiences and challenges in achieving empowerment.

By integrating Oxfam's framework, it provided a holistic view of empowerment, recognizing that education's impact was not uniform but varied across socioeconomic and cultural contexts.

Comparison with Other Approaches:

While alternative models such as Kabeer's Empowerment Framework (1999) and the Capability Approach (Sen, 1992) also examined empowerment, Oxfam's model proved to be the most suitable for the study because:

- It explicitly integrated societal structures and institutional access, aligning with a focus on Balochistan's unique socio-cultural and economic challenges.
- It allowed for both individual agency and systemic influences to be analyzed, making it more adaptable to a mixed-methods approach.

#### ***1.7.5 Applying Oxfam's framework to the study***

- Provided empirical evidence on how higher education enhanced women's agency in a culturally conservative region.
- Identified barriers that limited the translation of educational attainment into real empowerment, particularly in rural areas.
- Offered policy recommendations for improving women's access to services, economic opportunities, and political participation.
- Contributed to global discussions on women's empowerment by showcasing context-specific findings from Balochistan, where higher education had emerged as a transformative force.

### **1.8 Operational Definitions**

#### ***1.8.1 Higher Education***

Higher education is broadly referred to as "all post-secondary education" (World Bank, 2014). In the perspective of the study, the term 'Higher Education' refers to formal educational programs beyond the higher secondary school level, typically provided by universities, Degree colleges, and institutions of higher learning.

#### ***1.8.2 Empowerment***

Empowerment is a complex and multidimensional term that defies easy definition (Paterson, 2018). Its multidimensionality encompasses the social, economic, psychological, and political aspects of an individual's life (Pettit, 2012).

#### ***1.8.3 Women Empowerment***

Women's empowerment is the process by which individuals who have been denied the ability to make strategic life choices acquire the ability to do so. It entails gaining the capacity to make significant life decisions related to marriage, education, livelihood, and other aspects that profoundly impact their lives. Women's empowerment allows women to understand their rights, exert control over their lives and decisions, and influence society (Eyben et al., 2008).

#### ***1.8.4 Personal Empowerment***

Personal Empowerment of women in the study refers to the process by which women gain increased self-confidence, individual knowledge, opinions, and attitudes on women's economic role, non-acceptance of GBV, Personal autonomy, and a sense of control over their own lives through higher education. It includes women's beliefs about their strength. Specifically, it involves the development of critical thinking skills, self-awareness, and the ability to make informed decisions that positively influence their personal development and well-being. It further contains self-esteem, control beliefs, self-confidence, and self-efficacy. These components are referred to as personal empowerment because they evaluate various psychological aspects related to women's personal beliefs and actions (Huis et al., 2017).

#### ***1.8.5 Relational Empowerment***

Relational empowerment has entailed the transformation of women's interpersonal relationships as a result of higher education. It involves challenging traditional gender roles and norms, promoting equitable dynamics within families and communities, and fostering effective communication and negotiation skills that empower women to assert their rights and influence their relational empowerment. Women's empowerment has focused on women's position concerning relevant others, such as their partner, family, or social networks.

#### ***1.8.6 Environmental Empowerment***

Societal empowerment refers to the situation of women in the broader societal context to understand how women's empowerment may develop. In simple terms, Environmental empowerment indicates the capacity of women to engage with and address environmental issues through the lens of higher education. Environmental

empowerment means access to services and resources and the ability to influence at the political level.

### ***1.8.7 Socioeconomic Empowerment***

Socioeconomic empowerment for women is foundational for their overall development. Economic empowerment involves women freely choosing their professions and having control over their earnings, including property rights (OECD, 2012).

## **1.9 Research Methodology**

### ***1.9.1 Research Design***

The research design followed a mixed methods approach using the convergent parallel design. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected simultaneously to answer the research questions. A qualitative research process allowed the researcher to gain a general overview of the research perspective and describe data based on numerous contributions.

### ***1.9.2 Population***

The target population comprised of 4875 graduate women from three divisions of Balochistan: Quetta, Loralai, and Kalat. Furthermore, examination offices of the selected educational institutes were contacted to gather data about graduated women who had completed Bachelor's or higher degrees (2011 to 2020) from any discipline or field of life.

### ***1.9.3 Sample and Sampling Technique***

According to Adam's (2020) table for determining sample size, a population of 4,875 required a sample of 341 (7% of the total). To ensure proportional representation, 321 participants were selected from Quetta, 9 from Kalat, and 10 from Loralai. The snowball sampling technique was used to recruit participants from various disciplines and fields of life within the period 2011 to 2020. Additionally, purposive sampling was employed to select 30 respondents for qualitative interviews, including 22 from Quetta, 4 from Kalat, and 4 from Loralai.

### ***1.9.4 Instruments***

To achieve the research objectives and collect relevant data, qualitative and quantitative tools, specifically, questionnaires and an interview guide, were developed and utilized. Given the three major variables, each with its respective sub-variables, four statements were designed for quantitative data collection, and four questions were formulated for qualitative data collection for each sub-variable, ensuring comprehensive coverage of the research dimensions.

**Table 1.1***Reliability of Research Instrument*

Sr. No	Variables	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha Values
1	Personal Level Indicators	20	0.973
2	Relational Level Indicators	24	0.972
3	Environmental Level Indicators	8	0.974
	Overall Reliability	52	0.984

**1.9.5 Validity and Reliability of Research Instrument**

Validation by the experts was a pivotal aspect of the research methodology, underscoring the rigorous scrutiny and endorsement of the research instruments. The involvement of esteemed experts in the field ensured a meticulous review and approval process, affirming the instruments' capability to measure the intended constructs accurately. Both the questionnaire for quantitative data and the interview guide for qualitative data underwent a thorough validation process. The reliability of the tools was checked through Cronbach's alpha.

**1.9.6 Data Collection Procedure and Data Analysis**

The data collection process was designed to be methodical, ethical, and comprehensive, enabling a holistic exploration of the research topic. Accordingly, the data collection process for research was conducted systematically and ethically, ensuring the highest standard of research ethics and privacy were maintained. Quantitative data underwent demanding analysis employing Descriptive Statistics: *M* scores, Frequency, and percentages were computed to provide a clear summary of the variability of the data. These analyses were executed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software, version 21. The researcher adopted the thematic analysis approach for qualitative data analysis.

**1.10 Summary**

The introduction chapter of this thesis underscored the transformative power of education in empowering women, particularly in underdeveloped areas like Balochistan, Pakistan. Education served as a crucial tool for women to challenge

patriarchal norms and gain personal autonomy. Empowerment, in this context, encompassed the freedom to make choices, protection from gender-based violence, control over life decisions, and the ability to influence societal roles.

Balochistan's unique cultural and societal dynamics posed challenges to the notion that education alone guaranteed women's empowerment. The province's tribal and feudal systems, deeply entrenched gender disparities, and conservative beliefs often hindered the impact of education on women's lives. While higher education can bring about significant positive changes, cultural constraints and the need for male approval remain barriers. It delved into the complex interplay of education, gender roles, and empowerment in Balochistan. It sought to understand whether higher education genuinely empowered women in terms of personal, relational, and environmental aspects. Through structured research questions, it aimed to explore the influence of higher education on self-confidence, individual knowledge, and attitudes toward women's economic roles, non-acceptance of gender-based violence, personal autonomy, and control over time, relational empowerment, and environmental empowerment.

The significance of the study lay in its potential to raise awareness among parents, communities, policymakers, and NGOs about the critical role of higher education in women's empowerment. By examining the impact of education on women's lives, the research had the potential to catalyze efforts to make higher education more accessible and conducive to women's empowerment in Balochistan. Ultimately, the study contributed to the broader discourse on women's empowerment and education in the region and offered valuable insights for future policy and practice.

The conceptual framework, based on various scholars' views, serves as the guiding framework for this research. It highlighted the multifaceted nature of empowerment, encompassing personal, relational, and environmental dimensions. This framework will underpin the exploration of the transformative power of education in Balochistan's unique context. This introductory chapter sets the stage for an in-depth investigation into the impact of higher education on women's empowerment in Balochistan. It highlighted the complexity of the issue, the cultural constraints, and the potential for education to be a catalyst for positive change in the lives of Balochistani women.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This section presents a detailed description of the literature review/research related to the topic under study, theoretical and conceptual explanations of variables, and global and contextual information available in the literature to support the topic of the study.

#### **2.1 Introduction**

In recent years, women's empowerment has become a very important issue in the contemporary world. Women made up half of the world's population and were integral to the progress of any country. However, women were still deprived of their basic rights, especially in underprivileged areas in Pakistan (Adil et al., 2021; Stromquist, 2015). They still did not have the right to make decisions about their lives and faced challenges of poverty and inequality, receiving hardly any acknowledgment for their role in serving their families (Bashir & Zafar, 2017). The topmost factor that played a vital role in women's empowerment was the higher education that women held, which was important for the development of the human mind; moreover, it helped them attain equal opportunities as well as equal status to achieve anticipated objectives and goals (Bushra & Wajiha, 2015). The primary measure of women's empowerment lay in both the empowerment itself and the inherent right of every individual within society (Adil et al., 2021). The pivotal factors of higher education opportunity and access were regarded as crucial elements that could shape the societal roles of women and lead to economic independence (Voigt & Spies, 2020).

Women empowerment was also one of the critical dimensions from a feminist perspective. Many studies provided strong bases and positive impacts on the empowering effects of higher education on women (Adil et al., 2021; Village Earth, 2022). Women were suppressed in a male-dominated society; therefore, higher education was taken as a remedy that prepared them to deal with the obstacles caused by suppression and burden (Naz et al., 2020). However, literary evidence confirmed that the chances of women receiving higher education were lower than that of men; in male-dominated societies, women were exposed to gender-specific roles. In this fashion, the existing economic, as well as socio-cultural values, created hurdles for women in the context of obtaining a higher education (Batoool et al., 2021). Moreover,



it banned women from playing their role in societal improvement and development (Yousuf, 2019; Marie, 2003). Suja (2012) described that women's empowerment and the achievement of their full potential development goals were not possible without strong support, access to resources, prevention of anti-women practices, and the like; therefore, the educational role was indispensable for the development process. Gender parties and women empowerment were growing realizations, considering and taking into account that every woman had the right to exercise her reproductive rights in a peaceful atmosphere.

In existential and normative order, Pakistani society was hierarchical and revealed uneven power dynamics between women and men, where women were kept under men (Rahman et al., 2018). The existence of significant gender discrimination made it a restricted society where gender equality and women's freedom appeared to be distant goals (Raza & Murad, 2010). In this situation, the low standard of women's empowerment was a serious issue in Pakistan, as the country was classified nearly at the lowest on the gender gap index, ranking 151st out of 153 studied countries. Likewise, in the country, the Human Development Index (United Nations, 2019) showed a lower value for females compared to males (0.464 vs. 0.622).

Women were underprivileged economically, politically, and educationally and were treated as the second sex even in the contemporary period. It became a known reality that Pakistani women faced numerous obstacles in the context of gender discrimination, domestic violence, gender dominance, and the uneven distribution of women's rights, power, and work due to the insufficiency of education (Muneer, 2021). This was attributed to a male-dominated culture that promoted a conventional mentality and powerfully resisted any sort of positive change in society that nurtured women's empowerment, particularly in the area of education. During the present era of gender inequality, women's empowerment became a significant area for study (Sharif et al., 2021; Muhammad et al., 2021).

Though from the very inception of Pakistan, women's education and their empowerment had been emphasized in various forums, policies, and plans. For example, Quaid-e-Azam, speaking at the Muslim University of Aligarh on March 10, 1944, stated to the Muslim League assembly that "none of the nations can ever be valuable for its being who does not take its women equaling with men. The success of any struggle is not possible without women contributing with men. The two powers in

the world are sword and pen. But the third power stronger than both powers is the power of women" (Bhattacharya, 2014; Khatwani, 2016). Likewise, commitments at national and international levels by the Government of Pakistan guaranteed women's rights. The National Commission for the Status of Women (NCSW) held a meeting with the HEC on September 5, 2018, to identify areas of collaboration between both organizations in promoting gender equality and empowering women through higher education (HEC, 2017). In the meeting, it was agreed that the NCSW would help frame a comprehensive policy for universities to promote equality and protection against harassment, thereby empowering the women of Pakistan (Bushra & Wajiha, 2015).

Various researches pointed out that "women's empowerment was regarded as the most influential instrument for sustainable development, whether in a qualitative or quantitative aspect, and as an indispensable component that constituted the collective advancement within social order" (Batool et al., 2021). Similarly, female educational dynamics were identified as the preliminary channels or developmental drivers in terms of social development, economic expansion, political advancement, and decision-making processes. These factors were also responsible for strengthening and enabling women to accelerate their livelihood options and contribute to socio-economic development for sustainable development goals (Awan & Naqvi, 2016).

## **2.2 Definitions of Empowerment**

Empowerment was the process of enabling or authorizing individuals to think, take action, and control work in an autonomous way (Bhat, 2015; Kaur, 2018). It referred to liberation from oppression or bondage of any kind. It also ensured escape from long-term bondage. It demanded the reconfiguration of the full range of social and economic relations. It was a story of liberation and identities gained, where different actors clashed for the achievement of prestige. It involved liberating individuals from understandings of the "self" that were imposed by external forces. A meaningful commitment to empowerment, it seemed, presupposed structures that institutionalized respect and recognition for difference, guarded a negative space of freedom for the individual, and provided basic resources for individuals to realize their "self" (Witte, 2019).

Several previous studies on empowerment defined the term empowerment. It was the means that enabled individuals who were previously unable to achieve the capability to make essential choices about their life decisions (Kabeer, 1999). The term empowerment meant the increase of resources and abilities for disadvantaged people to engage in, bargain with, control, direct, and hold responsible the organizations that influenced their lives (Narayan, 2002). Some scholars defined the empowerment of women as the capability of women to be financially independent and able to make decisions that influenced their life choices and ensured independence from brutality (Rao & Kelleher, 1995). However, the idea of empowerment emphasized the control over resources such as tangible assets, stable supplies, and beliefs (Batliwala, 1994). It was a process that assisted individuals or communities in gaining control over the factors that affected their lives (Gibson, 1991). Achieving greater decision-making ability, developing knowledge of relationships, life formation, and managing conditions responsible for changing one's life were recognized as various dimensions of empowerment. Hur (2006) emphasized empowerment as an outcome rather than a process, which could be estimated, assessed, and developed.

According to Kessey (2005), empowerment was a way of transformation by which people or organizations with little or no power obtained the capability to make proper decisions that improved their lives. It was a way that helped people gain the power to free themselves from the existing cultural, financial, and political inequalities of society. Wallerstein (2001) and Whitmore (1988) also described empowerment as a social practice that encouraged the cooperation of individuals, different institutions, and societies to achieve the purposes of increasing self-esteem and social power, legislative efficiency, enhanced social living conditions, and cultural legitimacy.

### **2.3 Concept of Power (General Overview)**

The term "power" could be understood in various dimensions, encompassing both its constructive and potentially transformative aspects. One dimension of power, referred to as "power-to," was a productive force that generated fresh opportunities and actions without exerting dominance (Rahman, 2013). It empowered individuals by granting them decision-making authority and nurturing a problem-solving mindset (Oxaal & Baden, 1997). This form of power had the ability to inspire and create novel

avenues for action (Ibrahim & Alkire, 2007). Furthermore, it emphasized collaboration and sharing, aligning with the concept of "power-with," which sought common ground and cultivated collective strength, ultimately contributing to collective empowerment (Odera et al., 2020).

On the other hand, "power-within" was often associated with qualities such as self-confidence, self-awareness, and assertiveness. It involved an individual's recognition of power dynamics in their life and their subsequent actions to effect change or influence existing power structures based on this understanding (Oxaal & Baden, 1997). Notably, power-within was a self-regenerating and self-enriching force; it could not be bestowed upon or generated on behalf of others (Kabeer, 2012). Ibrahim and Alkire (2007) defined it as self-respect and self-acceptance.

A foundational concept in understanding power, inspired by Michel Foucault's philosophy, was the intricate relationship between knowledge and power. Expanding upon Foucault's ideas, the field of development framed power as inseparable from knowledge. Knowledge conferred legitimacy and authority upon an individual's actions, allowing them to interpret their environment effectively and potentially alter existing power relations. Foucault argued that power was enduring, repetitive, and self-perpetuating, and that shifts in knowledge discourses gave rise to new structures of human interaction, where the enlightened wielded power over specific target groups, as seen in the medical profession's authority over the sick (Gunaratna, 2013). Development discourse similarly created and intervened in the lives of target groups, such as the Third World, underdeveloped economies, agricultural communities, and marginalized women in less developed countries, thereby reinforcing the connection between knowledge and power (Grown et al., 2005).

Many feminist scholars followed Michel Foucault's lead in exploring the concept of power, particularly by examining it through the lens of gender, just as Foucault categorized power as having an "energy" aspect (Rowlands, 1995) or a generative quality. Noreen and Khalid (2012) delved into the potential avenues for women's empowerment and the perceptions of study participants regarding the influence of higher education on women's empowerment within their familial and professional spheres. Their findings emphasized the importance of women continuing their higher education and careers through strategic planning and recognizing the support of their family members. Banerjee (2012) conducted a study on the impact of higher

education on women's empowerment. She observed that empowered women actively contested male dominance in the workplace and were increasingly visible in influential corporate roles.

Kandpal et al. (2012) examined the involvement of women in community-level empowerment programs in India and found that participants experienced enhanced physical mobility, increased political engagement, and improved access to employment opportunities. Murtaza (2012) conducted an analysis of the existing status of women in higher education in Gilgit Baltistan and highlighted the challenges faced by women, including workplace harassment and excessive workloads. Additionally, it revealed discrepancies in parental investment in the education of their daughters compared to their sons. Sonowal (2013) investigated the impact of Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) women in the rural areas of Sonitpur district. His research illuminated the role of prevailing societal attitudes and parental perspectives toward girls' education in shaping the status of women in contemporary society.

#### **2.4 Awareness-Raising/Critical Consciousness of Women Empowerment**

This aspect was also known as consciousness-raising (Odera et al., 2020) or critical awareness and aimed to cultivate a critical consciousness among women (and men), encouraging them to transition from unquestioningly accepting societal norms to critically evaluating them (Kabeer, 1999). Awareness-raising was a pivotal tool within the empowerment approach. Its objective was to reshape women's self-perception and beliefs about their rights and capabilities. It challenged feelings of inferiority, fostered an understanding of how gender discrimination impacted them, and highlighted the true value of their contributions to family, society, and the economy (Batliwala, 1994). As a strategic process, awareness-raising was geared toward reshaping a woman's self-image, boosting her self-confidence, uncovering and refining her abilities, and instilling a consciousness that empowered her to serve as a catalyst for personal and societal change. It also encouraged women to engage in collective action.

Awareness-raising was synonymous with critical consciousness and constituted a fundamental aspect of the overall development process. Education for building awareness was particularly suitable for an empowerment model that

embodied the generative aspect of power. In its productive form, this power strived to enhance self-image and foster the development and refinement of skills and capabilities essential for personal growth and societal progress toward equity and positivity, which aligned with other core elements drawn from the original empowerment model (Rowlands, 1995), including the sense of belonging and dignity. Given the central focus on education, critical consciousness remained a pivotal theme in the study, irrespective of the specific research inquiry.

## **2.5 Aspects of Women Empowerment**

### ***2.5.1 Engagement in Public Affairs***

Education empowered women to engage in politics. It provided a space where not only the political and civil involvement of women was ensured but also their economic and cultural participation. The power of knowledge gave them more trust in themselves, allowing them to stand up to any kind of abuse. Self-awareness empowered women politically, assisting them in making important choices in both their personal and political lives. The ability to vote, the right to contest, and their role as activists in public affairs were all components of their empowerment. Education also facilitated their engagement in the government of their local community. Education gave women the skills to engage in decision-making and policies that impacted them and advanced their interests (Akawa, 2017).

### ***2.5.2 Social Upliftment***

Education empowered women socially. It played a catalytic role in a nation's socioeconomic development and was one of the most important tools available for a more profound and harmonious form of human development that reduced poverty, illiteracy, and exclusion. Education, which prepared students for professional, research-based, career-oriented careers, was acknowledged as a tool for social change and democracy (Singh & Singh, 2017). If women gained greater control over the factors of production, access to resources, and the distribution of benefits as a result of their higher engagement in the decision-making process, then this increased participation could be said to contribute to their enhanced development and empowerment. This was the only condition under which one could say that increasing participation at the decision-making level led to increased development and empowerment (Varghese, 2012). Therefore, research on the mechanism through

which education could change beliefs, attitudes, and outcomes for women would have been extremely beneficial to the discussion about the relationship between education and female empowerment (Aslam, 2019).

### ***2.5.3 Financial Independence***

Education empowered women financially and socially. Financial literacy boosted creditworthiness. According to Varghese (2012), women who had a solid educational background engaged in extremely comprehensive financial planning. Because without economic strength, women were unable to exercise their rights and entitlements, the financial independence of women was a crucial prerequisite for enabling them to seek justice and equality. Women who were financially literate managed the household budget as well as public and private sector budgets more effectively. Women's economic power could be judged by how much control they had over resources, how much power they wielded, and how much they had accomplished. Women's financial freedom depended on the availability of microfinance, which also had the potential to boost their purchasing power. Throughout history, education for girls and women was regarded as profoundly subversive and dangerous.

### ***2.5.4 Psychological Empowerment***

Education had the potential to equip people with the psychological tools necessary to address the challenges of their own lives. Self-worth and self-efficacy were important for psychological strength. Psychological empowerment enabled women to challenge patriarchal norms and redefine their identities (Mandal, 2013). It provided women with a way to work together and helped them feel less alone, divided, and shattered. Women felt psychologically empowered when they joined educational institutions, political parties, decision-making bodies, held white-collar jobs, made decisions, traveled, and occupied land and wealth. Education reduced women's desire for more children, thereby limiting their numbers.

### ***2.5.5 Political Growth***

Education was one factor that contributed to the political empowerment of women. Women's empowerment required their full participation in governing structures. Women all over the world had been fighting a constant uphill battle to free themselves from the shackles of bondage, subordination, oppression, and other forms of mistreatment, both within and outside of their homes. It was very difficult for women to survive if they were not given a place in the corridors of power, where they could help create policies and programs and see those policies and programs put into action (Mandal, 2013). Education empowered women to face their own fears and increased their sense of self-dignity, both of which were important for achieving gender equality. Without the participation of all women, it was difficult to envision a robust democratic society. Participation was an essential means of enhancing living conditions.

## **2.6 Women Empowerment in Pakistan: Historical Perspectives**

The quest for women's empowerment in Pakistan dated back to the efforts of Muslim reformers like Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, who championed education as a means to empower women. Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah also held a favorable stance toward women's rights. Post-independence, Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah worked tirelessly to bridge socio-economic disparities affecting women (Sajid, 2017). Before 1947, Muslim women in Punjab exhibited a proclivity toward voting for the Muslim League, actively participating in large-scale public demonstrations. The pivotal year of 1947 saw the enactment of the Pakistan (Creation of Pakistan) Ordinance, granting Pakistani women the right to suffrage. Subsequently, in 1956, under the interim Constitution, women's right to vote in national elections was reaffirmed. This inclusivity extended to the constitutional provisions for reserving seats for women in Parliament, a practice that persisted from 1956 to 1973 (Shomiala, 2018).

Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's administration (1970-1977) marked a progressive era for women's rights. Women gained access to government services previously unavailable to them. Notably, approximately 10% of seats in the National Assembly and 5% in provincial assemblies were reserved for women, without restrictions on contesting general seats. The Constitution of Pakistan, adopted in 1973, guaranteed gender equality, explicitly stating that there should be "no discrimination on the basis of sex alone." It also emphasized the protection of marriage, family, motherhood, and



children, along with encouraging women's "full participation in all spheres of national life" (Mobeen, 2018).

Saleem et al. (2021) investigated that during General Zia-ul-Haq's military regime (1977-1986), significant strides were taken in women's development:

- i. Establishment of the Women's Division in the Cabinet Secretariat.
- ii. Formation of the Commission on the Status of Women.
- iii. Inclusion of a chapter on women in development in the Sixth Plan.
- iv. Induction of 20 women members into the Majlis-e-Shoora in 1981.
- v. Doubling of women's reserved quota in the National Assembly through nonparty elections in 1985.

However, this period also saw the initiation of Islamization policies, which included discriminatory legislation against women. Sports participation and spectating were prohibited for women, and practices like purdah were promoted. Additionally, fundamental rights, including protection from discrimination based on sex, were suspended, as guaranteed in the Constitution of 1973. Benazir Bhutto, during her terms in office (1988-1990 and 1993-1996), prioritized social issues affecting women. Although she announced plans for initiatives like women's police stations, courts, and development banks, she faced challenges in repealing controversial Hudood laws due to constitutional limitations (Mehmood, 2019).

In 1997, the Nawaz Sharif government proposed a fifteenth constitutional amendment aiming to replace the existing legal system with a comprehensive Islamic one. This proposal sparked opposition from women's groups, human rights activists, and opposition parties, who called for the repeal of discriminatory Hudood legislation. During Pervez Musharraf's regime (1999-2008), several key steps were taken: Establishment of the Ministry of Women Development in September 2004. An ordinance was signed by General Musharraf in July 2006 for the immediate release on bail of around 1,300 women in jails on charges other than terrorism and murder. The Women's Protection Bill was passed by the Pakistani parliament in late 2006, repealing some of the Hudood Ordinances. A 10% quota for women in Central Superior Services was approved by the Cabinet. President Asif Zardari's government

(2008-2013) prioritized addressing discriminatory laws against women, resulting in several critical legislative acts:

- i. Adoption of the Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act 2010.
- ii. Enactment of the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act.
- iii. Introduction of the Acid Control and Acid Crime Act and Prevention of Anti-Women Practices Act.
- iv. Implementation of the National Commission for Human Rights Act 2012 to monitor overall human rights.
- v. Enactment of the Women in Distress and Detention Fund Act 2011, providing financial and legal aid to deserving women.

Furthermore, 26 Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Centers for women were established across various districts to provide immediate relief to female victims of violence. The Benazir Income Support Program directly assisted around one million women, while the National Commission on the Status of Women was strengthened to monitor women's rights violations. Proposals to increase women's representation in the judiciary were under consideration. Under Nawaz Sharif's leadership, the government prioritized equal opportunities for women, recognizing them as an integral part of society. Initiatives like the Prime Minister's Youth Loan allocated 50% of the scheme to women, encouraging them to establish businesses and attain equal rights (Government of Pakistan, 2014).

In South Asia, Pakistan had the widest gender gap and discrimination against women at all levels persisted. Although the world had achieved some progress toward gender equality and women empowerment, a significant gap remained, as revealed in the UN's working report conducted during 2018, which ranked Pakistan 148th among 149th in terms of women's empowerment, having closed only 55% of the overall gender gap (Batool et al., 2021). In Pakistan, women's value in society was strongly affected by socio-cultural norms and values. Although the male-dominating society was not constant throughout the country, it generally persisted.

The damage of legal laws was well-known, and the gender gap was deeply rooted. Men were more inclined to hold the power, while women were adversely

affected in all spheres of life (Malik & Courtney, 2011; Madhani, 2007). According to the book by Anatol Lieven titled *Pakistan: A Hard Country*, Pakistan was depicted as a diverse country based on a male-ruling culture where people valued their culture more, with cultural roots covering social, economic, and political discrimination against women. Consequently, women were deprived of their fundamental and constitutional rights due to their low level of education, illogical cultural norms, and performances (Sathar & Kazi, 2000).

The most significant obstacle that Pakistan faced was its low standing in numerous global guides about eliminating the gender gap and empowering women. Despite the low international and even regional ranking of the country, 72% of women contributed to household food security through agricultural activities and 22.53% were part of the overall civilian labor force in Pakistan (Habib et al., 2019). Their contribution to educational and economic activities was undermined and unrecognized, resulting in lower wages and minimal compensation. The overall female literacy rate in Pakistan was 48%, with provincial variations: Punjab 54%, Sindh 44%, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa 36%, and Balochistan 24%, the lowest among all provinces (Naz et al., 2020). The province of Balochistan particularly lagged in educational facilities and literacy rates, presenting a significant challenge as thousands of girls remained illiterate throughout their lives (Hassan, 2020; UNPO, 2020).

Equal rights for all citizens were promised by the Constitution of Pakistan (1973), which rejected discrimination based solely on gender and aimed to certify full participation of women in all domains of life. The legitimate constitution and its emphasis on equal rights and opportunities for women were intended to address the traditionally low position of women in society and their limited participation in most social sectors (Ashraf & Farah, 2007). Pakistan Vision 2025 (Pillar 1; Goal 3) set the target of increasing female labor force participation from 24% to 45%. The 2025 Vision aimed to embed five major components of women's empowerment, including activities that encouraged women's self-worth, control over choices, access to opportunities and resources, power, and the capability to effect social changes. However, in Pakistan, these objectives remained largely unattained (UNFPA, 2022; Malik & Courtney, 2011).

According to a recent survey, in Balochistan province, the literacy rate for women was only 27%, the lowest globally (Hassan, 2020). The World Bank (2011) emphasized that there was a difference in gender voices in society, with women's opinions often disregarded. Millennium Development Goal (MDG) No. 3 encouraged women's empowerment and gender equality, aiming to eliminate gender discrimination at primary and secondary levels by 2005 and at all levels by 2015 (Noreen & Khalid, 2012). Although it was observed as goal five of the SDGs by the United Nations, women's empowerment received insufficient attention, with education being highlighted as a crucial element in empowering women.

As documented in the National Education Policy of Pakistan (2017), knowledge has shifted away from its traditional role as a "public good" and has been commodified into marketable units, with higher education largely neglecting its social and cultural objectives in favor of national and global competitiveness. In this context, achieving gender equity became a luxury often overlooked (Leathwood & Read, 2009). Undoubtedly, the presence of women in higher education had significantly increased since the 1990s worldwide, with women outnumbering men in undergraduate and graduate programs, achieving educational milestones, and making their presence felt in public spheres. However, an increase in the number of women in higher education did not necessarily translate into true progress for women or empowerment through higher education (Leathwood & Read, 2009).

Furthermore, as development theory recognized gender as a critical dimension in addressing global challenges, and given that many higher education institutions were undertaking extensive curriculum innovations to adapt to evolving societal norms, the omission of this gender aspect was no longer acceptable (Yates, 2006). In the rapidly evolving global landscape, education stood as the cornerstone of comprehensive development. Within this realm, higher education emerged as the primary bedrock, furnishing public and private sectors with the skilled workforce needed to forge an innovative world. Universities, acting as crucibles of change, played a pivotal role in transforming society through diplomacy and civility. Simultaneously, it was imperative to bestow equal emphasis on education for both genders, recognizing the vital contributions of males and females alike (Sumera, 2015).

In stark contrast, the year 2000 witnessed a historic convergence of nations at a summit with the ambitious agenda of eradicating poverty and food insecurity, attaining universal primary education, achieving gender parity, empowering women, and curbing infant mortality within the first five years of life. Levene (2013) underscored the fifth goal, which championed the cause of gender equality and women's empowerment. This noble endeavor sought to obliterate all forms of injustice in public, societal, and private domains, while striving to establish equal economic and property rights for women. Additionally, it aimed to redress gender imbalances in the workplace. The advancement of women's rights emerged as a linchpin for the prosperity and well-being of any community, firmly grounded in the fundamental human right of equal treatment between the sexes (Trivedi, 2018).

Sengupta (2020) provided compelling evidence of a series of United Nations (UN) conferences that fervently advocated the interconnection between women's empowerment and sustainable development. These conferences culminated in the Copenhagen Declaration during the World Summit for Social Development, which unequivocally recognized the paramount importance of enabling individuals, particularly women, to enhance their own capabilities. This recognition bore critical significance for the advancement of women. Education surfaced as a pivotal milestone in women's empowerment, affording them the capacity to confront challenges, challenge traditional norms, and fundamentally enhance their quality of life. The imperative for women's involvement in programming and administration, active collaboration with community organizations, the establishment of self-improvement groups, and their direct engagement in program design and administration was underscored. Additionally, respecting women's interests and needs in employment and eradicating all forms of physical, mental, or social mistreatment of women were paramount in fostering an inclusive society.

When compared to other industries, the percentage of women employed in the education sector was notably encouraging and steadily on the rise. However, viewed in light of their population, both the percentage of women in the education sector and their empowerment within it were deemed inadequate and warranted attention. The Pakistan Economic Survey (2015) highlighted a noteworthy disparity in literacy rates, with only 49 percent of Pakistani women being literate, compared to a substantially higher 71 percent among males. Furthermore, neighboring countries like Sri Lanka

boasted significantly higher percentages of women with some form of higher education, emphasizing the need for concerted efforts to enhance educational opportunities for Pakistani women. Within Pakistan's higher education institutions, a mere 2.5 percent of students were women. The Pakistani government prioritized specialized, professional, and vocational education for women, underscoring its critical role in fostering progress and gender equality (Mamoon, 2006; Nelson, 2019).

Zafar and Ali (2018) observed that the higher education system exhibited significant gender-related segregation, particularly concerning female students and staff members. This segregation was particularly noticeable in public settings. Factors such as learning methodologies, assessment procedures, and inflexible admission and departure policies within higher education perpetuated gender disparities. Female students faced considerable challenges related to standard admission processes and preconceived notions, which affected their educational journeys. Furthermore, faculty and staff members in women's educational institutions were less accepting of comparable practices compared to other forms of segregation, which not only had adverse consequences on the careers and aspirations of these women but also cast a shadow on the future prospects of female scholars, competent professionals, and the broader educational community.

Noureen (2017) shed light on the significance of access to education as a potent indicator of the status and standing of women within a specific society. In the context of discussions on women's empowerment in higher education, it was widely acknowledged that the proportion of female undergraduate students at universities was experiencing rapid growth. However, discrimination against women in fields traditionally associated with femininity had endured since 1965, resulting in their underrepresentation in the labor force. Women's voices continued to be marginalized at the upper echelons of numerous disciplines, despite significant progress toward gender equality in several nations over recent decades.

Furthermore, the availability of educational opportunities for young women and girls remained constrained across all tiers of the educational system, from primary and secondary schools to universities and PhD programs. Addressing these injustices required proactive measures to level the academic playing field, recognizing that a country could not afford to hinder half of its population from realizing their full potential. Additionally, the proportion of enrolled female students in higher education

institutions (HEIs) fell far short of sufficiency. This inadequacy was further exacerbated in rural areas, where universities and colleges were scarcer, compounding the issue of women's access to higher education on a global scale. The extent of their involvement in organization-related opportunities was severely limited. Social and cultural norms hindered women from attaining positions of influence within their communities. Therefore, it was imperative for women in Pakistan to have unimpeded access to higher levels of education (Batool et al., 2018).

In the past decade, Pakistan witnessed significant growth in higher education. The establishment of the Higher Education Commission (HEC) led to an increase in the number of universities and improved access to higher education for a larger proportion of the population. More students, both male and female, graduate from degree-awarding institutions (DAIs) each year. Research became a central focus, and the range of fields for students to choose from expanded to meet the country's needs in the global technical and professional environment. However, the participation and access of women to higher education were predominantly measured in terms of numbers. It was essential to examine whether this expansion of higher education truly enhanced women's capacity for self-development by providing not only access to Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) but also access to a relevant and empowering curriculum (HEC, 2017).

However, challenges persisted, including gender-based violence, limited access to education, and disparities in economic opportunities. Cultural norms, patriarchal structures, and discriminatory practices continued to shape women's experiences. The future prospects for women's empowerment in Pakistan called for a multifaceted approach that challenged discriminatory practices, promoted education, and ensured economic opportunities, fostering a more inclusive and equitable society. Examining this historical context provided insights into the complexities of the journey toward greater gender equality in Pakistan.

## **2.7 Breaking the Glass Ceiling**

The "glass ceiling" concept underscores the pervasive gender and racial inequalities that persisted in society, representing a form of discrimination that transcended other forms of inequality (Cotter et al., 2001). This review critically examined the invisible barriers that hindered women's advancement to influential

positions in both the workplace and politics. It emphasized that women's empowerment aimed to overcome deeply entrenched historical discrimination rather than promote dominance over the opposite gender.

### ***2.7.1 Perpetuating Inequality: The Unseen Barriers***

While overt discrimination against women may have diminished, the insidious issue of the glass ceiling continued to grow. Deceptive practices in job advertisements and hiring processes appeared unbiased, yet subtle preferences for men persisted. Organizations often touted equal opportunity policies, masking hidden challenges such as harassment, doubts about women's capabilities, and societal pressure regarding appearance (Cotter et al., 2001). These concealed obstacles complicated the analysis of the barriers women faced.

### ***2.7.2 The Glass Ceiling in Pakistan: Unearthing Hidden Discrimination***

In Pakistan, discrimination against women was palpable, though not always evident in mainstream media. Despite strides in professions like medicine, law, and information technology, unfavorable conditions persisted. Gender disparities in higher education enrollment persisted, driven by socio-cultural attitudes and economic constraints (Malik & Courtney, 2011). Additionally, family commitments and a lack of required experience hindered women's career progression, creating a paradox where indirect social barriers impeded their advancement (Kaur, 2018).

### ***2.7.3 Breaking Through: Exceptional Cases vs. Systemic Challenges***

While there were instances of women shattering the glass ceiling and reaching high-ranking positions, these exceptions inadvertently reinforced the pervasive effect of the glass ceiling. The success of a few obscured the challenges faced by many women due to unsupportive environments or overpowering fears. It was crucial to recognize that the number of underrepresented women far outweighed the number of women in top positions (UNDP, 2021).

## **2.8 Women Leadership: Glimpses of Progress and Persistent Inequities**

In academic and political spheres, women in Pakistan faced imbalances in representation. Although women participated in political affairs, only one female politician led the country to date. The case of Ms. Benazir Bhutto exemplified women's empowerment, yet significant hurdles to participation and decision-making



persisted (Khan & Khan, 2007). Women's presence in media was notable but still lagged in leadership positions.

### ***2.8.1 Policy Measures and Economic Implications***

Policy initiatives like the Election Act of 2017 aimed to increase women's representation in parliament. However, women's votes remained underrepresented, reflecting the need for further progress (Zafar, 2018). The glass ceiling not only impacted women's status but also hindered economic growth, as the IMF suggested that women's economic empowerment could significantly boost Pakistan's GDP (Salman, 2016). Overcoming this barrier was crucial for sustainable economic development.

Gender stereotypes and entrenched social norms presented formidable obstacles to women's progress across South Asian societies, including Pakistan. Within Pakistan's predominantly male-dominated social fabric, patriarchal traditions dictated the perceived value and role of women (Women in Pakistan, 2000). Although women participated in various spheres, they often grappled with subconscious acceptance of male dominance. In urban settings, specialized job requirements and societal expectations continued to hinder women's access to influential positions. In politics, women faced challenges in securing equitable representation, while women in rural areas confronted persistent barriers to exercising their human rights (Wallis et al., 2010).

While educational attainment was often emphasized as a key aspect of women's emancipation, issues in the workplace and leadership opportunities remained overlooked. Deep-seated societal taboos and perceptions of women's purported biological frailty further impeded their progress (Thomas Reuters Foundation, 2018). Family obligations and inadequate access to suitable education also limited women's economic participation. Pakistan's inclusion in the list of unsafe states for women highlighted the pressing need for transformative change (Wacker, 2017).

Despite constitutional provisions permitting women's full political participation (Latif et al., 2019), uneven socioeconomic development perpetuated conceptual divisions between men and women. Passed legislation aimed at supporting women's rights yielded limited impact due to ingrained social practices (Aftab, 2008). The establishment of a committee in 1976 to safeguard women's rights underscored

the ongoing struggle to translate legal theory into practical empowerment. Reserved seats for women in the National Assembly and the Senate signified progress in political participation. However, the persistence of oppositional mindsets impeded women's attainment of equal rights and positions in Pakistan's multifaceted political, economic, and social landscape (Zafar, 2018).

International entities, such as the United Nations, actively championed female emancipation in Pakistan. The integration of women's empowerment components into Pakistan Vision (2025) demonstrated concerted efforts to bolster women's self-worth, decision-making autonomy, and societal influence (World Economic Forum, 2016). Nevertheless, familial restrictions on girls and women continued to limit access to these opportunities, creating disparities among different socioeconomic strata. Formal statutory laws, Islamic legal principles, and customary practices converged to shape women's experiences in Pakistan. The contradiction between formal legal standards and ingrained practices that perpetuated gender-based violence and discrimination underscored the complexity of women's empowerment (World Bank, 2019). Despite promises of equitable opportunities for women, substantive disparities persisted in political, social, and economic institutions (Khan, 2023). The underrepresentation of women in labor force participation and income distribution starkly contrasted with the achievements of a minority of women in prestigious positions (UNDP, 2021).

Despite these discrepancies, international efforts were initiated to promote women's empowerment. Following decolonization, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) was established in 1946 to advocate for gender equality ("Commission on the Status of Women," n.d.). Subsequently, various agreements and institutions were formed to further this cause, including the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) in 1976, which collaborated with national governments to advance gender equality ("UN Creates New Structure for Empowerment of Women," 2010). Additionally, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979, widely recognized as the international bill of rights for women (World Bank, 2019). CEDAW encompassed a broad spectrum of rights, including political participation, health, education, employment, marriage, family relations, and legal equality.

Furthermore, UN efforts to increase women's representation in the parliament of Pakistan played a pivotal role in enacting gender-sensitive legislation. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) played a key role in establishing the Women's Parliamentary Caucus, facilitating the introduction of critical bills addressing domestic violence and sexual harassment. The UNDP's project, "Strengthening Democracy through Parliamentary Development in Pakistan," initiated in 2008, furthered these endeavors. Collaborative efforts between the UN and numerous non-governmental organizations (NGOs) contributed significantly to legal empowerment for women, although achieving widespread emancipation remained a formidable challenge. Many organizations persisted in their mission to align Pakistan with the principles of CEDAW, aiming for societal transformation (UNDP, 2010).

### ***2.8.3 Commitments of Pakistan to Women's Constitutional Rights***

Pakistan demonstrated its commitment to women's rights and gender equality by aligning with key international agreements, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action, and the Sustainable Development Goals (UN, 2017). UN initiatives in Pakistan aimed to break down barriers hindering women's progress by establishing conducive working environments and ensuring income security.

Significant constitutional amendments were implemented in Pakistan since the early 21st century to empower women. Article 25 of the constitution guaranteed equal status to women, asserting that all citizens were equal before the law and prohibiting discrimination based on sex alone. Article 2(3) empowered the state to formulate specific rules addressing challenges faced by women and children. Additionally, Article 34 encouraged women's participation in all aspects of life and called for measures enabling their active engagement in social activities (Government of Pakistan, 2014).

While robust legislation existed to protect women's rights in Pakistan, its implementation remained a challenge. Laws like the Women's Protection Act, enacted in 2006 to safeguard women against rape, faced difficulties in enforcement. The Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, passed in 2010, aimed to

combat harassment, but cases continued to be reported, especially in the context of online harassment facilitated by social media platforms (UNDP, 2021).

In 2011, Pakistan introduced a comprehensive act aimed at providing a secure environment for women and girls (Lari, 2011). Despite these efforts, reported cases persisted, particularly among marginalized groups such as the economically disadvantaged and the individuals with limited education. The 18th Amendment, passed by the National Assembly of Pakistan in 2010, decentralized authority over various social issues to provinces, including legislation pertaining to women's rights. This shift empowered provinces to independently address social conditions and advance women's emancipation (World Bank, 2019), leading to initiatives aimed at reducing gender disparities.

The Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, introduced in 2012 to combat violence against women in private spaces, faced opposition from influential political parties and the Council of Islamic Ideology, which deemed it contrary to Islamic principles (Khattak, 2019). The Anti-Honor Crime Bill was enacted in response to the murder of social media figure Qandeel Baloch in 2016, aiming to combat honor killings. This legislation classified honor-related murders as criminal offenses with severe penalties. However, challenges persisted in effectively curbing these crimes due to deeply entrenched societal attitudes (Rashid, 2018). Additionally, the act targeted the rape of mentally and physically challenged individuals as well as minors (Bilal, 2016), though implementation gaps hindered its efficacy. These legal measures, though significant, faced limitations in the face of enduring social norms, evident in unequal inheritance rights and minimum marriage ages (Naseem et al., 2024).

## **2.9 Women's Empowerment: Global Perspective**

The world progressively became more interconnected, with globalization involving the deepening interdependence of nations, characterized by the rapid flow of goods, ideas, and the transformation of institutions and policies on international levels. This phenomenon yielded both advantageous and adverse effects on countries (Kaur, 2018). Women's empowerment pertained to enhancing the social, economic, political, and legal standing of women, ensuring equal rights and fostering their confidence to assert their rights in societal, economic, familial, and personal aspects

(Shahid, 2023). The connection between globalization and women's empowerment was not straightforward. It demonstrated a positive relationship between globalization, media, educational attainment, economic productivity, the exercise of social and political responsibilities, and the authority to demand respect for individual and group rights. It was also instrumental in endorsing economic development, particularly if women could realize their full potential as skilled employees, caregivers, and responsible household managers (King & Mason, 2020).

In the 2016 World Economic Forum, women's economic equality was a significant topic of discussion. Developing countries, such as Pakistan, faced limitations in terms of resources that hindered their integration into the global market. Liberalization, a key facet of globalization, aimed to make the export market profitable by promoting competition, improving quality, and generating employment. However, this process also led to increased unemployment rates in Pakistan (Economic Survey, 2014-15). Although Pakistan made efforts to stabilize its economy, it held the potential to create more opportunities for women's participation in various aspects of life (Ortiz-Ospina & Tzvetkova, 2017).

Family structures shifted from joint families to nuclear families, indicating a move toward individualism in Pakistani culture. Gender roles evolved, and women's rights became a significant topic of discussion. Women in Pakistan strived for better education and more opportunities, echoing a global trend (Kumar & Sharma, 2014). Gender equality, as defined by the UNFPA (2014), implied equal opportunities, rights, and obligations for women and men in all spheres of life. These changes had far-reaching effects on improving the status and empowerment of women in Pakistan. (Lavanya et al., 2018) also found a decrease in gender disparities and a positive association between globalization and gender development.

In addition to increased autonomy for women, progress was made in education. Education was considered a fundamental human right and a crucial factor for building strong societies (Cohen et al., 2006). Access to quality education was not just a matter of human rights; it also affected a country's labor market and its ability to transition from an agrarian to an industrial economy. However, a stagnant job market, especially for women, directly impacted a country's development and could push families to the brink of poverty. People with limited higher education skills faced a

higher risk of poverty and limited employment opportunities, contributing to social and economic inequality and educational marginalization (UNESCO, 2010).

For women, globalization played a significant role in advancing women's rights movements and empowering them economically. However, the progress of women's rights was slow, described as "too little globalization" by Supp (2009), where economic and material resources crossed borders, but the crucial element of women's empowerment and knowledge did not. Without access to higher education, social progress was constrained, affecting not only women but also other marginalized individuals.

Despite the positive correlation between globalization and women's empowerment, conflicting views existed. Some studies focused on employment and wage disparities, noting that improvements in women's earnings might lead to increased exploitation at work and at home (Neumayer, 2010). Duflo (2012) suggested that limited opportunities within the labor market could contribute to unequal treatment of women within households and lower aspirations for daughters. It also reinforced the idea that women had less need for services such as higher education if there was no place for them outside the home. In many societies, traditional patriarchal gender roles dominated, significantly influencing the roles of men and women in both formal and informal markets. Men were traditionally seen as the heads of households, holding decision-making power in financial and family matters and opportunities like higher education and employment (Castellani, 2014). Despite the increasing prominence of women, they continued to face deeply entrenched biases (Deb & Sen, 2016).

The traditional roles of women in Pakistan were evolving, with women gaining greater autonomy. This paper aimed to investigate the changing roles of women in Pakistani society due to higher education and employment opportunities resulting from globalization. This issue was not just academic but central to Pakistan's development process. It was essential to assess the impact of globalization on women's lives and understand its positive and negative effects on the status of women in Pakistan today (Tabassum, 2016).

Women's empowerment emerged as a pivotal global concern, commanding the attention of policymakers and researchers across various social and economic

domains. However, in Pakistan, empowerment remained predominantly under the control of men, resulting in the deprivation of women's rights. Addressing this issue was paramount for improving the present societal landscape. This was particularly salient in Pakistan, where women faced restricted access to resources and contended with an existing male-dominated societal framework, all in pursuit of enhancing their quality of life (Noreen, 2012). Noreen highlighted that women's empowerment was a global issue, especially acute for marginalized women under male dominance, with nearly 70% of women worldwide experiencing poverty.

Scholars provided diverse analyses of the concept of 'women's empowerment.' According to the United Nations (2001), women's empowerment encompassed five key components: self-respect, the right to make and exercise choices, access to opportunities and resources, the power to control one's own life within and outside the home, and the ability to influence social change for a more equitable socio-economic order. Friendmann (1992) delineated women's empowerment across various forms of power, including social, political, economic, and psychological dimensions. Social power involved access to critical resources like financial assets, information, knowledge, skills, and active participation in social organizations.

Political power pertained to a household member's ability to partake in decision-making processes, particularly those impacting their future. Economic power denoted access to income, assets, food, markets, and influence in economic decision-making. Psychological power related to an individual's sense of self-assuredness, evident in confident behavior and self-worth. Building on these dimensions, Kumar and Sharma (2014) identified three pivotal variables of empowerment: general, economic, and social empowerment. Conversely, Fayyaz (2002) categorized women's empowerment into economic, social, and political spheres.

Women's empowerment could be defined as a process wherein women gained equal control over resources, including financial autonomy, decision-making power, and access to knowledge and information (Kabeer, 2005). This process enabled women to challenge previous conditions where their agency was denied, ultimately strengthening their capacity for economic independence, control over life choices, and freedom from violence (Rao & Kelleher, 1995). From an economic standpoint, women's empowerment involved accessing material resources such as land, finances, credit, income, and the availability of employment opportunities. Socially, it pertained

to recognizing the vital role women played in serving their families and communities over the long term. Politically, it entailed the freedom to make life choices, representation in political and decision-making bodies, and the enjoyment of fundamental rights as stipulated in constitutions and international agreements (Aurat Foundation, 2011).

Cheston and Kuhn (2002) argued that self-confidence in women, while important, did not directly lead to empowerment. Rather, it contributed significantly to a woman's capability and motivation to navigate the social discriminations and inequitable systems she encountered. Decision-making power concerning credit and savings had the potential to enhance the well-being of women and their households. Additionally, investments in working women could expand employment opportunities, thereby reducing poverty (Kuhn, 2002).

Community development programs played a pivotal role in women's empowerment in Bangladesh. Women's involvement in these programs led to improvements in education, health, and livelihoods, ultimately strengthening women in a predominantly male-dominated society (Pitt et al., 2003). Rahmato (1991) further emphasized the critical role of community development programs in empowering women by providing opportunities and nurturing their potential.

Kasali (2006) asserted that women served as the bedrock of social mobilization, making women's empowerment a highly cost-effective strategy for development. By affording women opportunities within community development programs, they could contribute significantly to the advancement of their respective areas. Reflecting on the outcomes of community development programs, Tauffiqu et al. (2015) emphasized the indispensable role of NGOs in progressing women's status in society. NGOs launched community development programs to offer employment opportunities, skills training, and accurate information for women. Renzetti and Curan (1992) contended that women's contributions were equally vital to men's in the developmental process. When formulating development plans, minimizing gender discrimination was pivotal for the success of such activities.

Will et al. (2012) introduced a model of women's empowerment specific to Bangladesh, highlighting three key elements: agency, resources, and achievements. These components were integral to realizing women's empowerment in practice.



Empowerment encompassed a multi-dimensional approach, and its effectiveness was contingent on the prevailing environmental factors. A safe and nurturing environment at the foundational level was imperative for women's empowerment. Learning from regional, national, and global experiences and case studies was crucial for fostering women's participation in various groups (Singh, 2009). Empowerment was a multifaceted process that enabled women to recognize their complete identity and capabilities over the course of their lives (Sushama, 1998).

### ***2.9.1 Empowerment across three Dimensions***

Personal empowerment involved cultivating individual knowledge, personal conviction, and the ability to overcome the impacts of internalized abuse. Relational empowerment encompassed the capacity to manage and influence the nature of relationships and the decisions made within them. Collective empowerment entailed individuals working together to achieve a more far-reaching impact than they might have achieved individually, involving engagement in political formations. It also suggested that collaborative efforts based on cooperation rather than competition could be involved (Rowlands, 1997).

The economic aspect played a significant role in women's empowerment. When women earned money through employment, they became a source of income for their families, contributing to their members' well-being and establishing a sense of economic independence (Kabeer, 2005). Paid employment signified financial power (Elliott et al., 2008), and financial autonomy was a potent factor in alleviating poverty (Biswas, 2010). Additionally, the status of working women was considered a key factor in advancing women's financial independence, serving as an indicator of their overall well-being within the nation (Mammen & Paxson, 2000). Women's participation in the labor force was a pivotal determinant in social advancement, directly influencing their level of autonomy, standard of living, and overall welfare (Sharma & Saha, 2015). The increasing trend of women's participation in the workforce, both in advanced and developing nations, garnered attention from both cultural and scholarly perspectives (Ackah et al., 2009). Various studies encapsulated and organized the frequently observed dimensions of women's empowerment, with each dimension encompassing a range of sub-domains, indicating the potential for women's empowerment (Schuler et al., 2002).

### ***2.9.2 Dimension One: Personal Empowerment***

Education stood as a potent catalyst for women's personal empowerment. It equipped them with essential knowledge, skills, and the self-assurance needed to actively engage in societal development (Uwakwe et al., 2008). This transformative power was most evident in its cognitive benefits, enhancing the quality of life for educated women and enabling them to make informed decisions regarding their health and that of their offspring (Chandra, 2018).

Moreover, education acted as a cornerstone for political engagement, nurturing self-confidence and inspiring women to seek higher positions within public discourse. This dynamic engagement resulted in their advocacy for fundamental services such as healthcare and social security (Mercy & Rani, 2019). Complementing this, formal education subtly delved into the psychological facets of empowerment, augmenting self-esteem, efficacy, and expectations for prospects (Stromquist, 2015).

Education's influence extended to family planning and rights awareness. Educated women tended to marry later and form smaller, healthier families. They were equipped with the knowledge and agency to prioritize healthcare, recognizing its significance for both themselves and their children. Simultaneously, education nurtured a profound understanding of rights and instilled the confidence to assert them (Girman, 2012). Furthermore, creating an environment that encouraged girls to express their views on human rights fostered their sense of security and dignity. This empowerment was particularly vital in contexts where patriarchal norms and economic uncertainties might challenge their rights (Gervais, 2011).

The literature review synthesized the multi-dimensional impact of education on women's empowerment, encompassing cognitive development, confidence-building, psychological well-being, family planning, and advocacy for rights. It emphasized the importance of addressing gender disparities in literacy rates, especially in developed nations. Understanding these nuanced influences of education on women's empowerment was integral to the creation of more inclusive and equitable societies (Engida et al., 2021).

Personal empowerment represented the fundamental level of empowerment, focusing on cultivating self-confidence and capability while addressing the effects of internalized oppression (Rowlands, 1995). It was important to note that achieving

personal empowerment did not automatically guarantee empowerment in close relationships or within the community. The core of every personal empowerment experience was shaped and influenced by various factors that, in turn, led to changes. According to Rowlands' original model (1995), key elements of women's personal empowerment included the cultivation of Education stood as a potent catalyst for women's personal empowerment. It equipped them with essential knowledge, skills, and the self-assurance needed to actively engage in societal development (Uwakwe et al., 2008). This transformative power was most evident in its cognitive benefits, enhancing the quality of life for educated women and enabling them to make informed decisions regarding their own health and that of their offspring (Chandra, 2018).

Moreover, education acted as a cornerstone for political engagement, nurturing self-confidence and inspiring women to seek higher positions within public discourse. This dynamic engagement resulted in their advocacy for fundamental services such as healthcare and social security (Mercy & Rani, 2019). Complementing this, formal education subtly delved into the psychological facets of empowerment, augmenting self-esteem, efficacy, and expectations for future prospects (Stromquist, 2015). Education's influence extended to family planning and rights awareness. Educated women tended to marry later and form smaller, healthier families. They were equipped with the knowledge and agency to prioritize healthcare, recognizing its significance for both themselves and their children.

Simultaneously, education nurtured a profound understanding of rights and instilled the confidence to assert them (Girman, 2012). Furthermore, creating an environment that encouraged girls to express their views on human rights fostered their sense of security and dignity. This empowerment was particularly vital in contexts where patriarchal norms and economic uncertainties might challenge their rights (Gervais, 2011). The literature review synthesized the multi-dimensional impact of education on women's empowerment, encompassing cognitive development, confidence-building, psychological well-being, family planning, and advocacy for rights. It emphasized the importance of addressing gender disparities in literacy rates, especially in developed nations.

Understanding these nuanced influences of education on women's empowerment was integral to the creation of more inclusive and equitable societies

(Engida et al., 2021). Personal empowerment represented the fundamental level of empowerment, focusing on cultivating self-confidence and capability while addressing the effects of internalized oppression (Rowlands, 1995). It was important to note that achieving personal empowerment did not automatically guarantee empowerment in close relationships or within the community. The core of every personal empowerment experience was shaped and influenced by various factors that, in turn, led to changes.

According to Rowlands (1995), key elements of women's personal empowerment included the cultivation of self-esteem, self-confidence, and dignity, along with the development of a sense of agency and an understanding of oneself within a broader context. These elements served as indicators of the ongoing empowerment process. An increase in these aspects signified that changes were occurring as a result of the development of these core elements (Odera et al., 2020). Self-esteem, self-confidence, and dignity, along with the development of a sense of agency and an understanding of oneself within a broader context. These elements served as indicators of the ongoing empowerment process. An increase in these aspects signified that changes were occurring as a result of the development of these core elements (Odera et al., 2020).

### ***2.9.3 Dimension Two: Relational Empowerment***

Research indicated that heightened social interaction among female program beneficiaries, community members, and leaders fostered improved communication. This increased contact encouraged the exchange of information, leading to significant behavioral and attitudinal shifts (Vakis et al., 2011). Furthermore, a substantial body of evidence underscored that educated women displayed a heightened interest in making informed decisions concerning their personal lives (Stromquist, 2015).

Educated women demonstrated a greater proclivity to engage in public participation and attend political gatherings. Numerous instances showcased qualified women in developing nations benefiting from political campaigns. Data also established a positive correlation between higher education levels of women and the presence of democratic governance in their respective countries (Chandra, 2018). A well-educated woman possessed the adaptability to assimilate into any class or culture, freely articulate her opinions, and contribute meaningfully to the societal advancement of her community. The acquired training aided women in effectively balancing their lives, enhancing their bargaining power, and becoming more proficient mothers with improved spousal relationships (Magaji, 2014).

The educational journey prompted mothers to assume a more conscious role in fulfilling their responsibilities toward their children. A well-educated mother substantially influenced the growth and development of her children, underscoring the critical role education played in this regard. In many cases, Nigerian women took the lead in their children's education, often sacrificing their necessities for the betterment of their children's futures. These mothers were willing to go to great lengths and face considerable risks to secure an education for their children, a testament to their profound understanding of its importance (Magaji, 2014). Furthermore, an educated mother's increased influence in household negotiations equipped her to secure additional resources for her children (Benedicta, 2011).

### ***2.9.4 Dimension Three: Social Empowerment***

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) introduced two pivotal indices in 1995, namely the Gender-related Development Index (GDI) and the Gender Empowerment Indicator (GEM). The GDI tracked gender disparities in life expectancy, educational attainment, and employment, offering a gender-responsive

extension of the Human Development Index (HDI) (Silva et al., 2021). Women's empowerment served as a countermeasure against both absolute and relative gender discrimination. It was imperative to recognize and assess the nuanced facets of women's empowerment, acknowledging that it extended beyond a simple comparison of influence between men and women. Women's complete autonomy, encompassing aspects like the freedom of movement, was vital to their overall liberty, regardless of whether this freedom aligned with that of men.

This perspective advocated for a comprehensive evaluation of women's status and rights. While certain aspects of women's empowerment might warrant comparisons with men, it was imperative to address these dynamics with a nuanced understanding (Lindberg et al., 2015). Education equipped women with the tools to lead dignified lives and raised their awareness of their rights within society. It empowered them to take swift and effective legal action against prevalent forms of violence against women, such as dowry-related issues, forced prostitution, female feticide, and child marriage (Basheer, 2018). Engaging women in education as active members of society enabled them to exercise their rights and fulfill their obligations. It facilitated more informed decision-making in areas of political participation and life choices (Magaji, 2012).

Furthermore, women's education significantly contributed to social development, manifesting in lower birth rates, reduced child and maternal mortality rates, and enhanced gender equality. This not only ensured equal rights and opportunities for all individuals but also strengthened democratic governance by mitigating corruption and amplifying women's representation in policymaking. Recent studies highlighted the expanding role of women in areas concerning education, safety, access to clean drinking water, and combating crimes against women (Clots-Figueras, 2012).

Access to justice formed a cornerstone of women's political empowerment, underscoring the notion that women's rights are human rights. Failure to address challenges faced by women in enforcing their routine activities through the justice system perpetuated customary practices that limited women's choices. This emphasized the pivotal role of a judicial system in upholding and enforcing fair rights for women, including property ownership and inheritance rights (Benschop, 2002). Empowerment encompassed a multi-dimensional approach, and its effectiveness was

contingent on the prevailing environmental factors. A safe and nurturing environment at the foundational level was imperative for women's empowerment. Learning from regional, national, and global experiences and case studies was crucial for fostering women's participation in various groups (Singh, 2009). Empowerment was a multifaceted process that enabled women to recognize their complete identity and capabilities over the course of their lives (Sushama, 1998). Rowlands (1997) delineated empowerment across three dimensions:

- i. Personal empowerment involves cultivating individual knowledge, personal conviction, and the ability to overcome the impacts of internalized abuse.
- ii. Relational empowerment encompasses the capacity to manage and influence the nature of a relationship and the decisions made within it.
- iii. Collective empowerment entailed individuals working together to achieve a more far-reaching impact than they might have achieved individually, involving engagement in political formations.

It also suggested that this could involve collaborative efforts based on cooperation rather than competition (Rowlands, 1997). Over the course of nearly five years, the Burundi case study scrutinized a 30 percent quota for women's participation in political institutions. While quotas did increase the number of women in decision-making bodies at all levels, including local governance, they did not inevitably translate into substantive and effective representation for women or a discernible reduction in gender inequality. Women, particularly those residing in rural and urban areas, continued to grapple with significant challenges such as poverty, limited access to land and property, illiteracy, and substantial domestic responsibilities (International Warning, 2012).

The economic aspect played a significant role in women's empowerment. When women earned money through employment, they became a source of income for their families, contributing to their members' well-being and establishing a sense of economic independence (Kabeer, 2005). Paid employment signified financial power (Elliott, 2008), and financial autonomy was a potent factor in alleviating poverty (Biswas, 2010). Additionally, the status of working women was considered a key factor in advancing women's financial independence, serving as an indicator of their overall well-being within the nation (Mammen & Paxson, 2000). Women's

participation in the labor force was a pivotal determinant in social advancement, directly influencing their level of autonomy, standard of living, and overall welfare (Sharma & Saha, 2015). The increasing trend of women's participation in the workforce, both in advanced and developing nations, garnered attention from both cultural and scholarly perspectives (Ackah et al., 2009). Table 1 encapsulated and organized the frequently observed dimensions of women's empowerment, with each dimension encompassing a range of sub-domains, indicating the potential for women's empowerment (Malhotra et al., 2005).

Over the past few decades, globalization exerted a significant impact on the lives of women worldwide, particularly those in developing nations (Chaudhry et al., 2009). The recent wave of globalization facilitated women's participation in various aspects of life, encompassing socio-political, economic, recreational, and cultural domains (Straw & Glennie, 2012). Nevertheless, women continued to face deprivation in numerous spheres, including limited access to education, employment opportunities, healthcare, and even their fundamental human rights. This widespread mistreatment, although historically ingrained, became more apparent and pervasive with the advent of globalization.

While there was an optimistic perspective on the advancements it brought to women's lives globally, it was essential to acknowledge that globalization also harbored the potential for undesirable and contentious consequences (Chaudhry et al., 2015). Therefore, a comprehensive examination of globalization's impact on women's lives and their empowerment was imperative. Despite their unique role in society, women often found themselves within a disadvantaged class due to various social barriers and constraints. They were frequently the most marginalized and least privileged members of households, burdened with the primary responsibility of caregiving (Jayachandran, 2015). Despite their second-class status in numerous societies, the significance of women's issues gained prominence worldwide, as the repercussions of gender discrimination in political, socio-economic, and employment grounds came to light.

Since 1975, the "UN Declaration of Women" there had been a steady increase in attention and action directed toward women's concerns. Empowerment emerged as a focal area for women's organizations, government agencies, and international donor organizations. The underlying assumption was that empowerment would follow if



women were equipped with an understanding of their circumstances, knowledge of their rights, and skills that had traditionally been denied to them. In a globalizing world, gender equality and the empowerment of women were pivotal instruments for achieving sustainable development in societies (UN, 2004).

In Pakistan, the combination of escalating population growth and diminishing employment opportunities led to a widening gap between the privileged and the underprivileged (Stephan, 2018). The concept of market liberalization paved the way for the unrestricted movement of goods, labor, ideas, and services on local, regional, and international scales (Chandy & Seidel, 2016). Consequently, as competition intensified, there was an upswing in educational and professional institutions, resulting in enhanced quality of education. Specifically, for women, the pursuit of education, work, and mobility became relatively more acceptable in society, especially in urban areas. These socio-cultural shifts had far-reaching implications for women's empowerment and their standing in society.

Therefore, it was imperative for developing nations like Pakistan to comprehensively understand the interplay between the evolving global landscape and the marginalized group (women) that constituted a significant portion of the country's population. Pakistan had yet to fully harness the potential benefits of globalization (Farooq et al., 2019). However, strategic alterations in economic and higher education policies could have brought about a transformative shift. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) underscored the significance of higher education, with target 4.3 of SDG-4 aiming to "ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational, and tertiary education, including university" by 2030 (Owens, 2017).

The world witnessed an escalating trend toward integration. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), globalization encompassed heightened interconnectedness and interdependence among peoples and nations, involving two interconnected elements: the widening of international borders to facilitate swifter flows of goods, services, capital, individuals, and ideas, and the consequent alterations in institutions and policies, both at national and international levels that fostered or supported such flows. Globalization possessed the potential for both positive and negative impacts on a country's development (Kaur, 2018). Women's empowerment referred to the augmentation and enhancement of women's social, economic, and legal

standing, ensuring parity of rights. This empowerment was pivotal in allowing women to confidently assert their entitlements in socio-economic, familial, and individual realms (Shahid, 2023).

The nexus between globalization and women's empowerment was not a straightforward linear relationship. There existed a positive correlation between globalization, media influence, educational attainment, economic productivity, the exercise of social and political agency, and the capacity to demand the acknowledgment of individual and collective rights. Additionally, it was instrumentally beneficial as it endorsed economic progress when women could realize their full potential as capable and productive workers, nurturers, caregivers, and often more astute household managers than their male counterparts in many societies (UNIFEM, 2008).

The 2016 World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, saw women's economic equality emerge as a pivotal topic among global leaders. Economically, developing nations like Pakistan encountered resource constraints that hindered their integration into the international market. In theory, liberalization, a cardinal tenet of globalization, aimed to render the export market lucrative by fostering competition, elevating quality, and generating employment. However, such a process led to an upswing in the unemployment rate, escalating from an average of 3.5% during 1981-90 to 6.0% in 2015 (Economic Survey, 2014-15). While Pakistan had regained access to international capital markets, receiving disbursements from the IMF and other development partners, which would undoubtedly assist in stabilizing the nation's economy, the potential for broader opportunities for women's participation in various spheres of life remained a crucial facet (Ortiz-Ospina & Tzvetkova, 2017).

Moreover, families in Pakistan transitioned toward nuclear structures rather than joint families, signifying a shift toward individualism within the culture. Gender roles underwent transformation, and women's rights assumed a significant position in discussions and concerns. Women in Pakistan now strive for greater educational attainment and accomplishments, aligning with a global trend (Kumar & Sharma, 2014). Specifically, for women, the acquisition of education, employment, and mobility became relatively more acceptable in urban areas. According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA, 2014), gender equality denotes a society where women and men have equal access to opportunities, outcomes, rights, and

responsibilities across all spheres of life. These shifts had far-reaching effects, elevating women's status and empowerment in Pakistan (Lavanya et al., 2018).

Furthermore, there had been an enhancement in education, complementing the broader increase in autonomy for women. Education was not only regarded as a widely accepted humanitarian responsibility but was also recognized as an internationally mandated human right (Cohen et al., 2006). Attaining a quality education extended beyond a mere human rights issue; an undereducated populace directly impacted the labor market and a nation's ability to transition from an agrarian to an industrial economy. Nevertheless, a static labor market, particularly concerning women, directly hampered a nation's development and placed the family institution on the brink of poverty. Presently, individuals lacking higher education skills faced heightened vulnerability to poverty and limited employment prospects, which, in turn, contributed to social and economic disparities and the marginalization of education (UNESCO, 2010).

Globalization significantly impacted women, fueling movements for women's rights and facilitating their economic independence and full autonomy. However, advancements in women's rights were sluggish. Supp (2009) termed this phenomenon "insufficient globalization," emphasizing that while money and goods traversed borders, the essential element of knowledge, crucial for empowering women, often lagged behind. The lack of proficiency in higher education skills not only restricted women but also affected other vulnerable and marginalized groups, limiting their opportunities for social progress.

Despite a body of literature supporting the positive link between globalization and gender empowerment, dissenting opinions existed. Previous studies primarily focused on employment and wage gaps when examining the effects of globalization on women's rights. However, even with improvements in women's earnings, they may have faced increased exploitation both at work and in the home (Neumayer, 2010). Duflo (2012) suggested that a scarcity of opportunities in the labor market paradoxically contributed to unequal treatment of women within households. This situation led parents to have lower aspirations for their daughters, reinforcing the idea that women perceived fewer requirements for services like higher education when they saw limited roles for themselves beyond domestic spheres.

In many societies worldwide, traditional patriarchal gender norms still prevailed, significantly influencing the extent of men's and women's participation in formal and informal markets. Men typically assumed the role of household heads, wielding decision-making authority over financial and familial matters. Consequently, men were inherently afforded resources and opportunities, including decisions related to finance, family, and access to opportunities like higher education and employment (Castellani, 2014). Despite women gaining increased visibility, they grappled with deeply ingrained biases (Deb & Sen, 2016). In Pakistan, the conventional roles of women underwent transformation, heralding a new era of autonomy.

## **2.10 Higher Education and Women Empowerment: Global Perspectives**

In the realm of higher education, the empowerment of women holds significant importance, contributing to both national development and the broader advancement of society. The significance of higher education for women manifests in two pivotal ways. Firstly, it paves the way for qualified women to assume leadership roles within society, thereby serving as inspirational figures for younger generations. Inayatullah (1996) underscored the paramount importance accorded by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to women graduates. These women, owing to their educational background, constituted a critical component of a nation's skilled human capital, poised to make substantial contributions to the sustainable process of human development. Their contributions spanned various dimensions, encompassing their professional expertise within chosen domains, their influence as decision-makers in shaping policies related to social, economic, and cultural development, and their active participation in family and community life.

Usha and Sharma (2001) posited that women held a central role in the growth of society, with their contributions historically being of great significance throughout the flow of civilizations. Their engagement in the social fabric was consistently multifaceted, diverse, and highly valuable. The observation that access to quality education is generally low in remote regions has been explored in various studies concerning education in regressive regions. These studies shed light on significant factors (Audsley et al., 2016; Schwilch et al., 2017). These aspects encompass the pivotal role of public infrastructure in delivering education to communities (De-Piero et al., 2017; Schwilch et al., 2017; Song et al., 2017). Additionally, attention has been

directed toward the inclusion of marginalized ethnic groups in educational systems (Xiaoyan et al., 2018), as well as the contribution of education in promoting sustainable development and ecological consciousness within progressive communities (Laurentiu, 2018; Mili et al., 2018).

Nevertheless, the subject of female education has not received the same level of scrutiny in research concerning education in regressive regions, despite its vital role in broader dialogues and policies relating to sustainable development (Eger et al., 2018; Wier & Price, 2019). Several studies aim to address this gap through a case study in the regressive region of Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan. Despite its remote mountainous setting, characterized by low population density and often economically disadvantaged communities, Gilgit-Baltistan displays surprisingly elevated educational levels (Benz, 2014).

Scholars have argued that female education could instigate transformative shifts in individuals and societies. Notably, women might cultivate heightened self-assurance, acquire skills for employment and leadership, and attain economic autonomy through higher education (Malik & Courtney, 2011; Murtaza, 2012). The exploration of female education has sought to examine how perceptions of women's societal roles could evolve with the introduction of education. The concept of a societal role encompassed the anticipated behavior, rights, and responsibilities of an individual within a specific social context. In this context, women often contended with role overload, which included expectations, demands, and duties such as their reproductive role, caregiving responsibilities, and other work commitments (Erdwins et al., 2001; Akter et al., 2017).

It was imperative to view female education as one of numerous factors influencing the societal role of women, as the impact of educational advancements on gender dynamics could vary significantly across diverse cultural settings (Mohanty, 2016). Moreover, societies were in a perpetual state of flux, and the catalysts for such changes might not always have been readily discernible. Internal household dynamics, for instance, frequently exerted considerable influence, especially in Pakistan, where households were typically extended families led by a male figurehead (Shah & Shah, 2012). As highlighted by Murtaza's (2012) research in rural Pakistan, control over resources and decision-making, including those related to education, and was seldom vested in women's hands.

In addition to limited decision-making authority within the household, various other factors impeded female education in rural Pakistan. The financial status of a household played a crucial role, as less affluent parents in Pakistan were more inclined to invest in their sons' education due to better employment prospects for men. Additionally, sons usually remained with the family, whereas daughters typically left upon marriage and were often expected to contribute to their husbands' families (Lloyd et al., 2004).

Empowerment of women was a crucial aspect of the feminist perspective. In patriarchal countries, women were oppressed and suppressed, making higher education essential for addressing these challenges. Education was absolutely necessary for the development of a nation and for achieving goals related to modern living standards. Higher education was important and necessary for both men and women in every culture. However, women faced many barriers and persistent discrimination in the field of higher education. In this context, the education of women was even more challenging in traditional cultures and developing countries like Pakistan. According to Naz and Ashraf (2020), there was a significant connection between the completion of higher education and the empowerment of women. Women were subjected to gender-specific roles in a male-dominated society (Khokhar, 2018), as evidenced by the fact that their opportunities for obtaining a higher education were lower than men's. Yousuf (2019) suggested that prevalent socio-cultural and economic attitudes created barriers to women's access to higher education and prevented them from fulfilling their rightful place in societal progress.

In Pakistan, there was a substantial gender disparity in terms of basic education and literacy levels. This discrepancy was most pronounced between men and women. According to the findings of another survey, 72% of girls did not even complete elementary school, and only 10% of women enrolled in universities (Syed, 2018). In this light, developed regions that had achieved greater gender equality were in a far better position than Pakistan in terms of women's education in general and higher education in particular.

Saleem et al. (2021) revealed that the low higher educational profile of women in Pakistan could be attributed to various social and cultural factors, including the feudal system, patriarchal culture, lack of family support, lack of travel freedom, lack of government facilitation, poverty, fear of sexual harassment, and concerns about

pre-marital affairs. According to Nawaz et al. (2017), there was a substantial association between higher education and decision-making. They also found that greater education was associated with higher levels of decision-making in household matters. Education facilitated the acquisition of information, skills, values, habits, attitudes, and beliefs, enabling lifelong learning. Education also united people in efforts to make the world a better place (Yousuf, 2019).

Higher education played a significant role in elevating women's income levels, leading to improved self-esteem, independence, and confidence. Most importantly, it enabled women to break free from the typical gender roles that society had assigned to them (Asghar, 2018). Women with a high level of education had the ability to make their own decisions and raise awareness about their rights, among other things (Batool & Batool, 2018). On the other hand, women who did not receive an education tended to remain dependent on men throughout their entire lives (Asghar, 2018). There were a lot of problems with girls going to school and getting an education in Pakistan, especially in rural places (Yousuf, 2019). This position was made even more difficult by the pervasiveness of traditional standards, the broad prevalence of poverty, and the dearth of female educational institutions (Syed, 2018).

In this regard, earlier research also showed that higher education led to economic independence, freedom, participation in the political sphere, respect in family and community, and improved self-esteem (Batool & Batool, 2018). It was also discovered that highly educated women had a better awareness of politics and political dynamics, as well as their involvement in the process (Asghar, 2018). According to the findings of a number of studies that had been conducted up to this point, attaining a higher level of education was associated with increased levels of confidence, improved levels of self-esteem, and respect for women within the family and community, particularly in patriarchal settings (Batool & Batool, 2018).

According to Akkermans et al. (2017), the influence of family on the development of positive feelings of self-efficacy, strong social ties, and the utilization of art to support academic endeavors contributed to an increase in both one's self-esteem and trust in society. Latif et al. (2019) suggested that the main focus of higher education institutions had been on their own academic needs, not on the students, who were probably the most important people. Al-Deen (2019) argued that in order for Muslim women in Pakistan's higher education institutions to catch up to their

counterparts in the developed world, they must first engage in critical self-reflection, uncover their potential, and learn how to employ it to claim their share of available financial, cultural, and social resources while taking into account cultural and structural constraints.

According to Nawaz et al. (2017), granting women access to higher education that was both free and equitable was the best way to empower them in a variety of socioeconomic spheres and guarantee gender equality in Pakistan's major cities, such as Karachi and Lahore. Moghadam et al. (2018) worried that women with higher levels of education were less likely to have children, which was problematic because families valued having children. According to Mendoza (2018), Muslim women were subjected to inequalities and discrimination both inside their own households and in the communities in which they resided.

Habib et al. (2019) revealed that education and employment had a highly significant positive relationship with women's empowerment in decision making, control over resources, and influence. Education helped women get jobs, which empowered them financially. Mishra & Sam (2016) depicted that empowerment was a change process that gave people or groups who had little or no power the ability to make decisions that affected their lives. Women's empowerment was being talked about more and more in terms of economic growth and progress (Barra & Barra, 2019). According to De Loenzien et al. (2021), higher education was the accumulation of systematically organized information and practical skills that would assist in the resolution of issues through the application of contemporary advances in science, technology, and culture.

Higher education improved human resource utilization and life quality. Quality higher education, especially for women, could improve socioeconomic indicators including birth rate, infant mortality, and life expectancy. The status of women was inferior to that of males. In addition, it was discovered that literacy was the single most significant factor in educating women and paving the way for economic equality, which would elevate the status of women (Odera et al., 2020). Lavanya and Ahmed (2018) noticed that women were able to engage themselves in meaningful activity that would allow them some degree of financial freedom, despite the fact that accomplishing this goal could be challenging in the beginning stages. It had also been seen that the development of women was reflected in the constitution of



India, where laws were passed to get rid of the social evil of inequality, government-funded programmes like Rural Mahila Mandals and local self-government, and the demand for reservations in political institutions. Infant and child mortality rates were reduced as a direct effect of female education (Liu, 2017).

Higher education was essential in the modern world, not only as a way to expand one's knowledge but also as a way to increase one's employability in the workforce. Higher education increased financial stability, self-confidence, and independence in women. Karnataka perceptual research of women with higher education examined how higher education affected social, psychological, economic, political, and educational empowerment. Women's empowerment was found to be significantly influenced by education level (Kulal et al., 2023). Bhat (2015) said that education was a key step in empowering women because it gave them the tools they needed to deal with the difficulties of their traditional roles and make changes in their lives. Education reduced inequities and improved family status.

Agrawal and Kukreti (2017) analyzed the impact of higher education in empowering women by identifying the greatest barrier to women's empowerment. Findings indicated that there could be no question about how important it was to provide women with access to higher education so that they could achieve their full potential. In addition, it was stated that literacy was the only means of empowering women. Halakerimath and Danappagoudra (2018) investigated women's empowerment through education in the Hubli-Dharwad region. According to the results, raising the educational level of women was the most effective way to boost their social participation and elevate their position in society.

According to Sandhya (2015), education had been a crucial factor in the empowerment of women. It was essential for economic and human resource development. Pakistan must empower women. Female education boosted incomes and profits. Thus, female education reduced family poverty and enhanced prestige. Findings indicated that factors such as increased poverty, family, money, and societal restrictions had an effect on the education of women (Aslam et al., 2019). Education awakened people from their darkness to understand their strength. Education supported individual and national growth. Education empowered women in socio-cultural, economic, interpersonal, legal, political, and psychological realms, making it

profitable for individuals and nations (Aslam, 2019). So, education was important not just for men but also for women (Nagaraja, 2018).

Education helped women to realize their rights and combat economic and social inequality. Through education, women gained an understanding of their rights as well as the strength to fight against the economic and social injustices they faced (Ojha, 2016). Yousuf (2019) revealed that education provided opportunities for women to expand their worldviews and levels of comprehension, which in turn benefited their families, communities, and the nation as a whole. It had a significant part in improving the women's circumstances of living and earning a living. All over the world, governments and different groups worked to strengthen women by doing things like giving them access to microfinance services and promoting sustainable development and human rights (Huis et al., 2017).

Empowering women had become one of the most important issues in the present era. Education empowered women to overcome obstacles, challenges, and transform their lives. It helped to bring unity and improved women's position in their family and society. It was generally agreed that women deserved the same opportunities as males in terms of social standing, economic security, and physical well-being. Women's education was crucial to a progressive society (Jaysawal & Saha, 2023).

## **2.11 Higher Education in Balochistan**

Balochistan, with an area of 347,190 square km and a population of 12,344,408, was the largest province in Pakistan. The geographic location of Balochistan, along with years of neglect, extensive distances, a lack of infrastructure, and a worsening security situation, hampered the socioeconomic development of the province. Balochistan only had nine high schools and no colleges when it gained its freedom (Khan et al., 2023). As a result of the growth and development of education that took place over the course of the years, there were presently nine universities that were part of the public sector in the province. Still, the province faced sluggish growth in higher education institutions and student enrollment (Ali, 2022). The goals of higher education (HE) could not be attained without addressing the problems with elementary and secondary education in Balochistan (Bashir et al., 2021).

Before 1970, there was no HEI in Balochistan, and HE was connected to the University of Punjab. The first higher education institution in Balochistan was the University of Balochistan, which was established in 1970 by an ordinance issued by the Governor of Balochistan at the time. Khuzdar Engineering University, which opened in 1994, was the second most important university in the area. The Higher Education Commission (HEC), which was established in 2002, was tasked with the responsibility of providing financial support to universities that were part of the public sector, as well as the duty to foster research culture and development throughout the nation (Sofia, 2019). Higher education could play a crucial role in the stabilization and prosperity of the province, especially in light of the overall worsening security situation in the area (Bashir et al., 2021).

The Government of Balochistan was committed to ensuring equal opportunities for women, girls, and men in all aspects of public life. The primary aim of this policy was to eliminate structural barriers, challenge restrictive gender norms, and address disparities through comprehensive management and coordination. It established a framework for enabling women's active and meaningful participation across various spheres, ensuring equal access to leadership positions at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public domains. Additionally, it sought to enhance accountability and strengthen institutional frameworks (Arif & Bannian, 2022).

The vision was to achieve a peaceful, democratic, just, and prosperous Balochistan where women and girls had equal standing as citizens and actively participated in decision-making processes from local to global levels. They should have the freedom to lead lives free from violence and discrimination and fully exercise their social, political, and economic rights. This policy aimed to promote gender equality and women's empowerment through comprehensive sector-specific reforms, mobilizing necessary legal, administrative, financial, and institutional measures to empower women and girls as equal citizens throughout Balochistan. The overarching objective was to uphold and enforce constitutionally mandated principles and equal rights for women and girls in Balochistan, providing them with equitable and high-quality access to socio-economic services, opportunities, and roles in both public and private sectors, including political representation and participation (Arif & Bannian, 2022).

### ***2.11.1 Addressing gender disparities***

Gender disparities involved implementing gender-responsive planning, budgeting, and reporting in public policy and strategy development at various levels across Balochistan. It required taking affirmative actions to challenge patriarchal mindsets, gender stereotypes, and specific behaviors, attitudes, and customary practices that undermined the rights of women and girls (Ali, 2022).

### ***2.11.2 Fostering Gender-Inclusive Governance***

Fostering gender-inclusive governance entailed establishing robust, participatory, transparent, effective, and accountable institutions and mechanisms to ensure the full and effective implementation of constitutional, national, and provincial commitments, as well as international obligations related to gender equality and women's empowerment.

### ***2.11.3 Legislative Safeguards for Women***

The focus was on enacting sound policies, practices, and enforceable legislation to promote gender equality, including for transgender individuals, and empower women and girls at all levels. This encompassed legislative actions to bridge persistent gaps in the legal framework concerning inheritance rights, family laws, early child marriages, trafficking, acid attacks, and related issues.

### ***2.11.4 Women's Economic Empowerment***

Efforts were directed toward increasing investment in women and girls and reducing the gender pay gap through support for business and entrepreneurship development. This included policies such as equal pay for equal work, the establishment of working women hostels, the adoption of gender-balanced recruitment and HR policies, and the recognition and incentivization of women's contributions in livestock rearing and inclusive agricultural practices. The objective was to enhance their overall participation in the labor market (Zhang et al., 2014).

### ***2.11.5 Women's Political Participation***

The policy aimed to provide sustained support for women's engagement in electoral, parliamentary, and other democratic and political processes, including representation in Senate, National and Provincial Assemblies, and local government.

#### ***2.11.6 Ensuring Women's Access to Justice***

Ensuring Women's Access to Justice involved adopting an inclusive approach to facilitate women's access to justice and combat violence against women, young girls, and transgender communities. Specific initiatives were promoted, such as implementing the Rule of Law Roadmap of Balochistan, relaxing age criteria, addressing gender disparities in on-job facilities, and encouraging women to join justice sector institutions (police, investigation, prosecution, judiciary) and other public sector entities related to the justice system of Balochistan (Ali, 2022).

#### ***2.11.7 Enhancing Social Services***

The policy aimed to strengthen women and girls' access to social services, healthcare, and education by introducing reforms within these sectors. This included efforts to reduce girls' dropout rates, improve retention rates, and ensure available, affordable, and efficient access to comprehensive healthcare coverage and facilities, especially in rural areas, with a focus on women's well-being and reproductive health.

#### ***2.11.8 Bridging Gender Data Gaps***

The policy emphasized the importance of gathering, organizing, analyzing, and generating gender-disaggregated data to inform public policy formulation for advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in Balochistan. It advocated for the establishment of a Gender Management Information System (GMIS) to institutionalize sex-disaggregated data collection, monitoring, and reporting across provincial departments and survey instruments.

#### ***2.11.9 Addressing Women, Climate Change, and Humanitarian Emergencies***

The policy called for comprehensive strategies to protect and support women and girls from the adverse impacts of climate change and humanitarian crises. This involved inclusive disaster risk reduction, recovery, and rehabilitation measures, gender-responsive mitigation and adaptation approaches, and the strengthening of equitable natural resource management frameworks, laws, and policies (Memon et al., 2020).

### ***2.11.10 Promoting Women's Engagement with Technology***

The policy aimed to level the playing field for women in terms of their access to e-learning platforms for Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and media. It sought to enhance their role and participation in related digital platforms, services, and opportunities.

### ***2.11.11 Adherence to International Commitments***

The policy emphasized the effective implementation and reporting of international commitments, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA), and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), along with other international human rights agreements, covenants, conventions, and treaties.

### ***2.11.12 Results-Based Framework (Monitoring & Evaluation)***

The policy proposed a rigorous framework for assessing the gender implications of planned actions in all areas and at all levels. It advocated for the integration of women and men's concerns and experiences in the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and programs across various spheres. The Bureau of Statistics (P&D Department) and other relevant institutions were strengthened to facilitate gender-segregated data collection for development planning and to promote gender-sensitive policies, planning, and budgeting in the public sector, as well as to monitor and report on international and national commitments (Arif & Bannian, 2022).

## **2.12 Promoting Women's Economic Empowerment**

The Government of Balochistan actively worked toward inclusive economic growth and sustainable development. Recognizing the pivotal role of women and girls in economic development, the Women Economic Empowerment (WEE) Council was established to safeguard the interests of women entrepreneurs and to facilitate their market access. Specific measures were taken to ensure equitable economic opportunities, particularly in sectors such as agriculture, livestock, handicrafts, technical and vocational training, and other small-scale and home-based industries (Ali, 2022; Bashir et al., 2021).

Vision 2025, a key planning document of the Government of Pakistan, emphasized agricultural productivity, urban development, health, and education, among other priorities. It recognized the concentration of women in informal work and aimed to address issues such as market exploitation and limited access to training, skill development, marketing, and credit facilities for women. The Government acknowledged that women's empowerment was essential for sustainable development (Government of Pakistan, 2014).

### ***2.12.1 Advancing Social Empowerment***

Women's empowerment and low literacy levels among girls remained significant challenges in Balochistan. Deep-rooted tribal customs, religious influences, and male dominance contributed to limited or absent female participation in decision-making processes. High maternal mortality rates, malnutrition. The Balochistan government was dedicated to fostering equal opportunities for individuals of all genders within the public sphere. This policy's central goal was to dismantle structural barriers, challenge limiting gender norms, and rectify discrepancies through comprehensive management and coordination. It established a framework to ensure women's active and substantial involvement across various domains, guaranteeing equitable access to leadership roles at all levels of decision-making, encompassing political, economic, and public realms. Moreover, it aimed to bolster accountability and fortify institutional frameworks (Arif & Bannian, 2022).

The aspiration was to realize a harmonious, democratic, equitable, and prosperous Balochistan, where women and girls stood on equal footing as citizens and engaged actively in decision-making processes spanning from local to global scales. They should have had the autonomy to lead lives free from violence and discrimination, fully enjoying their social, political, and economic entitlements. This policy endeavored to advance gender parity and the empowerment of women and girls through detailed sector-specific reforms.

It mobilized the requisite legal, administrative, financial, and institutional measures to empower them as equal stakeholders throughout Balochistan. The overarching objective was to uphold and enforce the constitutionally mandated principles and equal rights for women and girls in Balochistan, affording them just and high-quality access to socio-economic services, opportunities, and roles in both

public and private sectors, including political representation and participation (Arif & Bannian, 2022). Tackling gender imbalances involved the implementation of gender-responsive planning, budgeting, and reporting in public policy and strategy development at various levels across Balochistan. These necessitated proactive measures to challenge patriarchal mindsets, gender stereotypes, and specific behaviors, attitudes, and customary practices that hindered the rights of women and girls (Ali, 2022).

### ***2.12.2 Promoting Inclusive Governance***

Promoting Inclusive Governance encompassed the establishment of resilient, participatory, transparent, effective, and accountable institutions and mechanisms to ensure the full and effective execution of constitutional, national, and provincial commitments, along with international obligations concerning gender equality and women's empowerment.

### ***2.12.3 Legal Safeguards for Women***

The focus lay in enacting robust policies, practices, and enforceable legislation to advocate for gender equality, including transgender individuals, and empower women and girls at every echelon. This encompassed legislative measures to bridge lingering gaps in the legal framework concerning inheritance rights, family laws, early child marriages, trafficking, acid attacks, and related matters.

### ***2.12.4 Fostering Women's Economic Empowerment***

Endeavors were directed toward augmenting investment in women and girls and minimizing the gender pay gap. This involved bolstering business and entrepreneurship development through policies such as equal pay for equal work, the establishment of working women hostels, the adoption of gender-balanced recruitment and HR policies, and the recognition and incentivization of women's contributions in livestock rearing and inclusive agricultural practices. The objective was to enhance their overall participation in the labor market (Zhang et al., 2014).

### ***2.12.5 Encouraging Women's Political Participation***

The policy strived to provide continuous support for women's engagement in electoral, parliamentary, and other democratic and political processes, including



representation in the Senate, National and Provincial Assemblies, and local government.

#### ***2.12.6 Ensuring Women's Access to Justice***

Ensuring Women's Access to Justice entailed adopting an inclusive approach to facilitate women's access to justice and combat violence against women, young girls, and transgender communities. Specific initiatives were promoted, such as implementing the Rule of Law Roadmap of Balochistan, relaxing age criteria, addressing gender disparities in on-job facilities, and encouraging women to join justice sector institutions (police, investigation, prosecution, judiciary) and other public sector entities related to the justice system of Balochistan (Ali et al., 2022).

### ***2.12.7 Strengthening Social Services***

The policy aimed to fortify women and girls' access to social services, healthcare, and education by introducing reforms within these sectors. These included efforts to reduce girls' dropout rates, improve retention rates, and ensure available, affordable, and efficient access to comprehensive healthcare coverage and facilities, especially in rural areas with a focus on women's well-being and reproductive health.

### ***2.12.8 Closing Gender Data Gaps***

The policy underscored the importance of collecting, organizing, analyzing, and generating gender-disaggregated data to inform public policy formulation for advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in Balochistan. It advocated for the establishment of a Gender Management Information System (GMIS) to institutionalize sex-disaggregated data collection, monitoring, and reporting across provincial departments and survey instruments.

## **2.13 Obstacles of Women Empowerment: in Pakistani Context**

In the context of Pakistani society, women encountered a myriad of challenges that not only diminished their standing within the community but also restricted their roles in socio-economic progress. The subsequent sections delved into various obstacles in detail (Muneer, 2021).

### ***2.13.1 The Kinship System***

The foremost impediment in a patriarchal framework was the family structure and Biraderi system. The patriarchal family structure constituted a critical element that subdued the influence of women within households. The practice of patrilocal marriage, where the wife moved to her husband's family, separated women from their birth families and reduced the likelihood of parental intervention on their behalf after marriage. Exogamous customs and physical separation made it less probable for women to claim their rightful share of inheritance and more likely for their brothers to seize control of inherited land, disregarding their preferences. Arranged marriages, were common in many rural areas, and age differences between spouses placed women in a subordinate position relative to their husbands from the outset of marriage. Furthermore, substantial dowries received by women upon marriage were often taken away by their husbands or in-laws, depriving them of independent security (Niaz et al., 2003).

### ***2.13.2 Violence against Women***

Violence against women constituted another barrier in Pakistan (Shaikh, 2003), with patriarchy at the core of this violence, perpetuating gender disparity. This was starkly evident in the prevalence of violence against women, both in rural and urban settings, whether within their households or beyond. The patriarchal family structure isolated most women within their homes, and, in many cases, spousal abuse was considered a private matter where external intervention was unwelcome. Alarming was the absence of laws against domestic violence in nearly half of the countries in South Asia (UNDP, 2010). However, a positive development occurred in Pakistan, specifically in the southern province of Sindh. Sindh's provincial assembly unanimously passed a domestic violence bill, making its violation punishable by fines and/or imprisonment (Dawn, July 27, 2013). While this step was applauded by NGOs and civil society as a significant step against domestic violence, the challenge lay in implementing such laws, which often failed due to institutional breakdown and male dominance. The establishment of separate judicial courts, presided over by women judges, to expedite the trial of such cases, was crucial in curbing domestic violence (Memon et al., 2020).

Nonetheless, violence against women remained pervasive in Pakistani society, with instances of wife beating, domestic abuse, dowry demands, and murder by husbands or in-laws occurring. The sale of girls in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, forced marriages, and honor killings in rural Sindh, as well as gang rapes in rural and small towns across the country, persisted as daily occurrences (Mumtaz, 2007). Honor killings, particularly in the form of "karo-Kari," were prevalent in many regions of Pakistan. Official statistics revealed that from 1998 to 2004, over 4,000 people, including 2,800 women, fell victim to honor killings. Additionally, the figures showed that in 1997 alone, there were 86 karo-kari killings in Larkana, Sindh, with 53 of the victims being women (Felix, 2007). According to the HRCP report (2011), nearly 675 Pakistani women were murdered in the name of honor (Hali, 2013). The World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report (2012) ranked Pakistan as the worst country in terms of gender disparity.

### ***2.13.3 Political Participation***

Another substantial challenge for women in our society was the deprivation of their legal and political rights, resulting in their political and legal disempowerment and systematic curtailment of political participation. Generally, political participation entailed access to positions of political power and the ability to influence decision-making at community and formal institutional levels. Women were globally discriminated against in their participation in political decision-making, particularly in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa (UNDP, 2011). In Pakistan, the limited participation of women in formal governing bodies could be attributed to socio-economic conditions and their weaker position and bargaining power within and outside the household. Factors that constrained their participation were also compounded by the political landscape dominated by bureaucratic and land-owning elites, where men were the primary actors (Muneer, 2021).

In part due to the male-dominated political institutions and partly because of the weak formal judicial institutions and administration, women's legal protection (under both civil and Islamic laws) remained nominal. If a woman was involved in a land dispute, for instance, and lacked close male support, she was likely to lose the case, irrespective of the merit of her claim. Undeniably, some positive measures had been taken by previous regimes, such as the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), to secure women's legal rights.

In 2010, the president signed the 'Protection against the Harassment of Women at Workplace Bill 2009,' which was passed by the parliament. In 2012, two additional bills were signed into law, addressing traditional practices like *vani*, *watta-satta*, *swara*, and marriage to the Holy Quran, which had historically treated women as tradable commodities for dispute resolution. Life imprisonment for acid throwing was also introduced (Pakistan Economic Survey, 2015). However, there remained a pressing need for more progressive laws and amendments, along with their effective implementation, to improve the political and legal status of women in Pakistan (Zakar, 2016).

#### ***2.13.4 Religion***

Patriarchy drew strength from religion, especially in a country like Pakistan (Mumtaz, 2007). Islam had a significant influence on the expectations and behaviors of women in Pakistan. Islam explicitly delineated a division of labor and responsibility based on gender and, in effect, upheld male dominance. According to Islamic teachings, men and women had their distinct spheres of activity, reflecting their natural dispositions and inherent physical characteristics. Two aspects of Islam, as interpreted in Pakistan, reinforced patriarchal control over women: the laws of inheritance and the practice of purdah, or female seclusion.

Under Muslim inheritance laws, daughters received half the share of their male counterparts. In practice, women often received less than their rightful share. Moreover, if a woman inherited land, her husband typically cultivated it as if it were his own. Additionally, many women willingly relinquished their inheritance to their brothers to gain favor and goodwill (Jeffery, 1979). Purdah involved the seclusion of women and strict modesty requirements, including concealing their faces and bodies. This practice imposed severe restrictions on women's movement outside their homes (Mumtaz, 2007).

#### ***2.13.5 Division of Labor***

A rigid division of labor posed a significant obstacle in Pakistani society. The patriarchal structures that confined many women to relative seclusion within their homes also denied them access to various forms of employment (Sathar & Kazi, 2000; Mumtaz, 2007). According to a recent UNDP report (2010), in South Asian countries, including India and Pakistan, fewer than 35% of women engaged in paid work. A study by Amin (2012) revealed a decline in women's participation in paid work, dropping from 33% in 2000 to 21% in 2011 (Saeed, 2013).

Paradoxically, the limited access to economic resources reduced women's bargaining power within their households. In Pakistan, household labor was sharply divided, with women primarily responsible for tasks inside or near the household, such as food preparation and maintenance, while men specialized in external work like trading and other market-related activities. This division reinforced patriarchal control over women, making them financially dependent on men and denying them direct access to income-generating opportunities. This gendered division of labor

applied to women across different economic statuses and household structures, effectively excluding them from most wage employment. Engaging in other types of work that required leaving the household, such as petty trading, often came with a high cost, including potential abuse and loss of social status (Shahid, 2023).

Furthermore, age, gender, and class hierarchies further influenced patriarchal control in Pakistani society. Older women tended to align with patriarchal interests, which could undermine solidarity and potential resistance among women. Class differences among women also played a role in their experiences. Newly married women were often dominated by their mothers-in-law, and this age-based hierarchy aligned older women with patriarchal interests, offering younger women little to look forward to as they aged (Azam & Gavino, 2008).

Moreover, it was important to note that not all Pakistani women could be homogenized, as significant regional, ethnic, and geographical variations existed within the society (Ibraz & Fatima, 1993). The status and livelihood strategies of women also varied across different classes and households. While women commonly fulfilled roles related to reproduction, childbearing, and household maintenance, the extent and nature of their involvement in unpaid and income-earning activities differed based on their class and household dynamics.

#### ***2.13.6 Poverty and Women***

Poverty in Pakistan is closely linked to the obstacles imposed by patriarchy, which severely limit women's choices and their ability to make independent decisions regarding education, careers, and access to essential resources. The extent of gender-based poverty in Pakistan is portrayed in statistical terms, revealing the challenges in defining sociologically significant poverty levels. Traditional measures of poverty often relied on nutritional standards, expenditure, and income levels. However, it was crucial to consider additional welfare aspects such as life expectancy, health, literacy, and access to public services (Javed et al., 2018). The World Bank defined poverty as "the inability to attain a minimal standard of living," which was closely tied to a specific income threshold (World Bank, 1989). A recent UNDP report from 2013 indicated that 49% of the population in Pakistan lived in multidimensional poverty, with an intensity of deprivation at 53%. While a larger proportion of the population

may have been in multidimensional poverty in Bangladesh compared to Pakistan, the intensity of deprivation was higher in Pakistan (Qurat-ul-Ann et al., 2019).

A study by Saeed (2013) underscored that approximately 1.29 billion people worldwide lived in absolute poverty, with about 70% of them being women. Rural areas bore a more severe poverty burden, where one-third to one-half of the population lived in poverty, disproportionately affecting women (Abdullah, 2012). Women's increased workload for family survival and decreased access to food and nutrition contributed to this two-fold impact. The persistence of gender-based poverty in Pakistan was rooted in socio-cultural inequalities exacerbated by patriarchy.

Unfortunately, the Planning Commission of Pakistan did not provide specific data on female poverty. The World Bank's "Country Gender Profile of Pakistan" (1999) emphasized that the status of women in Pakistan was among the lowest globally. It further highlighted that women and girls in poor households bore a disproportionately high burden of poverty, largely due to their low social status, limited land and productive assets compared to men, and their restricted access to economic opportunities and social services (World Bank, 2002).

One of the reasons for this gender-based poverty was that poor women belonged to a socio-economic class that lacked significant influence to improve their situation within the male-dominated political and administrative structures in Pakistan. Women were critical contributors to the economic survival of poor households, and their earnings became increasingly relied upon as poverty deepened (Nwosu et al., 2018). Another contributing factor was that a majority of the impoverished population resided in rural areas (World Bank, 2002), where women's labor was concentrated in the agricultural sector, which was not only low-paying but also seasonal and limited to specific regions.

With the mechanization of tasks traditionally performed by men, women have been drawn into informal and non-agricultural activities in response to poverty (AR Qurat-ul-Ann, et al., 2018). This situation was mirrored in urban areas, where poor women faced similar challenges due to limited education and skills, resulting in few options for well-paid jobs. Consequently, they often accepted low-paying menial positions within the informal sector, such as domestic work or home-based jobs. This informal labor arrangement had devalued women's work and denied them essential

entitlements, such as maternity leave, health benefits, and childcare support (Jaffee et al., 2021).

### ***2.13.7 Women-headed Households***

In light of these pervasive socio-economic injustices, women-headed households in Pakistan have experienced considerable hardship. These households are characterized by a notable absence of male breadwinners, with adult men typically having no financial, spatial, or emotional involvement with the family unit of women and their children. This category of households was estimated to represent approximately one-third of all households globally, with a higher proportion among those living in poverty. Women who headed such households were considered a growing demographic that required policy attention (Tadros, et al., 2020).

Official socio-economic surveys indicated that female-headed households accounted for less than eight percent of all households in Pakistan. However, this figure was believed to be an underestimate due to potential gender bias in reporting. In Pakistan's patriarchal society, it was nearly inconceivable for a woman to become the head of a household in the presence of male elders, unless specific circumstances arose, such as the husband being disabled, elderly, or absent due to employment or other reasons. In some cases, a woman became the head of the household following widowhood, divorce, or separation. In all scenarios, Pakistani women were accustomed to their subordinate roles within households and often held limited authority, particularly in rural areas where cultural values strongly influenced household dynamics (Khalid et al., 2011).

Households led by women were typically situated within the poorest segments of society. Female household heads were particularly vulnerable to poverty because they often possessed limited education and skills relevant to economic activities. Their low educational attainment and skill set restricted their employment options to low-paying, unskilled jobs, resulting in overrepresentation in the lowest occupational categories. Despite these challenges, women heading households prioritized the welfare of all family members, both male and female, and sought to ensure equal rights for all. Resources further diminished women's bargaining power (Shahid et al., 2023).



### ***2.13.8 Muslim Personal Law 1937***

On September 10th, 1937, the enactment of the "Muslim Personal Law" (MPL) marked a significant achievement. This law granted Muslim women the right to inherit property, a pivotal milestone in their legal rights (Asghar, 2000). While this act faced criticism from various quarters, with some asserting that customary law was more appropriate, it was celebrated by Indian Muslim women. The MPL provided them with a ray of hope for enhancing their social and political standing. This gradual process of change, initiated with the right to education, increasing awareness, and the endurance of hardships, evolved into a struggle for women's political rights in the subcontinent (Noreen et al., 2014).

In the 1946 elections, the All-India Muslim League (AIML) nominated Begum Salma Tassaduque Hussain and Mrs. Jehanara Shah Nawaz as candidates. Although the AIML secured a historic victory, the British government did not allow the formation of the government. In response, five hundred women staged a protest rally in Lahore. As the level of activity escalated, numerous Muslim women, including Begum Salma Tassaduque Hussain, Begum Kamal-uddin Ahmad from N.W.F.P (now Khyber Pushtoon Khawa), and Mrs. Jehanara Shah Nawaz, were arrested. Subsequently, the British government also prohibited the political activities of the Muslim League Women Nation Guard. These legal reforms were significant steps toward creating awareness for the socio-political transformation and empowerment of Indian women in general, and Muslim women in particular (Naheed, 2008).

The Indian freedom movement provided women with opportunities to collectively contribute to the attainment of independence, which paved the way for social, economic, and political empowerment. Jinnah emerged as a staunch advocate of women's empowerment in 1944 when he declared that "no nation can rise to the height of glory unless their women are side by side with them. Women were victims of evil customs. It was a crime against humanity that women were confined within the four walls of the houses as prisoners. There was not any sanction anywhere for the deplorable condition in which women had to live; you wanted to take your women along with you as comrades in every sphere of life" (Mumtaz & Shaheed, 1987).

## **2.14 Modern Perspectives on Women's Empowerment through Higher Education**

In recent years, the discourse on women's empowerment in Pakistan has evolved, emphasizing the transformative role of higher education. Studies highlight that higher education equips women with critical thinking skills, enhances self-esteem, and provides economic opportunities, thereby challenging traditional gender roles (Batoool & Batoool, 2020). Furthermore, it enables women to engage in decision-making at various levels, contributing to their personal and professional growth (Stromquist, 2015).

### ***2.14.1 Contextualizing Gender Ideology***

Gender ideology in Pakistan is deeply rooted in patriarchal values, often relegating women to subordinate roles. However, the research indicates a gradual shift toward more egalitarian views, particularly among educated urban populations. This shift has contributed to increased female participation in various sectors, including politics and business (Ullah & Ullah, 2019).

According to Kroska (2007), gender ideology exists on a spectrum ranging from traditional to egalitarian. Traditional norms enforce a division between the public and private spheres, with men dominating the public domain while women remain confined to household roles (Leschyshyn & Minnotte, 2014). However, the increasing participation of women in education and professional settings is gradually challenging these constructs (Adil et al., 2021).

### ***2.14.2 The Family Domain as a Microcosm of Gender Ideology***

The family serves as a fundamental site for the internalization and transmission of gender ideologies. Historically, traditional norms in Pakistani families have limited women's autonomy, confining them to domestic roles. However, access to higher education has begun to alter these dynamics. Educated women are more likely to participate in household decision-making and challenge restrictive cultural practices (Muneer, 2021). Intergenerational transmission of gender ideologies is also evolving, as younger generations increasingly adopt more progressive attitudes toward gender roles (Halpern & Perry-Jenkins, 2016). This shift signifies the potential for long-term societal transformation as education continues to reshape gender expectations within families.

### ***2.14.3 The Workplace and Resistance to Gender Ideology***

Despite societal constraints, Pakistani women are increasingly entering the workforce, aided by educational attainments. However, resistance to female leadership remains significant, as gender stereotypes continue to associate leadership traits such as decisiveness and dominance with men (Garcia-Retamero & López-Zafra, 2006). Several initiatives have sought to challenge these stereotypes. For instance, the *Women on Wheels (WOW)* initiative has played a transformative role in breaking gender barriers in mobility and workforce participation (Reuters, 2024). By promoting women's independence and economic engagement, such programs actively challenge restrictive societal norms (Farooq et al., 2019).

### ***2.14.4 Contextualizing Pakistan***

Various national and international efforts have contributed to women's education and empowerment in Pakistan. The *Digital Rights Foundation (DRF)*, established in 2012, has been instrumental in addressing the digital divide and combating online harassment, ensuring safer online spaces for women (Wired, 2024). Additionally, Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai has been at the forefront of advocating for gender equality in education. She has called for the classification of gender apartheid as a crime under international law and has urged Muslim leaders to support women's rights and education (Reuters, 2025). These efforts underscore the growing momentum toward gender equality in education and beyond.

### ***2.14.5 Women's Resistance and Transformation***

Despite deeply embedded patriarchal structures, Pakistani women continue to exhibit resilience and resistance in their daily lives. Higher education has been a pivotal factor in this transformation, empowering women to challenge societal norms and contribute to national development (Chaudhry & Bertram, 2009). Women are increasingly asserting their agency in decision-making, professional pursuits, and advocacy, despite cultural and structural barriers (Bushra & Wajiha, 2015). However, access to higher education remains a key determinant of empowerment, necessitating continuous policy interventions and support systems to ensure equitable educational opportunities for all (Stromquist, 2015).

## **2.15 Summary**

Chapter 2 provided a comprehensive literature review examining the role of higher education in women's personal, relational, and environmental empowerment. The review highlighted how higher education fosters individual growth, enhances self-confidence, and strengthens critical thinking skills, enabling women to challenge traditional gender roles and assert their agency. Scholars emphasized that education catalyzes personal empowerment, equipping women with the necessary knowledge and skills for self-sufficiency and decision-making. Furthermore, the review explored relational empowerment, demonstrating how educated women contribute to shifting household dynamics, improving family well-being, and influencing intergenerational attitudes toward gender equality. It also addressed the role of higher education in environmental empowerment, enabling women to engage in economic, social, and political spheres, participate in leadership roles, and contribute to societal development.

The literature also acknowledged the barriers to women's higher education, such as socio-cultural constraints, gender stereotypes, and institutional challenges. However, various national and international initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality in education were discussed, highlighting their impact on increasing women's access to higher education and workforce participation. Overall, the review underscored the transformative role of higher education in empowering women across multiple dimensions, emphasizing its far-reaching effects on individuals, families, and society at large. It also pointed to the need for continued policy interventions and institutional support to ensure equitable educational opportunities for women, particularly in regions like Balochistan.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Methodology is defined as the systematic method to resolve a research problem through data gathering using various techniques, providing an interpretation of data gathered, and drawing conclusions about the research data. Essentially, a research methodology is the blueprint of a research or study (Murthy & Bhojanna, 2009). Methodology is about the overall approaches and perspectives of the research process (Esomar, 2019). The research methodology employed in the study triangulated both quantitative and qualitative approaches and utilized a five-point Likert scaling system to quantify responses within the framework of a mixed-method study. The foundation for choosing this approach was deeply rooted in contemporary research principles, as outlined by Creswell and Creswell (2018). Their work emphasized critical features such as clear purpose, testability, replicability, accuracy, confidence, impartiality, generalizability, and cost-effectiveness, aligning seamlessly with objectives.

This chapter delved into the intricacies of the research procedures, emphasizing the steps taken to ensure the reliability and validity of both quantitative and qualitative data. The focus remained on the application of Likert scaling, its appropriateness for the research objectives in the quantitative domain, and the rationale behind adopting a mixed-method approach. Additionally, attention was given to the distinctive characteristics of both quantitative and qualitative research that contributed to the overall robustness of.

To enhance the qualitative aspect, incorporated methodologies informed by the latest research trends. A noteworthy reference for qualitative data methodology was given by Braun and Clarke (2019), whose work provided contemporary insights into designing and conducting qualitative research. In summary, by addressing both quantitative and qualitative aspects, the methodology chapter aimed to provide a transparent and insightful account of the data-gathering process, which set the stage for subsequent analysis and interpretation in the following chapters. The revised introduction aligned closely with expectations, offering a clearer preview of the diverse discussions to follow in this mixed-method study.

### **3.1 Research Design**

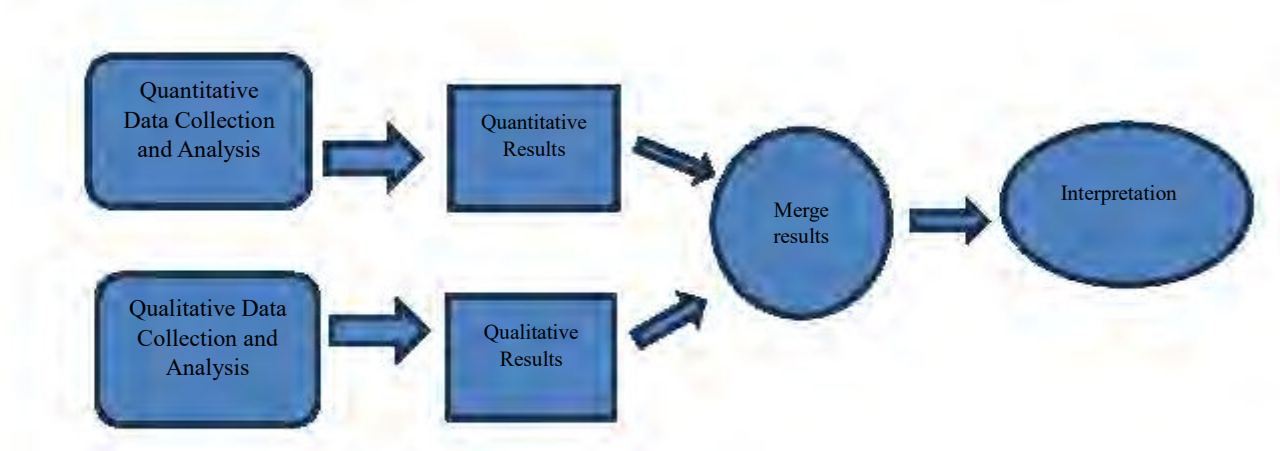
Research designs encompassed systematic procedures for gathering, analyzing, interpreting, and presenting data in research endeavors. Various methodologies emerged, each delineating its own set of principles and practices. For the study, the convergent parallel design employing a mixed-methods approach was chosen as the guiding framework. Mixed-methods research entailed the integration of quantitative and qualitative research techniques within a single study, as articulated by Turner et al. (2007). By combining statistical analysis with thematic exploration, this approach mitigated the risks of over-reliance on quantitative data while also capturing nuanced perspectives and experiential insights (Jogulu & Pansiri, 2011).

Creswell (2018) underscored the depth of insight achievable through mixed-methods research, which surpassed that of either quantitative or qualitative methods in isolation. By incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data, this methodology aimed to synergize the strengths of each approach, enabling a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomena under investigation (Airasian et al., 2012). Furthermore, mixed-methods research offered the flexibility to augment qualitative findings with quantitative analyses, and vice versa, thereby enhancing the robustness of outcomes.

Following a mixed-methods research paradigm within the convergent parallel design, the study collected qualitative and quantitative data to address its research questions. Leveraging qualitative research methods such as grounded theory, ethnography, case studies, narrative research, and phenomenological inquiry (Creswell, 2018), the sixth edition, the qualitative phase provided a holistic perspective and detailed insights into the research context. Given the utilization of a mixed-methods approach's findings were corroborated and triangulated to reinforce the conclusions drawn.

**Figure 3.1**

*Convergent Parallel Design (Creswell & Clark 2018)*



### **3.2 Population**

According to Gay (2012), a population refers to the group of interest to a researcher, to which the study's findings are intended to be generalized. For the study, the target population comprised women who had completed their Bachelor's degrees between 2011 and 2020. This group included 4575 women graduates who were actively engaged in various professional fields such as law, healthcare, and education across these divisions.

#### **3.2.1 Target Population**

The following table presented the number of female graduates from UoB and its affiliated institutions across the selected divisions from 2011 to 2020, total 4,875 graduates selected as a population of the study.

**Table 3.1***Population of the Study*

S.No	Year	Graduated Women				
		UoB Quetta	Affiliated Law College Quetta	Affiliated Bolan Medical College Quetta	Affiliated Degree College Kalat	Affiliated Degree College Loralai
1	2011	185	06	70	00	00
2	2012	201	23	81	00	00
3	2013	211	22	98	09	09
4	2014	302	11	97	12	11
5	2015	216	08	110	16	17
6	2016	281	12	125	19	19
7	2017	312	14	123	22	18
8	2018	405	10	130	23	20
9	2019	382	16	141	22	22
10	2020	423	18	138	26	33
		<b>Grand Total 4875</b>				

Source: Office of Director General (Students' Affairs) UoB

### 3.3 Sample of the study

**Table 3.2***Sample size of the Study*

Division	Total Graduates	Sample size
Quetta	4,594	321
Kalat	132	9
Loralai	149	10
Total	4,875	341

According to Adam (2020) table for determining sample size, if the population is 4875 then 341 (7% of total) will be the sample of study. In order to select the sample size, equal proportion was taken from three divisions. More specifically, 322 sample was selected from Quetta division, 9 female graduates were taken from Kalat division and 10 female graduates were selected from Loralai division. Snowball sampling technique was utilized to approach the sampled participants. Furthermore, using purposive sampling technique 30 respondents were selected for interview.



**Table 3.3***Sample for Qualitative Data*

Division	Sample Size
Quetta	22
Kalat	4
Loralai	4
Total	30

### **3.3.1 Snowball Sampling Technique**

The process involved four steps:

#### **Step 1: Selection of Initial Participants**

The researcher identified key female graduates from each division through university alumni networks, faculty recommendations, and professional organizations. These initial participants, representing different educational backgrounds and experiences, served as the “seeds” for the snowball sampling process.

#### **Step 2: Referral Process**

Each selected participant was asked to refer additional female graduates from their networks who met the study’s inclusion criteria. This approach helped reach graduates who might not be accessible through traditional sampling methods, particularly those from Kalat and Loralai divisions, where the graduate numbers were lower.

#### **Step 3: Expansion and Data Collection**

The process continued iteratively, with new participants providing further referrals until the required sample size of 300 graduates was reached, maintaining the proportionate representation from each division:

#### **Step 4: Ensuring Diversity and Data Reliability**

- To reduce bias, the researcher ensured that referrals came from diverse academic and professional backgrounds rather than from a single network.
- To verify participant eligibility and avoid duplication, a short screening questionnaire was used before final inclusion.

### ***3.3.2 Justification for Snowball Sampling***

- i. **Limited Accessibility:** Many graduates, especially from remote areas, might not be easily reachable through direct sampling.
- ii. **Efficient in Small Populations:** Given the small number of graduates from Kalat and Loralai divisions, snowball sampling helped in locating participants.
- iii. **Trust-Based Approach:** Female graduates may be more willing to participate when referred by someone they know, ensuring richer responses.

## **3.4 Instruments**

Instruments played an important role in the implementation of research plans. The selection of suitable and valuable research instruments (Ari et al., 2010) was crucial to the performance and accomplishment of the research study. Research instruments were "a guideline for assessing processes and were used to collect and record data for evaluation, execution, and final consideration" (Colton & Covert, 2007). The details of the instruments were as follows:

### ***3.4.1 Instrument Development Overview***

The instruments employed for data collection in the study include both qualitative and quantitative tools, namely "Questionnaires" and "Interview Guides." The purpose of these instruments is to comprehensively capture the multidimensional nature of women's empowerment across three major variables: Personal Empowerment, Relational Empowerment, and Environmental Empowerment.

### ***3.4.2 Framework***

The framework for the study was derived from the OXFAM model, specifically, the levels of women empowerment indexed. This framework was chosen due to its established credibility and effectiveness in gauging various aspects of empowerment. The model consisted of three overarching dimensions, each with sub-variables, ensuring a nuanced understanding of women's empowerment.

### 3.4.2.1 Dimensions of women's empowerment

**Figure 3.2**

*Instrument Developed on Dimensions of women empowerment*

<b><i>DIMENSIONS OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT</i></b>		
<b>PERSONAL EMPOWERMENT</b>	<b>RELATIONAL EMPOWERMENT</b>	<b>ENVIRONMENTAL EMPOWERMENT</b>
1. Self-Confidence	1. Influence on Community	1. Access To Services and Resources
2. Individual Knowledge	2. Control over Household Assets	2. Ability to Influence at Political Level
3. Opinions And Attitudes on Women's Economic Role	3. Involvement In Household Decision Making	
4. Non-acceptance of GBV	4. Independent Income	
5. Personal Autonomy	5. Experience of GBV	
	6. Control over Time	

- i. A structured questionnaire (five-point Likert scale) consisting of 52 questions was used for the survey purpose and to collect quantitative data from sampled graduate women.
- ii. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect qualitative data of 10 ten graduate women from each division.

### 3.4.3 Structured Questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of two parts.

#### **Part A - Demographic/General Information**

This section encompassed detailed demographic and general information, with a whole of various fields to gather comprehensive details about the participants.

#### **Part B - Research Statements (Likert Five-Point Scale)**

This part comprised 52 statements categorized into three main variables: Personal Empowerment, Relational Empowerment, and Environmental Empowerment. Personal Empowerment included five sub-variables, each represented by four statements, a total of 20 statements. Relational Empowerment consisted of six sub-variables, with four statements each, amounting to 24 statements. Environmental

Empowerment encompassed two sub-variables, with four statements each, totaling eight statements.

Respondents expressed their beliefs about the impact of higher education using a Likert Five-Point Scale: Strongly Dissatisfied, Dissatisfied, Moderately Satisfied, Satisfied, and Strongly Satisfied. For analysis, the satisfaction levels were consolidated: Strongly Satisfied and Satisfied were combined into a single "Satisfied" category, while Strongly Dissatisfied and Dissatisfied were combined into "Dissatisfied." The satisfaction range was measured as Low (0.00% -33.3 %), Moderate (33.40% -66.60 %), and High (66.70% -100 %). Specifically, each sub-variable was represented by four statements covering various dimensions, resulting in a total of 52 statements.

**Table 3.4**

*Categorization of Statements*

Main Variable	Sub-Variables	Number Statements	Total Statements
Personal Empowerment	5	4 each	20.00
Relational Empowerment	6	4 each	24.00
Environmental Empowerment	2	4 each	8.00
Overall			52.00

#### **3.4.4 Interview Guide**

The interview guide was a detailed tool designed to explore various aspects related to personal, relational, and environmental empowerment. It comprised 30 key questions divided into three main objectives.

##### **Objective 1: Personal Empowerment (10 questions)**

- **Sub-variable 1:** Self-confidence (2 questions).
- **Sub-variable 2:** Individual knowledge (2 questions).
- **Sub-variable 3:** Opinions and attitudes on women's economic role (2 questions).
- **Sub-variable 4:** Non-acceptance of gender-based violence (2 questions).
- **Sub-variable 5:** Personal autonomy (2 questions).



## **Objective 2: Relational Empowerment (12 questions)**

- **Sub-variable 1:** Influencing the community (2 questions).
- **Sub-variable 2:** Control over household assets (2 questions).
- **Sub-variable 3:** Involvement in household decision-making (2 questions).
- **Sub-variable 4:** Independent income (2 questions).
- **Sub-variable 5:** Experience of gender-based violence (2 questions).
- **Sub-variable 6:** Control over time (2 questions).

## **Objective 3: Environmental Empowerment (6 questions)**

- **Sub-variable 1:** Access to services and resources (2 questions).
- **Sub-variable 2:** Ability to influence at the political level (2 questions).
- **Sub-variable 3:** General questions (2 questions).

In total, the interview guide included 30 questions, ensuring a comprehensive exploration of the empowerment experiences of women through higher education in Balochistan.

### ***3.4.5 Validity and Reliability of Research Instrument***

Major instruments utilized for data collection were a Questionnaire for Quantitative data and an interview Guide for Qualitative Data from graduate women in Baluchistan.

#### ***3.4.5.1 Validity of Research Instrument***

Validation by the Faculty of IIUI was a pivotal aspect of the research methodology, emphasizing the meticulous scrutiny and endorsement of the research instruments, particularly focusing on content validity. The involvement of esteemed experts in the field ensured a meticulous review and approval process, affirming the instruments' capability to measure the intended constructs accurately. Both the questionnaire for quantitative data and the interview guide for qualitative data underwent a thorough validation process. In the case of the questionnaire, expert opinions were sought from senior teacher educators, emphasizing their invaluable insights into refining the instrument. Minor adjustments, particularly related to specific sub-themes, were incorporated into the interview guide based on the feedback received. Notably, the interview guide underwent validation before the commencement of data collection to fortify its reliability.

To enhance the validity of the quantitative questionnaire, a strategic approach was employed. Each sub-theme was meticulously examined and, in response to expert suggestions, was subdivided into segments containing three to five statements each. This meticulous structuring aimed to ensure the precision and clarity of the questionnaire, aligning it closely with the objectives. Furthermore, the iterative nature of the validation process included considerations for layout improvements. Insights garnered from the experts' feedback were instrumental in implementing necessary adjustments to enhance the visual and structural aspects of the instruments. This comprehensive validation approach, integrating expert perspectives and iterative refinement, established a robust foundation for the credibility and reliability of the research instruments in the pursuit of scholarly inquiry.

#### ***3.4.5.2 Pilot Testing***

A pilot test was a "small-scale trial before a major investigation" to determine the validity and reliability of the tools to be used in a data collection study, so "pilot testing was very important for research tools" (Wilson & Sapsford, 2006) to test "bias in the power of statements" (ibid., p. 106). To evaluate the effectiveness and reliability of the survey questionnaire within the context of the research, a pilot study was conducted before its formal implementation. The purpose of the pilot study was to identify and rectify any potential issues related to the questionnaire's structure, logical sequence, question format, wording, and instructions. Additionally, it ensured that the terminologies and expressions used in the questionnaire were consistent with the existing body of literature relevant to the research topic.

The pilot test involved the administration of the questionnaire to a sample of forty-two (42) graduate women from targeted areas of Balochistan, Pakistan. These participants were not part of the final sample for the primary study. The feedback and insights gathered from this pilot testing phase were invaluable in refining the questionnaire, enhancing its clarity, and ensuring that it effectively captured the necessary data for research.

**Table 3.5***Reliability coefficient of the Research Instrument*

Section of Questionnaire	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Personal Level Indicators	20	0.973
Relational Level Indicators	24	0.972
Environmental Level Indicators	8	0.974
Overall Reliability	52	0.984

The high Cronbach's Alpha values indicate excellent internal consistency, confirming the reliability of the instrument.

### **3.4.5.3 Reliability of Research Instrument**

According to Creswell (2018), reliability in research involved ensuring that scores from questionnaire items were internally consistent, stable over time, and consistently applied during testing and scoring (p. 233). To gauge the internal reliability of our research tool, a study was conducted, involving 42 randomly selected participants from various fields in the Quetta, Loralai, and Kalat divisions of Balochistan. This assessment considered the overall set of questions in the instrument. Similarly, a pilot investigation was carried out, involving forty-two randomly selected graduate females from universities and other fields across three selected divisions of Balochistan. The goal was to establish the reliability of the instrument, and the resulting Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient preliminary was a high score of .984. This pilot study, which focused on the overall set of questions, involved administering the developed questionnaire in three divisions of Balochistan.

## **3.5 Data Collection Procedure**

The data collection process for the research was conducted systematically and ethically, ensuring that the highest standards of research ethics and privacy were maintained. The university and affiliated colleges in the selected divisions provided access to sampled 341 graduates while 300 valid responses were received. Responses rate was 88%. The process comprised several distinct stages:

- i. In the initial stage, formal permissions were sought from the relevant authorities at the institutions being investigated. For example, in the case of hospitals, the senior management of the hospital was contacted. For universities, the heads of departments or university administrators in Quetta, Kalat, and Loralai divisions were approached. These permissions



were obtained to ensure the research was conducted with the institutional support and cooperation.

- ii. In the subsequent stage, the researcher actively engaged with potential participants to obtain their formal consent to participate in the research. Participants were assured that their data would be treated confidentially and exclusively for research purposes. The informed consent process adhered to ethical guidelines, ensuring that participants were fully aware of their rights and the nature of their involvement.
- iii. The third stage involved the recruitment of participants through one-on-one meetings, which could occur in person or through electronic means email and WhatsApp. The researcher subsequently established contact with graduated women. These individuals formed part of the sample for the quantitative data collection phase. During this phase, questionnaires were distributed among the selected sample of graduate women. The questionnaires were designed to gather quantitative data related to the research objectives. Participants were encouraged to provide responses, which served as a valuable source of quantitative data for the research analysis.
- iv. In the final stage of data collection, the researcher scheduled and conducted semi-structured interviews with a subset of participants. This subset included 30 graduate women generally, students, and employees, representing various disciplines such as Law, Health, and Education. The interviews provided an opportunity to gather qualitative data, allowing the thirty participants to share their perspectives and experiences related to the role of higher education in personal, relational, and environmental empowerment.

### **3.5.1 Justification of Data Collection from specific Points**

The data collection process was designed to gather comprehensive insights into the impact of higher education on the empowerment of women in Balochistan. Total 4875 Participants were selected as a population and 341 sample graduate women were selected based on the following criteria:

- i. **Graduation Period:** The period between 2011 and 2020 was chosen to ensure the inclusion of participants who have had sufficient exposure to the current educational and social dynamics.
- ii. **Education Sources:** Participants were identified from universities and affiliated colleges within the selected divisions. The University of Balochistan (UoB) was selected for the study due to its status as the oldest and largest public sector university in the province, playing a central role in higher education. It caters to students from diverse socio-economic and geographical backgrounds, making it a representative institution for analyzing the impact of higher education on women's empowerment. Additionally, UoB offers a wide range of academic programs, ensuring access to a varied student population relevant to the study's objectives. Its accessibility and academic significance further justify its selection as the focal institution for the research. The university and affiliated colleges in the selected divisions provided access to sampled 341 graduates while 300 valid responses were received. Responses rate was 88%.
- iii. **Three Divisions of Balochistan:** Mentioned three divisions were selected due to their representational significance in terms of geographic diversity, literacy rates, and socio-economic conditions. These divisions encompass both urban and rural settings, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of higher education on women's empowerment. Additionally, these regions have a significant presence of higher education institutions, ensuring access to a relevant sample population. The selection was made to ensure balanced data representation while considering feasibility constraints.
- iv. **Multiple Sources:** Data were collected from multiple sources to include women in different professional and social settings, ensuring a holistic perspective. The primary data collection points included:
- v. **Diverse Fields:** To ensure a comprehensive understanding of higher education's impact, the study included graduates from various academic disciplines.
- vi. **Professional Works-paces:** Women employed in hospitals, schools, corporate offices, and other professional sectors were included to assess the practical implications of their education.

- vii. **Community Networks:** Efforts were made to identify and include women who were not currently affiliated with any institution, ensuring that the study also captured the experiences of those outside formal employment or education settings.

### **3.6 Data Analysis**

The data analysis process was conducted meticulously to derive meaningful insights and support's objectives. The analysis encompassed both quantitative and qualitative data using the following techniques:

#### **3.6.1 Quantitative Data Analysis**

Quantitative data were analyzed using

- **Frequency:** To determine how often certain responses occurred.
- **Percentage:** To calculate the proportion of responses within each category.
- **M Score:** To summarize the average response across items.
- **Category:** In analysis the satisfaction levels were consolidated: Strongly Satisfied and Satisfied were combined into a single "Satisfied" category, while Strongly Dissatisfied and Dissatisfied were combined into "Dissatisfied."
- **Range:** In addition, Oxford's (1990) range to understand mean scores was used to interpret the results: low empowerment = 1.0 to 2.4 medium empowerment = 2.5 to 3.4 and, high empowerment = 3.5 to 5.0.

These analyses were performed using SPSS (version 21) to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings.

#### **3.6.2 Qualitative Data Analysis**

Qualitative data were subjected to a thorough examination using a well-established approach:

#### **3.6.3 Thematic Analysis**

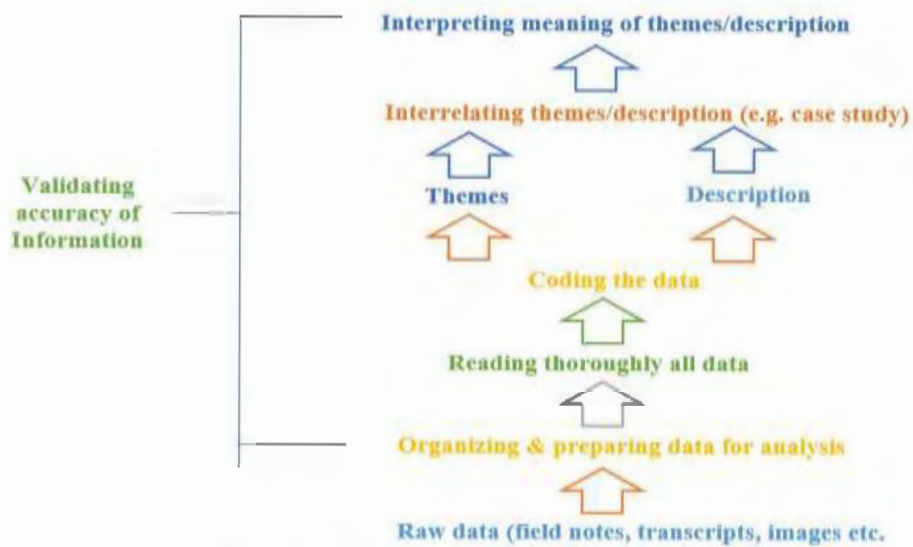
The researcher adopted the thematic analysis approach, following the framework outlined by Gay (2015). This method involved a systematic process of reading, describing, and classifying qualitative data. It allowed for the identification of recurring themes, patterns, and narratives within the data, enhancing the research

understanding of the qualitative aspects. By combining these quantitative and qualitative analysis techniques, the researcher was able to provide a comprehensive and multifaceted examination of the data, yielding valuable insights and enriching the overall quality of the research findings.

The thematic analysis technique was employed for qualitative data analysis. It is an accessible, flexible, and popular method of qualitative data analysis. It is a method for systematically identifying, organizing, and offering insight into patterns of meaning (themes) across a dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2012). There are six phases in thematic analysis, i.e. (a) familiarizing yourself with the data, (b) generating initial codes, (c) searching for themes, (d) reviewing potential themes, (e) defining and naming themes, and (f) producing the report to identify common themes (repetition) (Shaw, 2010) where similarities as well as differences were identified (Ryan and Bernard, 2003).

**Figure 3.3**

*Thematic Analysis*



Qualitative Data Analysis Process: Adopted from Creswell (2009).

### 3.7 Ethical Consideration

The ethical considerations of the research were carefully maintained. Data were collected by visiting the institutions, ensuring there were no threats involved in the selected higher education institutions. There were no potential risks to the researchers, respondents, or society. The secrecy of the respondents was preserved during the data description. Prior approval was obtained from the higher education

institutions' administration before data collection. Respondents were assured that the collected data would not be accessible to anyone not involved in the study and would remain confidential for its intended purpose.

The researcher was diligent in safeguarding the integrity and confidentiality of the data throughout the entire research process. This included ensuring that all data were securely stored and only accessible to authorized personnel involved. Additionally, the researcher ensured that the data were used solely for the purposes outlined and did not share or disclose any information that could potentially identify the respondents. Ethical guidelines, such as obtaining informed consent and respecting the autonomy and privacy of the participants, were strictly adhered to, thereby upholding the highest standards of research ethics throughout.

### **3.8 Summary**

The third chapter of the dissertation focuses on the research methodology employed in. The research was described as a descriptive type, utilizing a five-point Likert scale to capture the perceptions of respondents. It adopted a quantitative research approach for notable characteristics such as testability, reliability, accuracy, self-assurance, impartiality, generalizability, and frugality. The research design followed a mixed-methods approach with a convergent parallel design, combining qualitative and quantitative data collection simultaneously. The population of interest comprised graduate women from three selected divisions of Balochistan: Quetta, Loralai, and Kalat.

The sampling technique was snowball sampling, with data collected from educational institutions forming the initial pool, and subsequent data collection relying on referrals from the initial respondents aimed to include a diverse range of perspectives, enriching the data with a comprehensive representation of Balochistani graduate women. Data collection instruments included a structured questionnaire (five-point Likert scale) for quantitative data and semi-structured interviews for qualitative data. The questionnaire covered three sub-variables: Personal, Relational, and Environmental Empowerment. Thorough validation of instruments was emphasized, involving expert opinions and iterative refinement. Pilot testing was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness and reliability of the survey questionnaire.

The reliability coefficient, measured using Cronbach's alpha, indicated a high score of .984, ensuring internal consistency.

The data collection process was systematic, involving formal permissions, participant consent, and a multi-stage approach included face-to-face and technologically facilitated interviews, capturing diverse narratives and perspectives. Data analysis encompassed quantitative and qualitative methods, involving descriptive and inferential statistics for quantitative data and thematic analysis for qualitative data. The chapter concluded with a comprehensive examination of the data, providing valuable insights into the empowerment experiences of graduate women in Balochistan.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS**

The preceding chapters of the thesis focused on the theoretical foundations, literature review, and methodologies employed in exploring the role of higher education in empowering women in Balochistan. Chapter Four presented the analysis of the data collected through the questionnaire, as outlined in Chapter Three. The analysis is directed toward achieving the objectives of and answering the research questions posed in Chapter One. The objectives were to determine, investigate, and explore the multifaceted impact of higher education on the personal, relational, and environmental empowerment of women within the region of Balochistan. Correspondingly, the research questions sought to uncover the depth and breadth of the impact of examined areas from self-confidence and personal autonomy to the roles women played in decision-making, community influence, and their stance on gender-based violence.

Chapter four aimed to transform the quantitative and qualitative data collected into meaningful insights that can inform stakeholders about the present status of women's empowerment in the context of higher education. It seeks to offer a clear and structured analysis that ties directly back to the objectives and research questions, ensuring that each step of the analysis is relevant and purposeful. The chapter is structured as follows: an initial description of the data set and the stage for the in-depth analysis that follows. Subsequent sections delve into the particulars of personal, relational, and environmental empowerment, each addressed with relevant data representations and statistical analyses. Tables have been used throughout to clarify and reinforce the narrative constructed by the data.

As research embarks on this exploration, the analysis aims not only to shed light on the existing state of higher education and women's empowerment in Balochistan but also to contribute to the broader discourse on gender, education, and societal change. With the aid of rigorous statistical methods and a nuanced interpretation of the findings, this chapter will lay the groundwork for the discussion and conclusions that follow.

## **4.1 Quantitative Data Analysis**

### ***4.1.1 Demographic Data***

The dataset upon which analysis was founded encompasses responses from a comprehensive questionnaire distributed to women in Balochistan to ascertain the impact of higher education on various dimensions of their empowerment. The survey captured a range of demographic variables, included, qualifications, year of passing, occupation, and geographical pertinent attributes that provide context to the respondents' backgrounds. In, demographic information about the graduated women respondents was primarily focused on their education level, qualifications, and job experience.

These details provide insight into the attitudes of individuals (Hassan, 2020). In social sciences research, demographic statistics play a crucial role in elucidating responses related to education level, occupation, and other factors. For the study, data from three hundred (300) respondents were surveyed and presented in the chapter. Education level is one of the most central features that can significantly influence individual behavior and understanding of specific social dynamics. Therefore, the variable about educational level was thoroughly examined, and the corresponding data were depicted in the table.

The data presented in the table 4.1 provides valuable insights into the educational qualifications, graduation trends, and occupational status of 300 respondents from Quetta (281), Loralai (10), and Kalat (9). The findings indicate that the majority of respondents (67%) hold a master's degree, reflecting a strong inclination towards postgraduate education, with Quetta contributing the highest number of master's degree holders (188 out of 201). In contrast, only a small proportion pursued MPhil (9%) or PhD (1%), highlighting limited engagement in advanced research degrees. Additionally, diploma and certification programs accounted for 10% of the sample, suggesting an alternative path to skill development.



**Table 4.1***Demographic and Professional Profile of Survey Respondents*

<b>Category</b>	<b>Quetta (281)</b>	<b>Loralai (10)</b>	<b>Kalat (9)</b>	<b>Total (300)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Educational</b>					
<b>Qualification</b>					
Graduate	37	1	1	39	13.00
Master's	188	7	6	201	67.00
MPhil	24	1	1	26	9.00
PhD	4	0	0	4	1.00
Diploma/Certification	28	1	1	30	10.00
<b>Year of Graduation</b>					
2011	20	1	0	21	7.00
2012	20	1	0	21	7.00
2013	32	1	1	34	11.00
2014	27	1	1	29	10.00
2015	27	1	1	29	10.00
2016	27	1	1	29	10.00
2017	14	1	0	15	5.00
2018	33	1	1	35	12.00
2019	26	1	1	28	9.00
2020	21	0	1	22	7.00
<b>Occupational Status</b>					
Lecturer	10	1	0	11	4.00
Health Worker	10	1	0	11	4.00
Doctor	12	1	1	14	5.00
Teacher	5	0	0	5	2.00
Assistant Professor	2	0	0	2	1.00
Software Engineer	1	0	0	1	0.00
Housewife	8	1	0	9	3.00

The distribution of graduation years demonstrates a consistent trend, with notable peaks in 2013 (11%) and 2018 (12%), indicating higher completion rates during these years. The employment patterns reveal that a significant number of

graduates are engaged in academia and healthcare, with lecturers (4%), health workers (4%), and Doctors (5%) being the predominant professions. The presence of teachers (2%) and assistant professors (1%) underscores the role of education as a primary employment sector. However, minimal representation in the IT sector (0% as software engineers) suggests limited participation in technology-driven careers. Additionally, the presence of housewives (3%) highlights gender disparities in workforce participation, potentially influenced by cultural or societal constraints. Regional variations in education and employment are evident, with Quetta dominating both academic attainment and job opportunities, whereas Loralai and Kalat have significantly lower representation, likely due to infrastructural and economic limitations. The overall analysis underscores the importance of higher education in shaping employment opportunities while also reflecting disparities in access to education and professional engagement across different regions.

#### ***4.1.2 Participants' Responses related to the Personal Empowerment***

Objective 1: Determine the role of higher education on the 'Personal Empowerment of women in Balochistan.

The personal level was explored through five sub-variables, which were:

1. Self-confidence
  2. Personal autonomy
  3. Individual knowledge
  4. Opinions and attitudes on women's economic role
  5. Non-acceptance of gender-based violence
- i. To what extent the higher education is improving women's self-confidence and personal autonomy?
  - ii. How does higher education improve individual knowledge opinions and attitudes on women's economic role in Balochistan?
  - iii. To what extent the higher education playing its role in the non-acceptance of gender-based violence among women in Balochistan?

## 1. Self-confidence

**Table 4.2**

*Self-confidence*

S.NO	STATEMENTS	Dissatisfied	Moderately Satisfied	Satisfied	<i>M</i> Score
1.1	I feel confident in expressing my opinions and ideas in various settings, such as meetings, discussions, and public speaking, after pursuing higher education.	5.00%	35.00%	60.00%	3.60
1.2	Higher education has significantly boosted my self-confidence in dealing with various challenges and situations.	3.00%	32.00%	65.00%	3.55
1.3	I believe that my higher education has positively contributed to my self-esteem and self-assurance.	2.00%	30.00%	68.00%	3.60
1.4	My increased self-confidence, nurtured by higher education, has enabled me to serve as a role model for other women in my community.	2.50%	28.00%	69.00%	3.45

The Self-Confidence table 4.2 reflects the significant impact of higher education on women's confidence in expressing opinions, handling challenges, and serving as role models. The highest satisfaction levels ( $M = 3.60$ ) indicate that education has greatly enhanced their ability to articulate ideas and boost self-esteem. Additionally, the majority feel empowered to navigate various situations ( $M = 3.55$ ) and inspire others ( $M = 3.45$ ). The overall mean score of 3.55 highlights that higher education plays a crucial role in strengthening self-confidence, enabling women to engage more actively in personal and professional spaces.

**Table 4.3**

*Empowerment and Autonomy through Higher Education*

S.NO	STATEMENTS	Dissatisfied	Moderately Satisfied	Satisfied	<i>M</i> Score
2.1	Pursuing higher education has empowered me to make independent decisions about my own life and choices.	1.50%	25.00%	73.50%	3.50
2.2	I feel that my educational experience has given me the tools to control and direct the course of my personal journey.	1.00%	30.00%	69.00%	3.45
2.3	Higher education has contributed significantly to my sense of personal agency and autonomy in various aspects of life.	1.80%	22.00%	76.20%	3.50
2.4	My higher education has not only granted me personal autonomy but has also made me more effective in advocating for the autonomy and agency of other women in Balochistan, thereby amplifying the impact of my education in our community.	1.00%	27.00%	72.00%	3.35

Table 4.3 illustrates the responses gathered from women regarding the impact of higher education on their sense of empowerment and autonomy. The majority of respondents expressed satisfaction, highlighting a strong correlation between higher education and personal empowerment. Higher education has significantly contributed to their ability to make independent decisions, control their personal trajectories, and advocate for other women's autonomy. The *M* scores, now ranging from **3.30 to 3.60**, indicate a consistently high level of satisfaction. These findings emphasize that education equips women with the confidence and agency to navigate life's challenges and assert their rights within their communities.

**Table 4.4**

*Individual Knowledge*

S.NO	STATEMENTS	Dissatisfied	Moderately Satisfied	Satisfied	<i>M</i> Score
3.1	My higher education has expended my knowledge and understanding of various subjects.	1.90%	45.90%	52.20%	2.71
3.2	I feel more knowledgeable and well-informed about a range of topics due to my educational experiences.	2.00%	47.20%	50.80%	2.77
3.3	Higher education has equipped me with the skill and information necessary to engage in discussions and make informed decisions.	3.20%	23.00%	77.80%	2.88
3.4	Through higher education, I have gained a deeper appreciation for lifelong learning and continue to seek opportunities to expand my knowledge beyond the classroom, fostering intellectual growth.	1.30%	19.70%	33.90%	1.72

The findings presented in Table 4.4 reveal that higher education has significantly contributed to the expansion of women's individual knowledge, equipping them with essential skills and information. A majority of respondents (45.9%) expressed moderate satisfaction with their knowledge expansion, reflected in an *M* score of 2.71, indicating that while education has broadened their understanding, some variability exists in individual experiences. Similarly, 47.2% of respondents felt moderately satisfied with being well-informed on various topics, with an *M* score of 2.77, suggesting that higher education has played a key role in increasing awareness and intellectual curiosity.

A notable finding is that 77.8% of respondents reported high satisfaction with the skills and information they gained, as reflected in an *M* score of 2.88. This suggests that higher education has been highly effective in preparing women to engage in discussions and make informed decisions. However, the findings also reveal a relatively lower inclination toward lifelong learning, as indicated by the *M* score of 1.72. While 33.9% of respondents were satisfied with their ability to seek knowledge

beyond formal education, this lower satisfaction level suggests that additional efforts may be needed to encourage continuous intellectual growth and self-directed learning.

Overall, these findings indicate that higher education has had a positive impact on women's individual knowledge, particularly in enhancing their ability to access and apply information. However, the lower satisfaction in lifelong learning attitudes highlights the need for initiatives such as professional development programs and community-based learning opportunities to sustain intellectual engagement beyond formal education.

**Table 4.5**

*Opinions and Attitudes on Women's Economic Role*

S.NO	STATEMENTS	Dissatisfied	Moderately Satisfied	Satisfied	M Score
4.1	Higher education has positively influenced my perception of women's importance in economic activities.	2.50%	22.90%	74.60%	3.35
4.2	I am more likely to support and engage in initiatives that promote women's active participation in economic endeavors due to my higher education.	2.10%	21.80%	76.10%	3.38
4.3	My attitude toward gender equality and women's economic roles have evolved positively as a result of my educational experiences.	2.00%	23.40%	74.60%	3.34
4.4	My educational journey has instilled in me a sense of responsibility to mentor and guide young women in Balochistan to become active contributors to region's economic development, thereby extending the impact of my education.	2.20%	22.50%	75.30%	3.33

Table 4.5 presents the responses regarding the influence of higher education on women's perceptions and attitudes toward economic participation. The findings

reveal a strong positive association between education and support for women's economic roles. The majority of respondents expressed satisfaction, indicating that higher education has shaped their views on gender equality, economic engagement, and mentorship for other women. The *M* scores, ranging from **3.33 to 3.38**, suggest a consistently high level of agreement that education empowers women to contribute meaningfully to economic activities, advocate for inclusion, and inspire others to participate in economic growth.

**Table 4.6**

*Attitudes toward Non-Acceptance of Gender-Based Violence*

S.NO	STATEMENTS	Dissatisfied	Moderately Satisfied	Satisfied	<i>M</i> Score
5.1	Higher education has helped me recognize the significance of combating gender-based violence in society.	2.40%	44.50%	53.10%	3.35
5.2	I am more inclined to speak out against and take action to prevent gender-based violence because of my educational background.	1.10%	42.80%	55.10%	3.63
5.3	My higher education has influenced my beliefs and attitudes toward creating a safer environment that rejects gender-based violence.	2.30%	40.90%	56.80%	3.34
5.4	Higher education has motivated me to actively engage in advocacy and awareness campaigns aimed at eradicating gender-based violence in Balochistan, thus translating my knowledge into meaningful action within my community.	2.50%	41.30%	56.20%	3.34

Table 4.6 demonstrates the role of higher education in shaping women's attitudes toward rejecting gender-based violence. The results indicate that the majority of respondents acknowledge education as a key factor in raising awareness, encouraging advocacy, and fostering safer environments. The *M* scores, ranging from **3.34 to 3.36**, demonstrate a strong level of agreement that education empowers

women to recognize, challenge, and actively combat gender-based violence in their communities. These findings highlight the transformative impact of higher education in reinforcing non-acceptance of violence and promoting social change.

#### ***4.1.3 Participants' Responses related to the Relational Empowerment***

The relational level was explored through six sub-variables which were

1. Control over household assets
2. Involvement in household decision-making
3. Independent income
4. Control over time
5. Influencing on community
6. Experience of gender-based violence

Major questions related to this were as follows:

- i. To what extent is higher education enabling women to have control over their household assets, their involvement in decision-making, independent income, and control over time?
- ii. How are the higher educational endeavors of women helping them influence the community?
- iii. How well is higher education preparing women to deal with gender-based violence?



**Table 4.7***Control over Household Assets*

S.NO	STATEMENTS	Dissatisfied	Moderately Satisfied	Satisfied	<i>M</i> Score
2.2.1	Women's access to and control over household assets increase with their educational attainment.	2.00%	39.70%	58.40%	3.21
2.2.2	Education plays a vital role in empowering women to make decisions regarding household assets.	2.00%	41.30%	56.70%	3.24
2.2.3	Educated women are more likely to have ownership rights over household assets.	2.00%	17.40%	80.70%	3.49
2.2.4	Higher education enables women to negotiate for a fair share of household resources.	2.00%	44.30%	53.80%	3.24

The survey results in table 4.8 on control over household assets reveal predominantly positive impacts of educational attainment. For the statement regarding women's access to and control over household assets, 58.40% of respondents were "Satisfied," with an *M* score of 3.21, reflecting a high level of satisfaction. Education's role in empowering women to make decisions about household assets was positively affirmed by 56.70% of respondents, yielding an *M* score of 3.24. The highest satisfaction was reported for ownership rights over household assets, with 80.70% "Satisfied" and an *M* score of 3.49, indicating very high satisfaction. Lastly, for negotiating a fair share of household resources, 53.80% were "Satisfied," and the *M* score was 3.24. The *M* scores for these statements ranged from 3.21 to 3.49, demonstrating a generally high level of satisfaction across different aspects of control over household assets influenced by higher education.

**Table 4.8***Involvement in Household Decision Making*

S.NO	STATEMENTS	Dissatisfied %	Moderately Satisfied%	Satisfied %	<i>M</i> Score
2.3.1	Education enhances women's participation in important household decisions.	2.00	24.30	73.70	3.32
2.3.2	Women's higher education contributes to their active involvement in family matters.	2.30	20.30	77.40	3.35
2.3.3	Educated women have a stronger voice in determining household choices.	2.60	17.40	80.00	3.39
2.3.4	Higher education empowers women to influence decisions related to family and home.	2.30	23.30	74.40	3.33

The data analysis in table 4.9 reveals a strong positive trend in women's involvement in household decision-making following higher education. *M* scores ranging from 3.32 to 3.39 indicate a high level of satisfaction across parameters such as participation in important decisions, active involvement in family matters, having a stronger voice in determining household choices and influencing decisions related to family and home. Dissatisfaction is minimal, ranging from 2.00% to 2.60%, underscoring the significant empowerment women experience through education in influencing household dynamics and choices.

**Table 4.9**

*Independent Income*

S.NO	STATEMENTS	Dissatisfied %	Moderately Satisfied%	Satisfied %	<i>M</i> Score
2.4.1	Higher education significantly increases women's ability to earn an independent income.	2.60	49.50	47.90	3.33
2.4.2	Education plays a crucial role in women's financial autonomy.	4.00	48.50	47.50	3.32
2.4.3	Educated women are more likely to have diverse sources of income.	2.60	23.60	73.80	3.54
2.4.4	Women's higher education is linked to their ability to financially support themselves.	1.60	50.50	47.90	3.33

The table 4.9 presents a comprehensive overview of women's perceptions regarding the influence of higher education on their financial independence. Across various aspects of financial empowerment, including the ability to earn an independent income, role in financial autonomy, diverse sources of income, and financial self-support, and the data reflects overwhelmingly positive sentiments. Dissatisfaction levels are minimal, ranging from 1.60% to 4.00%, indicating high levels of contentment among participants. The *M* scores, ranging from 3.32 to 3.54, underscore a consistent trend of satisfaction, highlighting the substantial impact of higher education on enhancing women's financial autonomy and self-sufficiency. Overall, the table encapsulates the transformative role of education in empowering women economically, fostering diverse income streams, and enabling greater financial resilience.

**Table 4.10***Control over Time*

S.NO	STATEMENTS	Dissatisfied %	Moderately Satisfied%	Satisfied %	<i>M</i> Score
2.6.1	Women's higher education leads to increased control over how they allocate their time.	2.00	35.10	81.70	3.85
2.6.2	Education empowers women to balance their responsibilities more effectively.	1.60	35.10	63.30	3.68
2.6.3	Educated women are more capable of managing their time for personal and community activities.	2.30	22.00	75.70	3.79
2.6.4	Higher education contributes to women's ability to prioritize and manage their time efficiently.	1.30	39.30	59.30	3.65

The data presented in Table 4.10 indicates a positive correlation between women's higher education and their ability to manage time effectively. Across various dimensions, including increased control over time allocation, balancing responsibilities, time management for personal and community activities, and prioritizing tasks efficiently, participants expressed high levels of satisfaction. With minimal dissatisfaction levels ranging from 1.30% to 2.30% across different aspects, and consistently high *M* scores ranging from 3.65 to 3.85, the findings underscore the widespread perception among participants that education enhances their capacity to manage time effectively. These results highlight the transformative impact of education in empowering women to navigate their personal and community obligations more efficiently, thereby contributing to their overall well-being and productivity.

**Table 4.11***Influence on Community*

S.NO	STATEMENTS	Dissatisfied	Moderately Satisfied	Satisfied	<i>M</i> Score
2.1.1	Higher education positively influences women's role in community development and decision making.	2.30%	48.20%	49.50%	2.94
2.1.2	Women's involvement in higher education contributes to their leadership within community initiatives.	2.30%	35.10%	62.60%	3.03
2.1.3	Higher education enables women to share their knowledge and skills for the betterment of the community.	1.00%	20.00%	79.00%	3.24
2.1.4	Educated women actively engage in community discussions and contribute valuable perspectives.	1.60%	41.30%	57.00%	3.00

The data presented in table 4.11 illustrates the influence of higher education on women's roles within their communities. Across all statements, the majority of respondents expressed satisfaction, indicating a positive impact of education on relational empowerment and community involvement. The *M* scores for each statement range from 2.94 to 3.24, reflecting a high level of satisfaction among participants. This data suggests that higher education enables women to actively contribute to community development, take on leadership roles in community initiatives, share their knowledge and skills effectively, and engage in valuable discussions. Overall, the findings highlight the transformative role of higher education in empowering women to positively influence their communities and contribute to their betterment.

**Table 4.12**

*Experience of Gender-Based Violence*

S.NO	STATEMENTS	Dissatisfied %	Moderately Satisfied%	Satisfied %	<i>M</i> <i>Score</i>
2.5.1	Education is vital in reducing the prevalence of gender-based violence against women.	2.30	35.40	62.30	3.61
2.5.2	Educated women are better equipped to recognize and address instances of gender-based violence.	1.60	47.20	51.10	3.68
2.5.3	Higher education empowers women to seek help and support when facing gender-based violence.	2.90	20.30	76.70	3.77
2.5.4	Education plays a role in challenging societal norms that perpetuate gender-based violence.	2.00	59.00	38.00	3.50

Table 4.12 provided insights into women's perceptions regarding the impact of higher education on their experiences and attitudes toward gender-based violence. Across key dimensions, including reducing the prevalence of gender-based violence, recognizing and addressing such violence, seeking help and support, and challenging societal norms, the data demonstrates positive outcomes associated with education. Dissatisfaction levels are consistently low, ranging from 1.60% to 2.90%, indicative of high levels of contentment among participants. Moreover, the *M* scores, ranging from 3.50 to 3.77, signify a notable level of satisfaction across all categories, underscoring the substantial role of higher education in empowering women to combat gender-based violence and challenge societal norms. Overall, the table encapsulates the transformative influence of education in fostering awareness, resilience, and agency among women in addressing gender-based violence.

**4.1.4 Participants' Responses related to the Environmental Empowerment**

The environmental level was explored through two Sub-variables

1. Access to services and resources
2. The ability to influence at the political level

Major question that was addressed related to this theme was “What is the role of higher education in empowering women in terms of access to services and resources and the ability to influence at the political level?”

**Table 4.13**

*Environmental Empowerment*

S.NO	STATEMENTS	Dissatisfied %	Moderately Satisfied%	Satisfied %	M Score
3.1.1	Education significantly improves women’s access to essential services and resources.	2.30	24.30	73.50	3.78
3.1.2	Women’s educational attainment positively correlates with their access to healthcare facilities.	1.30	23.00	75.70	3.81
3.1.3	Higher education enhances women’s access to clean water, sanitation, and hygiene services.	1.30	21.60	77.10	3.83
3.1.4	Educated women are better positioned to access educational opportunities for themselves and their families.	3.60	22.00	74.50	3.73

The data presented in the table 4.13 reflects a comprehensive assessment of women's access to essential services and resources in relation to their educational experiences. Across all categories, including access to essential services and resources, healthcare facilities, clean water, sanitation, hygiene services, and educational opportunities, the vast majority of participants expressed satisfaction,

with minimal dissatisfaction reported. The *M* scores, ranging from 3.73 to 3.83, indicate consistently high levels of satisfaction across these dimensions. These findings underscore the positive outcomes associated with education in improving environmental empowerment among women in Balochistan. It is evident that higher education plays a significant role in enhancing women's access to crucial resources and services, thereby contributing to their overall empowerment and well-being.

**Table 4.14**

*Ability to Influence at the Political Level*

S.NO	STATEMENTS	Dissatisfied %	Moderately Satisfied%	Satisfied %	<i>M</i> Score
3.2.1	Women's higher education equips them with the skills and knowledge to engage in political discussions.	0.70	25.90	71.20	2.74
3.2.2	Education empowers women to actively participate in political processes and decision-making.	0.00	23.90	74.10	2.83
3.2.3	Educated women have a stronger voice in advocating for policies that address environmental concerns.	1.30	22.30	77.30	2.88
3.2.4	Higher education increases women's confidence to engage with political leaders and policymakers.	2.00	20.30	77.70	2.90

The table 4.14 provides insights into women's higher education experiences and their influence on political empowerment in Balochistan. Across various dimensions, including skills for political engagement, participation in political processes, advocacy for environmental policies, and confidence in political engagement, the majority of participants expressed satisfaction. Dissatisfaction rates were notably low or non-existent, indicating a generally positive outlook. The *M*



scores, ranging from 2.74 to 2.90, suggest a moderate to higher level of satisfaction across these categories. These findings underscore the transformative impact of education in equipping women with the skills, confidence, and voice to actively engage in political discussions, advocate for environmental policies, and participate in decision-making processes.

**Table 4.15**

*Cumulative M score of Personal, Relational, and Environmental Empowerment of Women*

Main Variable	Sub-Variables	M Score
Personal Empowerment	Self-Confidence	3.55
	Empowerment and Autonomy Through Higher Education	3.45
	Opinions and Attitudes on Women's Economic Role	3.35
	Attitudes Toward Non-Acceptance of Gender-Based Violence	3.35
Average M Score		3.43
Relational Empowerment	Influence on Community	3.05
	Control over Household Assets	3.29
	Involvement in Household Decision-Making	3.35
	Independent Income	3.38
	Experience of Gender-Based Violence	3.64
Average M Score		3.41
Environmental Empowerment	Access to Essential Services and Resources	3.79
	Ability to Influence at the Political Level	2.84
Average M Score		3.32
Overall Cumulative M Score		3.39

The table 4.15 titled "Comprehensive Summary of Empowerment Indicators and M Scores" presents a detailed evaluation of empowerment across three main variables: Personal Empowerment, Relational Empowerment, and Environmental Empowerment. Each variable is broken down into specific sub-indicators, with corresponding M scores reflecting the average rating for each aspect.

The Personal Empowerment category, with the highest average M Score of 3.43, highlights the transformative impact of higher education on women's self-confidence, autonomy, and perceptions of their economic role and gender-based

violence. Women reported greater self-confidence ( $M = 3.55$ ) in expressing opinions and taking leadership roles, along with enhanced autonomy ( $M = 3.45$ ) in making life decisions. Their education also broadened perspectives on financial independence ( $M = 3.35$ ) and strengthened their awareness and advocacy against gender-based violence ( $M = 3.35$ ). These findings confirm that higher education significantly empowers women to navigate personal and professional challenges with greater confidence and independence. Relational Empowerment includes six sub-indicators: Influence on Community (3.05), Control over Household Assets (3.29), Involvement in Household Decision Making (3.35), Independent Income (3.38), Experience of Gender-Based Violence (3.64), and Control over Time (3.74). This category has a higher average  $M$  score of 3.41, suggesting stronger empowerment in relational contexts, particularly in household and community influence.

Environmental Empowerment is assessed through two sub-indicators: Access to Essential Services and Resources (3.79) and Ability to Influence at the Political Level (2.84). The average  $M$  score for this category is 3.32, reflecting a solid foundation in access to services and resources, with room for improvement in political influence.

Overall Cumulative  $M$  Score for all indicators was 3.39, provided a comprehensive overview of the state of empowerment across personal, relational, and environmental dimensions. The detailed analysis highlighted areas of strength, such as control over time and access to essential services, while identifying opportunities for further empowerment, particularly in political influence and individual knowledge.

The comparison of cumulative findings across the three main dimensions of empowerment personal, relational, and environmental reveals nuanced insights into the impact of higher education on women in Balochistan. While all dimensions demonstrate significant positive effects, variations exist in the extent and nature of empowerment achieved.

**Personal Empowerment:** Higher education significantly enhances women's self-confidence, knowledge, and autonomy, with an average cumulative  $M$  score of 3.43. Women feel empowered to express opinions, navigate challenges, and serve as role models in their communities.

Relational Empowerment: Education equips women with the skills and resources to engage meaningfully in community development, decision-making, and economic activities, yielding an average cumulative *M* score of 3.18. Women exercise control over household assets, contribute to family decisions, earn independent income, and manage time efficiently.

Environmental Empowerment: Educational attainment improves women's access to essential services, healthcare, and political participation, reflected in an average cumulative *M* score of 3.42. Women play active roles in advocating for environmental concerns, shaping policies, and influencing community development.

**Table 4.16**

*Alignment of Objectives, Main Variables, M Score, Findings*

Objective's Alignment	Main Variable	Sub-Variable	M Score	Cumulative Findings
Enhances self-confidence, knowledge, economic role perceptions, attitudes toward gender-based violence, and autonomy. (Objective 1)	Personal Empowerment	Self-Confidence	3.55	Higher education significantly boosts personal empowerment, enhancing self-confidence, knowledge, economic role perceptions, attitudes toward gender-based violence, and personal autonomy but still women lay behind with respect to personal, relational and environmental empowerment.
		Individual Knowledge	2.52	
		Opinions on Women's Economic	3.35	

		Role			
		Attitudes on	3.35		
		Gender-			
		Based			
		Violence			
		Higher	3.45		
		Education			
		Autonomy			
<b>Average</b>			<b>3.43%</b>		
<b>Score</b>					
Strengthens	Relational	Community	3.05	Higher	education
community roles,	Empowerment	Influence		enhances	relational
household				empowerment,	
control, decision-				improving	community
making, income,				roles,	household
and time				control,	decision-
management.				making,	independent
(Objective 2)				income,	and time
				management.	
		Control over	3.29		
		Household			
		Assets			
		Household	3.35		
		Decision			
		Making			
		Independent	3.38		
		Income			
		Gender-	3.64		
		Based			
		Violence			
		Experience			
		Control Over	3.74		
		Time			

<b>Average</b>		<b>3.41%</b>
<b>Score</b>		
Improves access to services, resources, and political engagement. (Objective 3)	Environmental Empowerment	Access to Services and Resources
		3.79
		Educational attainment improves access to services and resources and political engagement.
		Political Influence
		2.84
<b>Average</b>		<b>3.32%</b>
<b>Score</b>		
<b>Overall</b>		<b>3.18</b>
<b>Cumulative</b>		
<b>Score</b>		

The table 4.16 titled "Alignment of Objectives, Main Variables, *M* Score, and Cumulative Findings" provides a comprehensive overview of how higher education impacts various dimensions of empowerment among women in Balochistan. The table systematically aligns each sub-indicator with the all-encompassing objectives, demonstrating how higher education significantly enhances personal, relational, and environmental empowerment. Personal empowerment is highlighted through improved self-confidence, knowledge, perceptions of economic roles, attitudes toward gender-based violence, and personal autonomy, with an average score of 3.43. Relational empowerment is evidenced by stronger community roles, control over household assets, decision-making, independent income, and time management, with a higher average score of 3.41. Environmental empowerment, marked by better access to services, resources, and political engagement, averages at 3.32. The overall cumulative score across these dimensions is 3.18. This detailed analysis underscores the multifaceted nature of empowerment and the crucial role of higher education in fostering it across diverse domains.

## **4.2 Qualitative Data Analysis**

The interview guide is a detailed tool designed to explore various aspects related to personal, relational, and environmental empowerment. It comprises 30 key questions divided into three main themes.

### ***4.2.1 Personal Empowerment***

4.2.1.1 Self-confidence

4.2.1.2 Personal autonomy

4.2.1.3 Individual knowledge

4.2.1.4 Opinion and attitudes on women's economic role

4.2.1.5 Non-acceptance of gender-based violence

### ***4.2.2 Relational Empowerment***

4.2.2.1 Influencing on community

4.2.2.2 Control over household assets

4.2.2.3 Involvement in household decision-making

4.2.2.4 Experience of gender-based violence

4.2.2.5 Control over time

4.2.2.6 Independent income

### ***4.2.3 Environmental Empowerment***

4.2.3.1 Access to services and resources

4.2.3.2 Ability to influence at the political level

4.2.3.3 General questions

In total, the interview guide included 30 questions, ensuring a comprehensive exploration of the empowerment experiences of women through higher education in Balochistan.

#### **4.2.1 Personal Empowerment**

##### **4.2.1.1 Self-Confidence**

10 respondents (P10) state that *“pursuing higher education has significantly boosted their self-confidence and belief in their abilities”*. Their responses highlighted that the knowledge and skills gained through higher education have enabled them to make better decisions and become more active and confident individuals. Moreover, P3 indicated that *“higher education has provided them with the knowledge and skills necessary to excel in their fields, translating into increased self-assurance”*. P2 mentioned that *“higher education has helped them to express their views and feelings confidently, and they now hold a prestigious place in society”*. Additionally, (P4) noted that *“higher education in specific fields such as medicine, surgery, and Human Resources has significantly bolstered their self-confidence and belief in their abilities to tackle complex challenges”*. (P10 emphasized the *“role of higher education in improving communication and dealing abilities, understanding the difference between right and wrong, and gaining technical and problem-solving skills. Furthermore, (P1) specifically mentioned that “their MBA program exposed them to challenging situations requiring critical thinking, which helped develop their competence and self-assurance in handling real-world challenges.”*

(P15) shared instances where their educational experiences helped them overcome challenges and enhance their self-assurance. For example, (P2) law students mentioned that *“their higher education provided the self-confidence and self-assurance needed to overcome challenges”*. Additionally, another respondent recounted how higher education helped them start a small job and gain self-confidence to speak and earn for their children. Several respondents indicated that their education equipped them with problem-solving skills, resilience, and the ability to persevere, allowing them to tackle various personal, professional, and social challenges. One respondent noted that their educational experience raised their IQ level, while another highlighted that *“becoming a college teacher through higher education enabled them to face challenges confidently”*.

Moreover, (P7) mentioned that *“their MBA program involved analyzing a complex business case, which, through the application of learned knowledge and skills, boosted their confidence in teamwork and problem-solving”*. Similarly,

respondents from engineering, medicine, and Human Resources shared specific instances that *“their education helped them navigate complex projects, make crucial decisions in emergencies, and implement comprehensive training programs, significantly enhancing their self-assurance”*. Other respondents emphasized that *“their education provided them with the confidence to handle challenges at the workplace, in society, and within their families.”*

The qualitative analysis of responses from 30.00 interviewees across three divisions (Quetta, Kalat, and Loralai) reveals several key findings related to the impact of higher education on self-confidence and overcoming challenges.

**i. Boost in Self-Confidence**

- a. A significant majority of respondents (10 out of 30) reported that pursuing higher education has significantly boosted their self-confidence and belief in their abilities. The knowledge and skills acquired through higher education were pivotal in enhancing their decision-making capabilities and overall confidence.
- b. Three respondents specifically noted that *“the skills gained through their education allowed them to excel in their respective fields, thereby increasing their self-assurance”*.
- c. Respondents highlighted that higher education helped them express their views and feelings more confidently and attain a prestigious position in society.

**ii. Field-Specific Confidence**

- a. Respondents from specialized fields such as medicine, surgery, and Human Resources mentioned that higher education significantly bolstered their confidence in tackling complex challenges in their professional domains.
- b. Two respondents emphasized that their MBA program played a crucial role in exposing them to challenging situations that required critical thinking, which in turn developed their competence and self-assurance.

**iii. Overcoming Challenges**

- a. Fifteen respondents provided instances where their educational experiences helped them overcome various personal, professional, and social challenges.



- b. Law students reported gaining self-confidence and self-assurance, which were instrumental in overcoming challenges in their field.
- c. One respondent shared that “*higher education enabled them to start a small job, thereby gaining the confidence to speak and provide for their children*”.
- d. Several respondents highlighted that “*education equipped them with problem-solving skills, resilience, and perseverance, which were essential in tackling challenges*”.
- e. Specific instances included handling complex business cases, leading engineering projects, making crucial medical decisions in emergencies, and implementing comprehensive HR training programs.

The analysis of the qualitative data indicates that higher education plays a critical role in enhancing self-confidence and equipping individuals with the skills necessary to overcome challenges. The respondents' experiences underscore the transformative impact of higher education on personal empowerment, particularly in terms of boosting self-confidence and providing the knowledge and skills required to navigate complex situations effectively. Field-specific education further reinforces self-assurance and the ability to tackle professional challenges. Overall, the findings suggest that higher education is a powerful tool for personal and professional growth, fostering a sense of competence and resilience among individuals.

#### **4.2.1.2 Personal Autonomy**

##### **i. Empowering Decision-Making: How Higher Education Enhances Personal Autonomy**

"According to seven respondents, pursuing higher education has enhanced their personal autonomy and decision-making authority in various ways. Five respondents mentioned that “*higher education equipped them with advanced knowledge, critical thinking skills, and exposure to diverse perspectives, contributing to greater independence and informed decision-making.*” Additionally, three respondents (P3) highlighted that “*higher education provided them with the confidence and competence to make informed choices in various aspects of life, leading to greater self-reliance and independence.*” Moreover, four respondents noted that “*higher education typically enhances personal autonomy by providing the skills and resources needed to make independent decisions about one's life, career, and future.*

*Furthermore, six respondents shared that pursuing higher education empowered them to assert control over their life choices and plans by fostering critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and independence."*

"According to five respondents, their educational background has enabled them to assert control over their life choices and plans in various instances. Four respondents shared that *"pursuing higher education enabled them to make career transitions aligned with their passions and interests, giving them greater control over their professional lives and future plans."* Additionally, (P3) mentioned that *"higher education empowered them to confidently negotiate employment terms and conditions, ensuring that they align with their career goals and personal priorities."* Moreover, four respondents noted that *"education equipped them with the confidence and qualifications to take on leadership roles, positively impacting their career trajectories and future plans. Furthermore, five respondents expressed that personal autonomy was enhanced through education, allowing them to make informed decisions about their career paths, finances, and personal lives."* Finally, four respondents highlighted that *"pursuing higher education enabled them to assert control over their life choices by pursuing specific career paths, setting ambitious career goals, and making informed decisions about their future."*

The qualitative analysis of responses from interviewees across three divisions (Quetta, Kalat, and Loralai) reveals several key findings related to personal autonomy and decision-making authority through higher education:

**ii. Enhancement of Personal Autonomy Through Higher Education:**

- a. Pursuing higher education equips individuals with advanced knowledge, critical thinking skills, and exposure to diverse perspectives, contributing to greater independence and informed decision-making.
- b. Higher education provides individuals with the confidence and competence to make informed choices in various aspects of life, leading to greater self-reliance and independence.
- c. It typically enhances personal autonomy by providing the skills and resources needed to make independent decisions about one's life, career, and future.

- d. Pursuing higher education empowers individuals to assert control over their life choices and plans by fostering critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and independence.

**iii. Instances of Asserting Control over Life Choices and Future Plans:**

- a. Pursuing higher education enables individuals to make career transitions aligned with their passions and interests, giving them greater control over their professional lives and plans.
- b. Higher education empowers individuals to confidently negotiate employment terms and conditions, ensuring alignment with career goals and personal priorities.
- c. Education equips individuals with the confidence and qualifications to take on leadership roles, positively impacting career trajectories and plans.
- d. Personal autonomy is enhanced through education, allowing individuals to make informed decisions about career paths, finances, and personal lives.

Pursuing higher education enables individuals to assert control over life choices by pursuing specific career paths, setting ambitious career goals, and making informed decisions about the future.

The findings highlight the significant role of higher education in enhancing personal autonomy and decision-making authority. Through advanced knowledge, critical thinking skills, and exposure to diverse perspectives, higher education empowers individuals to make informed choices and assert control over their lives and future plans. The instances shared by respondents underscore the transformative impact of education in enabling career transitions, negotiating employment terms, and pursuing leadership roles. Overall, higher education plays a crucial role in fostering independence, self-reliance, and empowerment among individuals, thereby shaping their future according to their goals and values.

**4.2.1.3 Individual Knowledge**

**i. Expanding Horizons: The Role of Higher Education in Enhancing Personal Knowledge and Decision-Making**

According to 12 respondents, higher education has significantly broadened their horizons and deepened their understanding of a wide range of subjects. (P3) highlighted that “*the knowledge and skills acquired through their studies have*

*enhanced their level of understanding and critical thinking abilities". Additionally, (P5) mentioned that "higher education contributed to their knowledge and skills in various topics gradually, through practical assignments and participation in numerous competitions". Furthermore, (P3) noted that "higher education has provided a substantial contribution to their knowledge and understanding of various subjects, aiding them in making more informed decisions in their personal lives. Other respondents emphasized the comprehensive enhancement of their knowledge, allowing them to critically analyze situations and make better choices."*

"Fifteen respondents (P15) shared instances that *"their expanded knowledge from higher education positively impacted their decision-making in personal matters. For example, three respondents mentioned that their higher education enabled them to critically analyze situations and make informed choices, improving their decision-making processes in various personal matters"*. Additionally, (P2) highlighted that *"the knowledge gained through higher education helped them make better health-related choices for their families"*. Other respondents emphasized the role of higher education in improving their financial decision-making skills, leading to more effective budgeting and investment decisions. Furthermore, (P2) noted that *"their expanded knowledge enabled them to make informed choices about their well-being and advocate for healthy practices within their families and communities."* Understanding human behavior from psychology courses was specifically mentioned by one respondent as having a positive impact on their relationships, fostering better communication and empathy."

The qualitative analysis of responses from 30 interviewees across three divisions (Quetta, Kalat, and Loralai) reveals several key findings related to the impact of higher education on personal knowledge and decision-making:

**ii. Contribution to Personal Knowledge**

- a. A significant number out of thirty respondents (P12) reported that *"higher education has significantly broadened their horizons and deepened their understanding of a wide range of subjects. The acquisition of knowledge and skills through higher education enhanced their critical thinking abilities."*

- b. (P5) highlighted that “*higher education contributed to their knowledge and skills gradually through practical assignments and participation in competitions.*”
- c. Three respondents noted a substantial contribution to their knowledge, aiding in making informed personal decisions.

### **iii. Positive Impact on Decision-Making**

- a. Fifteen respondents provided examples of how their expanded knowledge from higher education positively impacted their decision-making in personal matters.
- b. Respondents mentioned, “*that higher education enabled them to critically analyze situations and make informed choices, improving their decision-making processes in various aspects of their personal lives.*”
- c. Knowledge gained through higher education helped respondents make better health-related choices for their families, improve financial decision-making skills, and advocate for healthy practices.
- d. Understanding human behavior from psychology courses was specifically mentioned as having a positive impact on relationships, fostering better communication and empathy.

The analysis of the qualitative data indicates that higher education plays a critical role in enhancing personal knowledge and understanding, which in turn positively impacts decision-making in personal matters. The respondents' experiences underscore the transformative effect of higher education on personal empowerment, particularly in terms of broadening horizons, deepening subject understanding, and improving critical thinking abilities. The expanded knowledge gained through higher education allows individuals to make informed and effective decisions, leading to better outcomes in health, financial, and relational aspects of their lives. Overall, the findings suggest that higher education is a powerful tool for personal growth, fostering a sense of competence and informed decision-making among individuals.

#### **4.2.1.4 Opinion and Attitudes on Women's Economic Role**

##### **i. Transforming Perspectives: The Impact of Higher Education on Women's Economic Empowerment**

"According to eight respondents (P8) higher education has enlightened them about the importance of gender equality in the workforce and the need to break down barriers that restrict women's economic participation. P5) indicated that *"their education has fostered a belief in the economic empowerment of women as a catalyst for societal progress. Additionally, three respondents mentioned that through coursework and discussions, they gained insights into the importance of gender diversity and inclusion in the workforce."* Higher education often promotes gender equality and empowers women to pursue economic opportunities, as noted by four respondents. Furthermore, (P5) emphasized that *"their education has equipped them with the knowledge to advocate for women's economic empowerment and challenge stereotypes regarding their economic roles."*

According to six respondents, their perspectives on women's involvement in economic activities have evolved positively due to their educational journey. One respondent (p1) specifically mentioned that *"their educational journey led to a more progressive perspective on women's involvement in economic activities."* (p4) highlighted that *"their educational journey has been transformative in shaping their perspectives on women's involvement in economic activities."* Additionally, (P3) that *"they experienced significant changes in their perspectives on women's involvement in economic activities, moving from a belief that only men could participate to recognizing the vital role women play in the economy."*

The qualitative analysis of responses from 30 interviewees across three divisions (Quetta, Kalat, and Loralai) reveals several key findings related to the impact of higher education on shaping opinions and attitudes regarding women's economic roles:

## **ii. Shaping Opinions and Attitudes**

- a. Eight respondents reported that *"higher education enlightened them about the importance of gender equality in the workforce and the need to dismantle barriers to women's economic participation."*
- b. Five respondents indicated (P5) that *"their education fostered a belief in women's economic empowerment as essential for societal progress."*

- c. Three respondents (P3) gained insights into the importance of gender diversity and inclusion in the workforce through their coursework and discussions.
- d. (P4) mentioned that *“higher education promotes gender equality and empowers women to pursue economic opportunities.”*
- e. Five respondents (P5) emphasized that *“their education equipped them with the knowledge to advocate for women's economic empowerment and challenge stereotypes regarding their economic roles.”*

### **iii. Changes in Perspectives**

- a. Six respondents shared that *“their perspectives on women's involvement in economic activities evolved positively due to their educational journey.”*
- b. One respondent (P1) noted that their educational journey led to a more progressive perspective on women's involvement in economic activities.
- c. Four respondents highlighted that *“their educational journey was transformative in shaping their perspectives on women's involvement in economic activities.”*
- d. Three respondents experienced significant changes in their perspectives, moving from a belief that only men could participate in economic activities to recognizing the vital role of women in the economy.

The analysis of the qualitative data indicates that higher education plays a critical role in shaping opinions and attitudes regarding women's economic roles. The respondents' experiences underscore the transformative impact of higher education on personal empowerment, particularly in terms of promoting gender equality and economic empowerment for women. Higher education broadens perspectives and fosters a deeper understanding of the importance of women's participation in the workforce, challenging existing stereotypes and advocating for greater inclusion and diversity. The findings suggest that higher education is a powerful tool for fostering progressive attitudes and empowering individuals to advocate for gender equality and the economic empowerment of women.

#### **4.2.1.5 Non-Acceptance of Gender-Based Violence**

**i. Empowerment through Education: Challenging Gender-Based Violence and Promoting Women's Rights**

"According to eight respondents, higher education has significantly influenced their views on gender-based violence and women's rights. Seven respondents indicated that "their education has made them more aware of the injustices women face and has strengthened their commitment to advocating for gender equality and women's rights." Additionally, (P4) mentioned that *"through coursework and awareness campaigns on campus, they gained a deeper understanding of gender issues and the importance of combating gender-based violence. Higher education often exposes individuals to diverse perspectives, research, and critical thinking, which can contribute to greater awareness and understanding of gender-based violence and the importance of women's rights, as noted by five respondents."*

"According to seven respondents, higher education has empowered them to take a stand against gender-based violence and promote gender equality by equipping them with knowledge about human rights, gender dynamics, and strategies for advocacy. Four respondents (P4) shared that *"their education empowered them to engage in awareness campaigns, advocacy, and support organizations dedicated to this cause. Additionally, five respondents mentioned that as highly educated women, they know their rights and can take a stand legally for themselves and others."* Moreover, six respondents highlighted that *"higher education has equipped them with the knowledge and skills to address gender-based violence and promote gender equality in their teaching, actively integrating discussions on these topics into their curriculum to foster awareness and critical thinking among their students."*

The qualitative analysis of responses from interviewees across three divisions (Quetta, Kalat, and Loralai) reveals several key findings related to the impact of higher education on views regarding gender-based violence and women's rights:

**ii. Influence on Views Regarding Gender-Based Violence and Women's Rights**

- a. Higher education significantly influences views on gender-based violence and women's rights.
- b. Education enhances awareness of the injustices women face and strengthens commitment to advocating for gender equality and women's rights.



- c. Coursework and awareness campaigns on campus contribute to a deeper understanding of gender issues and the importance of combating gender-based violence.
- d. Exposure to diverse perspectives, research, and critical thinking through higher education fosters greater awareness and understanding of gender-based violence and women's rights.

### **iii. Empowerment to Take a Stand Against Gender-Based Violence and Promote Gender Equality**

- a. Higher education empowers individuals to take a stand against gender-based violence and promote gender equality by providing knowledge about human rights, gender dynamics, and advocacy strategies.
- b. Education encourages engagement in awareness campaigns, advocacy, and support for organizations dedicated to combating gender-based violence and promoting gender equality.
- c. As highly educated individuals, respondents feel equipped to stand legally for themselves and others.
- d. Higher education provides the knowledge and skills necessary to address gender-based violence and promote gender equality in teaching, fostering awareness and critical thinking among students.

The analysis of the qualitative data indicates that higher education plays a crucial role in influencing views on gender-based violence and women's rights, as well as empowering individuals to take action against such violence and advocate for gender equality. The respondents' experiences underscore the transformative impact of higher education on personal empowerment, particularly in terms of raising awareness, enhancing understanding, and providing the skills necessary to advocate for human rights and gender equality. Higher education not only broadens perspectives but also equips individuals with the tools to challenge gender-based violence and promote equality, fostering a more just and equitable society.

#### ***4.2.2 Relational Empowerment***

##### **4.2.2.1 Influencing on community**

### **i. Community Empowerment Through Education: Enhancing Relational Impact**

"Higher education has significantly influenced individuals' ability to positively impact their communities, as indicated by eight respondents. These respondents highlighted that *"higher education provided them with the knowledge, skills, and resources necessary to address social issues, engage in community initiatives, and contribute to positive change."* Additionally, four respondents emphasized that *"education fosters a positive attitude and equips individuals to provide knowledge, motivation, and social work within their communities."* Furthermore, five respondents noted that *"higher education empowers individuals to serve as role models, advocate for educational opportunities, and actively engage in community initiatives to drive positive change."* Moreover, six respondents (P6) highlighted that *"critical thinking skills acquired through higher education enable individuals to analyze complex community issues and contribute meaningfully to community development."* Additionally, through awareness campaigns, counseling, and community engagement, higher education enables individuals to positively influence their communities and promote social progress.

Respondents shared several examples of how their educational background has allowed them to contribute to community initiatives or projects. Four respondents mentioned that *"organizing workshops, awareness campaigns, and educational programs on various topics, including financial literacy, entrepreneurship, and sustainability."* Additionally, individuals with educational backgrounds in fields such as engineering, medicine, and social sciences can lead or participate in community projects that address local needs and benefit the community, as noted by three respondents. Furthermore, through volunteering, mentoring, and organizing initiatives like medical camps, surgical camps, and literacy projects, individuals can make significant contributions to community development and well-being, as highlighted by four respondents. Moreover, five respondents noted that *"education empowers individuals to initiate and participate in community projects focused on healthcare access, education, economic empowerment, and social progress."* Examples of contributions to community initiatives include organizing free healthcare services, conducting literacy programs, providing financial literacy workshops, and designing

sustainable energy solutions for underserved communities, as mentioned by five respondents.

The qualitative analysis of responses from interviewees across three divisions (Quetta, Kalat, and Loralai) reveals several key findings related to relational empowerment and its impact on community influence:

**ii. Influencing the Community through Higher Education:**

- a. Higher education significantly influences individuals' ability to positively impact their communities by providing knowledge, skills, and resources to address social issues and contribute to positive change.
- b. Education fosters a positive attitude and equips individuals to engage in community initiatives and social work.
- c. Higher education empowers individuals to serve as role models, advocates, and contributors to community development.
- d. Critical thinking skills acquired through higher education enable individuals to analyze complex community issues and contribute meaningfully to community development.
- e. Through awareness campaigns, counseling, and community engagement, higher education enables individuals to promote social progress in their communities.

**iii. Contributions to Community Initiatives:**

- a. Educational backgrounds allow individuals to organize workshops, awareness campaigns, and educational programs on various topics to benefit their communities.
- b. Individuals with specialized educational backgrounds can lead or participate in community projects addressing local needs.
- c. Volunteering, mentoring, and organizing initiatives enable individuals to make significant contributions to community development.

- d. Education empowers individuals to initiate and participate in community projects focused on various aspects, including healthcare, education, and economic empowerment.
- e. Examples of contributions to community initiatives include organizing free healthcare services, conducting literacy programs, and designing sustainable solutions for underserved communities.

The findings highlight the transformative impact of higher education on relational empowerment and its role in positively influencing communities. Through advanced knowledge, skills, and resources, higher education equips individuals to address social issues, engage in community initiatives, and contribute to positive change. The examples shared by respondents underscore the diverse ways in which educational backgrounds enable individuals to make meaningful contributions to community development and well-being. Overall, higher education plays a vital role in empowering individuals to positively influence their communities and drive social progress.

#### **4.2.2.2 Control over household assets**

##### **i. Transforming Household Dynamics: Empowerment through Education**

The responses from 30 participants indicate several key ways in which higher education has influenced their control over household assets. Enhanced decision-making and confidence were frequently mentioned, with (P10) respondents highlighting that *“higher education has significantly increased their capability in managing household resources.”* For instance, a respondent from Quetta mentioned that *“higher education made her more confident to make new decisions and try new ideas at home.”* Improved financial literacy and management skills were noted by eight participants from Kalat and Loralai, who emphasized that *“education provided them with better financial literacy and resource management skills, enabling them to plan budgets and allocate resources more effectively.”* One respondent from Kalat shared that *“her pursuit of higher education influenced her control over household assets by increasing her earning potential, financial literacy, and decision-making abilities.”*

Recognition and respect within the family were highlighted by 5 respondents from Quetta, who noted that *“education led to greater respect for their views and*

*decisions in financial matters.*” Increased earning potential was another common theme, mentioned by 4 participants from Loralai, indicating that *“higher education often leads to better job opportunities and higher earning potential, enhancing control over household resources.”* Active participation in financial decisions was reported by three respondents from Kalat and Quetta, who shared that *“education empowered them to participate actively in discussions and decisions about household finances.”*

Participants shared various experiences where their education played a crucial role in managing family resources. Financial planning and investments were frequently mentioned, with (P7) respondents, primarily from Quetta and Kalat, using their education to propose efficient budgeting strategies and investment plans. For instance, a respondent with an MBA from Quetta used her financial analysis skills to guide her family's home purchase decision. Advocacy and leadership were highlighted by (P6) participants from all three divisions, indicating that education enabled them to advocate for significant investments and improvements in the household. A respondent from Loralai shared that *“she persuaded her family to invest in her education, and in return, she actively participated in managing family resources, leading to more equitable decision-making.”*

Resource allocation was another area where education had a significant impact, with (P5) respondents from Kalat and Quetta playing key roles in allocating family resources effectively. One participant from Kalat mentioned that *“her education equipped her with advanced financial management skills, allowing her to create and implement effective financial plans, including budgeting, investments, and savings strategies.”* Healthcare and well-being decisions were influenced by education, as noted by six participants from Loralai and Quetta, who used their education to make informed decisions regarding their family's well-being, including healthcare and lifestyle choices.

## **ii. Involvement in household decision-making**

The impact of higher education on involvement in household decision-making was evident across all respondents. Ten participants from all three divisions indicated that *“higher education positively impacted their involvement by providing them with better understanding, maturity, awareness, and responsibility.”* Educated individuals

are often considered more knowledgeable and skilled, resulting in increased opportunities to participate in household decision-making, as noted by eight participants. Seven respondents shared that *“education empowered them to contribute meaningfully to discussions related to family matters, financial planning, healthcare choices, and major life decisions.”*

Particularly, educated women are encouraged to take active participation in decision-making processes within the household, leading to more equitable decision-making, as highlighted by five participants. Some respondents mentioned that *“their education enabled them to make decisions for their home and family based on their personal experiences and budgeting skills.”* Higher education equips individuals with expertise and confidence to engage in discussions and contribute meaningfully to various aspects of household decision-making, depending on their field of study and family needs, as noted by five participants.

Respondents shared numerous experiences where their education played a crucial role in shaping important family decisions. Financial planning and budgeting were frequently mentioned, with seven respondents indicating that *“education enabled them to contribute effectively to household financial management.”* Educational choices for younger family members were also significant, with five participants playing key roles in deciding the best schools and managing educational expenses. Healthcare advocacy was another important area, with (P6) respondents using their education to advocate for better healthcare options and healthier lifestyles within their families.

Home improvements and security were highlighted by four participants from all divisions, who used their education to advocate for energy-efficient home improvements, home security systems, and other enhancements contributing to household safety and sustainability. Crisis management was another area where education had a significant impact, with (P8) respondents sharing that *“education empowered them to take on leadership roles during family crises, guiding decisions related to healthcare, legal matters, and financial stability.”*

The analysis of responses from 30 participants across Quetta, Kalat, and Loralai reveals several key findings regarding the impact of higher education on

women's control over household assets and involvement in household decision-making:

- a. **Increased Financial Literacy and Management Skills:** Higher education significantly enhances financial literacy and resource management skills. Many respondents reported that their education equipped them with the ability to plan budgets, allocate resources effectively, and make informed financial decisions.
- b. **Enhanced Confidence and Decision-Making Abilities:** Education instills confidence and decision-making abilities in women, enabling them to take on leadership roles within their households. Respondents noted that higher education made them more confident in taking new decisions and trying innovative ideas at home.
- c. **Recognition and Respect within the Family:** Educational attainment leads to greater recognition and respect for women's views and decisions in financial and household matters. Many participants shared that their families valued their input more after they attained higher education.
- d. **Increased Earning Potential:** Higher education often results in better job opportunities and higher earning potential, which enhances women's control over household resources. Respondents indicated that their increased income allowed them to contribute more significantly to the family's financial stability.
- e. **Active Participation in Household Decision-Making:** Educated women are more actively involved in household decision-making processes. They contribute meaningfully to discussions related to financial planning, healthcare choices, educational decisions, and major life decisions, leading to more equitable decision-making within the household.
- f. **Advocacy and Leadership in Family Matters:** Education empowers women to advocate for significant investments and improvements within their households. Respondents shared instances where they led efforts in financial planning, healthcare advocacy, and home improvements, leveraging their educational background to influence family decisions positively.
- g. **Crisis Management and Long-Term Planning:** Educated women often take on critical roles in crisis management and long-term planning for their families.

They use their skills to guide decisions related to healthcare, legal matters, and financial stability during times of crisis.

The findings from the study underscore the transformative impact of higher education on women's control over household assets and their involvement in household decision-making. Education enhances financial literacy, confidence, and earning potential, empowering women to participate actively in managing household resources and shaping important family decisions.

Higher education not only equips women with the knowledge and skills necessary for effective resource management but also fosters a sense of confidence and authority in decision-making processes. As a result, educated women are more likely to be recognized and respected within their families, leading to more equitable and inclusive household dynamics.

Moreover, the ability to actively participate in and influence household decisions contributes to overall family well-being and stability. Educated women play crucial roles in financial planning, healthcare advocacy, and crisis management, ensuring that their families are better prepared for both short-term needs and long-term goals.

#### **4.2.2.3 Involvement in Household Decision Making:**

##### **i. Impact of Higher Education on Women's Household Decision-Making and Financial Empowerment**

These findings highlight the critical importance of promoting educational opportunities for women as a means of fostering relational empowerment and equitable resource management within households. By supporting women's educational attainment, we can contribute to more empowered and resilient families and communities.

Higher education has notably influenced women's involvement in household decision-making processes. Across the three divisions, participants highlighted that education has given them a better understanding, maturity, and awareness, leading to increased responsibility and confidence. Respondents shared that their educational background empowered them to contribute meaningfully to discussions on family matters, financial planning, healthcare choices, and other significant decisions. Specifically, 8 participants from Quetta, 9 from Kalat, and 7 from Loralai emphasized



that *“education equipped them with the skills needed to engage actively in decision-making processes.”*

Furthermore, higher education has been crucial in women's ability to earn an independent income. Higher education was consistent across the divisions, with 27 out of 30 respondents highlighting that *“obtaining a degree or relevant qualifications opened up employment opportunities and provided the necessary knowledge and skills for various professions.”* Education has enhanced skills, knowledge, and expertise, which are highly valued by employers, leading to higher income potential for many respondents. Participants, particularly those with degrees in fields such as civil engineering, electrical engineering, medicine, surgery, and human resources, shared personal experiences where their educational background directly influenced their ability to secure well-paying jobs and achieve financial independence.

Educational achievements have also positively impacted individuals' financial contributions to their families or households. Increased earning potential, financial responsibility, and the ability to make informed financial decisions were common themes among the responses. Many respondents mentioned that their educational achievements allowed them to support their families financially, easing the burden on other family members and improving overall quality of life. This was notably mentioned by 8 participants from Quetta, 9 from Kalat, and 8 from Loralai. The increased income from educational achievements, such as earning an MBA or engineering degree, has empowered individuals to contribute more substantially to their family's financial stability and future plans. The financial contributions resulting from educational achievements have earned respect and appreciation from family members, reinforcing individuals' roles within the household. This recognition was particularly emphasized by respondents from all three divisions.

- a. **Impact of Higher Education on Household Decision-Making:** Higher education significantly enhances women's involvement in household decision-making processes, fostering understanding, maturity, awareness, and confidence in managing household resources.
- b. **Role of Higher Education in Earning an Independent Income:** Education plays a crucial role in enabling individuals, particularly women, to earn an

independent income by providing better employment opportunities and higher income potential.

- c. **Enhancing Skills and Income Potential:** Educational attainment enhances skills and expertise, especially in fields like civil engineering, medicine, and human resources, leading to well-paying jobs and financial stability.
- d. **Influence on Financial Contributions to the Family:** Participants noted that educational achievements increase their financial contributions to the family, easing financial burdens and improving overall quality of life.
- e. **Respect and Appreciation:** The respect and appreciation garnered from family members reinforce the importance of educational attainment and the significant role it plays in shaping family dynamics and resource management.

The findings from the study underscore the transformative impact of higher education on women's involvement in household decision-making and their financial independence. Education enhances financial literacy, confidence, and earning potential, enabling women to participate actively in managing household resources and shaping important family decisions. The ability to earn an independent income and contribute significantly to the family's financial stability further empowers women, fostering respect and appreciation within the household. Promoting educational opportunities for women is thus critical for fostering relational empowerment and equitable resource management within households. By supporting women's educational attainment, we can contribute to more empowered and resilient families and communities.

#### **4.2.2.4 Experience of Gender-Based Violence**

- i. **Empowering Change: The Role of Education in Shaping Perceptions and Responses to Gender-Based Violence:**
  - a. Respondents provided examples of how education empowered them to address and challenge instances of gender-based violence by imparting knowledge about human rights, gender equality, and advocacy strategies. This empowerment was evident in their active participation in campus initiatives, as reported by 8 participants from Quetta, 9 from Kalat, and 7 from Loralai.

- b. Education equipped respondents with communication skills and confidence to advocate for survivors, raise awareness about the issue and organize workshops and campaigns to educate others. This empowerment led to volunteering with organizations supporting survivors and developing anti-harassment training programs, as mentioned by 9 participants from Quetta, 7 from Kalat, and 8 from Loralai.
- c. Respondents cited personal experiences where they actively addressed instances of gender-based violence by supporting survivors, raising awareness, and advocating for stronger legal measures against perpetrators. These actions included collaborating with local organizations and incorporating discussions on the topic into their teaching roles, as reported by 8 participants from Quetta, 9 from Kalat, and 7 from Loralai.
- d. Education and experience provided respondents with insights to identify signs of gender-based violence and protect vulnerable individuals in their communities.
- e. This empowerment extended to advocating for women's rights, raising awareness, and collaborating with local organizations, as highlighted by 9 participants from Quetta, 7 from Kalat, and 8 from Loralai.
- f. Education significantly shapes individuals' perceptions and responses to gender-based violence, fostering a deeper understanding and proactive engagement against it.
- g. Across Quetta, Kalat, and Loralai, participants highlighted education's role in challenging harmful norms perpetuating gender-based violence and advocating for a safer society.
- h. Awareness gained through education has heightened sensitivity to gender-based violence, prompting active discouragement of violence and advocacy for gender equality.
- i. Education equips individuals with the knowledge and tools to confront gender-based violence, fostering empathy toward survivors and motivating action against injustice.
- j. Religious teachings, particularly from Islam, also influence perceptions and responses to gender-based violence, guiding advocacy for justice and equality.

## **ii. Analysis of the Theme: Positive Impacts of Education on Perceptions and Responses**

- a. **Awareness and Sensitivity to Gender-Based Violence:** One of the primary findings from the respondents' experiences is that education plays a crucial role in increasing awareness of GBV. As respondents from Quetta, Kalat, and Loralai noted, higher education deepened their understanding of the issue, helping them recognize its widespread impact on individuals and communities. Education often serves as a vehicle for awareness-raising, exposing students to diverse perspectives, facts, and resources on GBV. This exposure not only challenges ignorance but also fosters empathy toward survivors and those affected by violence.
- b. **Challenging Harmful Norms and Stereotypes:** A key aspect of education's role in addressing GBV is its potential to challenge and deconstruct harmful societal norms that perpetuate violence. The respondents highlighted how their education empowered them to question cultural and social attitudes that condone or normalize violence against women. This includes challenging patriarchal ideologies that often diminish the severity of GBV or excuse such behaviors within certain communities. Through education, participants were able to break away from traditional gender roles and engage with more progressive, gender-equal perspectives.
- c. **Empowerment through Knowledge and Advocacy:** Education was also identified as a tool for empowering individuals to actively engage in advocacy, raise awareness, and participate in initiatives to combat GBV. Respondents reported using the knowledge gained from their educational experiences to organize workshops, campaigns, and support groups for survivors. In some cases, education equipped individuals with the skills necessary to engage in policy change, support organizations working to address GBV, and contribute to a broader societal shift toward gender equality. This reflects how education, particularly in the form of human rights and gender equality courses, can foster proactive agents of change.
- d. **The Role of Religious Teachings in Shaping Responses to GBV**

- e. An interesting and somewhat nuanced finding in the analysis was the role of religious teachings, particularly Islam, in shaping individuals' responses to GBV. Respondents from various regions indicated that religious values influenced their perceptions of justice, equality, and their response to violence. While religious teachings can be a powerful tool for reinforcing gender equality (as seen in the teachings about justice and fairness in Islam), this dimension can be double-edged.
- f. **Potential for Regressive Interpretations:** Some respondents emphasized how religious teachings motivated them to advocate for justice, and interpreted religious texts in a way that limits women's rights or condones gender-based violence. which highlighted the critical role of context and interpretation in understanding the impact of religion on societal issues. The influence of religion on perceptions of GBV is highly contextual, and while it can promote equality, it can also perpetuate harmful gender norms if misinterpreted.
- g. **Limitations of Education in Addressing GBV**
- h. **Contextual and Cultural Factors:** Despite the evident positive impact of education on the respondents, one of the limitations of this theme is the issue of cultural resistance to the messages of gender equality and GBV awareness. Education may challenge harmful norms in a classroom setting, but outside the academic environment, deeply ingrained cultural attitudes and social structures might mitigate these efforts. For example, participants in conservative or patriarchal societies may face resistance when attempting to advocate for survivors of GBV or challenge traditional gender roles.
- i. **Access to Education:** Another limitation is the unequal access to quality education. While higher education has the potential to empower individuals to respond effectively to GBV, this opportunity is not equally accessible to all. In many parts of the world, particularly in rural or conflict-affected areas, access to higher education for women is still limited, preventing them from fully benefiting from education's transformative power. Moreover, even when women have access to education, the content of curricula may not always be aligned with the promotion of gender equality or active engagement with issues such as GBV.

- j. **Superficiality of Awareness:** While education can raise awareness about GBV, the depth and quality of education are key factors in determining whether individuals truly internalize and apply this knowledge in their daily lives. Without ongoing education, deeper engagement, or practical exposure to GBV issues, awareness alone may not lead to significant behavioral change. It is crucial that education not only informs but also empowers individuals to act and advocate effectively.

#### **4.2.2.5 Control over Time and Daily Schedule**

##### **i. The Impact of Higher Education on Time Management and Daily Scheduling**

Higher education has been a transformative force for respondents, with 25 out of 30 participants acknowledging its significant impact on their control over time and daily schedule. They expressed that *“their educational journey had equipped them with effective time management strategies, enabling them to navigate their daily lives more efficiently.”* Additionally, 28 participants highlighted how education had empowered them to prioritize tasks, set goals, and allocate time for various activities according to their preferences and priorities. The structured nature of higher education programs was particularly instrumental, as reported by 22 respondents, in instilling discipline and honing time management skills, leading to enhanced organizational abilities. Moreover, 20 respondents emphasized *“that their education had enabled them to balance academic pursuits, work responsibilities, personal interests, and family commitments effectively, thereby giving them greater control over their daily schedules.”* Overall, education emerged as a cornerstone in shaping respondents' capacity to manage their time effectively and allocate it based on their preferences and priorities.

Respondents vividly illustrated how their education had facilitated the allocation of time to various activities based on their preferences and priorities. Among the 30 participants, instances of balancing work with personal interests, fulfilling family responsibilities, engaging in community initiatives, and pursuing further studies were shared. Moreover, 26 respondents highlighted how education had enabled them to structure their daily schedules effectively, accommodating coursework, work commitments, volunteering, hobbies, and personal time. Specific instances during their educational journey, such as managing research projects,

coursework deadlines, and extracurricular activities, were recounted by 24 participants, underscoring successful time allocation based on preferences and priorities. Furthermore, 23 respondents expressed *“how education empowered them to value personal time and prioritize self-care, ensuring a well-rounded and fulfilling life.”* With the skills acquired through higher education, individuals could balance professional duties, family obligations, and community involvement while making time for personal pursuits, as reported by 27 participants. Overall, education equipped respondents with the necessary tools and techniques to manage their time efficiently and prioritize activities in line with their preferences and priorities.

- i. Higher education has had a significant impact on respondents' control over their time and daily schedules, with 25 out of 30 participants acknowledging its transformative influence.
- ii. Respondents emphasized that education equipped them with effective time management strategies, enabling them to navigate their daily lives more efficiently, as highlighted by 28 participants.
- iii. The structured nature of higher education programs played a crucial role in instilling discipline and honing time management skills, with 22 respondents attributing their improved organizational abilities to their educational journey.
- iv. Education empowered individuals to balance academic pursuits, work responsibilities, personal interests, and family commitments effectively, as reported by 20 participants, thereby giving them greater control over their daily schedules.
- v. Examples provided by respondents illustrated how education facilitated the allocation of time to various activities based on preferences and priorities, with 26 participants sharing instances of successful time management.
- vi. Furthermore, education enabled individuals to value personal time and prioritize self-care, ensuring a well-rounded and fulfilling life, as expressed by 23 participants.

Analysis: Higher education has been examined as a transformative factor in enhancing respondents' control over their time and daily schedules, with the majority of participants recognizing its influence on their ability to manage time effectively. The structured nature of academic programs has played a crucial role

in instilling discipline, prioritization, and organizational skills, which participants attributed to their ability to balance academic, professional, personal, and family responsibilities. Through education, individuals acquired time management strategies that enabled them to allocate time to various activities based on their preferences and priorities, promoting a more balanced life. Additionally, respondents highlighted how education empowered them to value personal time and prioritize self-care, contributing to their overall well-being and satisfaction. Therefore, higher education not only equips individuals with the tools for academic and professional success but also fosters essential life skills that support personal autonomy and the capacity to lead fulfilling, well-rounded lives.

The findings underscore the transformative role of higher education in enhancing individuals' control over their time and daily schedules. Education equips individuals with effective time management strategies, organizational abilities, and the capacity to balance multiple responsibilities effectively. By enabling individuals to prioritize tasks according to preferences and priorities, education fosters a sense of agency and autonomy in managing one's daily life. Moreover, education instills values such as the importance of personal time and self-care, contributing to overall well-being and fulfillment. Therefore, investing in higher education not only enhances academic and professional development but also cultivates essential life skills that empower individuals to lead balanced and fulfilling lives.



### **4.2.3 Environmental Empowerment**

#### **4.2.3.1 Access to services and resources**

**Influence of Higher Education on Access to Essential Services and Resources:** Higher education has significantly enhanced the ability of respondents to access essential services and resources, as noted by 28 out of 30 participants. Participants emphasized that *“education equips individuals with advanced knowledge, critical thinking skills, and a broader perspective, enabling them to make informed decisions and navigate complex systems effectively.”* Additionally, 25 participants mentioned that *“education enabled them to utilize modern technology and online resources to access healthcare, education, and other vital services, underscoring the role of education in adapting to evolving service delivery mechanisms.”*

Moreover, education expanded the professional networks of respondents, providing access to career opportunities, mentorship, and valuable connections for 26 participants. These networks facilitated access to healthcare, education, and other essential resources. Furthermore, 22 respondents highlighted how education empowered them to manage their finances effectively, access scholarships, loans, or financial aid for education, and understand health insurance, thus improving access to healthcare and educational opportunities. Overall, higher education has positively influenced respondents' ability to access essential services and resources by providing them with the necessary skills, knowledge, and networks.

**Examples of How Education Improved Access to Healthcare, Education, and Other Vital Resources:** Education has played a crucial role in improving access to healthcare, education, and other vital resources for respondents, as reported by (P27) out of 30 respondents. Participants mentioned that *“education enabled them to understand the use of technology and access information, making it easier to access healthcare and educational resources.”* Additionally, 24 respondents cited examples of how their education connected them with scholarship programs, eased financial burdens, and provided access to healthcare services through university-affiliated clinics and programs.

Moreover, education improved respondents' ability to access healthcare and educational resources through career advancement, higher income, and financial stability, as mentioned by 23 participants. Through their educational networks, 25

respondents gained access to resources, partnerships, and collaborations that benefited their communities, students, and overall well-being. Overall, education has facilitated access to essential services and resources by empowering individuals with knowledge, skills, networks, and opportunities for personal and professional growth.

- i. Higher education significantly enhances individuals' ability to access essential services and resources, as reported by 28 out of 30 participants.
- ii. Education equips individuals with advanced knowledge, critical thinking skills, and a broader perspective, facilitating informed decision-making and effective navigation of complex systems, as noted by 28 participants.
- iii. Modern technology and online resources become more accessible through education, aiding in accessing healthcare, education, and other vital services, according to 25 participants.
- iv. Education expands professional networks, providing access to career opportunities, mentorship, and valuable connections for 26 respondents, thereby facilitating access to essential resources.
- v. Financial management skills acquired through education improve access to scholarships, loans, and financial aid for education, mentioned by 22 participants, contributing to enhanced access to healthcare and educational opportunities.
- vi. Overall, education plays a pivotal role in empowering individuals to access essential services and resources by providing necessary skills, knowledge, and networks, a sentiment echoed by the majority of participants.

Analysis: Higher education has been analyzed as a key factor in enhancing individuals' access to essential services and resources. The majority of participants reported that education significantly improved their ability to navigate complex systems and make informed decisions, particularly in accessing healthcare, education, and financial resources. Education equipped respondents with advanced knowledge, critical thinking skills, and technological proficiency, enabling them to effectively utilize modern resources, such as online platforms, for essential services. Furthermore, respondents highlighted the role of education in expanding professional networks and providing access to career opportunities, mentorship, and valuable connections, which in turn facilitated access to healthcare and educational resources.

Additionally, higher education empowers individuals with financial management skills, helping them access scholarships, loans, and financial aid, thus improving their overall ability to secure essential services. These findings suggest that education plays a transformative role in fostering environmental empowerment by equipping individuals with the tools, knowledge, and networks necessary to access crucial services and resources, contributing to both personal and professional growth. Therefore, higher education is a vital mechanism for promoting equitable access to essential resources and ensuring long-term well-being.

The findings underscore the transformative impact of higher education on individuals' access to essential services and resources. Education equips individuals with the skills and knowledge needed to navigate complex systems, utilize technology, and expand professional networks, thereby facilitating access to healthcare, education, and other vital resources. Moreover, education fosters financial literacy, enabling individuals to access financial aid and manage resources effectively. By empowering individuals with the tools needed to access essential services and resources, education plays a crucial role in promoting personal and professional growth and enhancing overall well-being. Therefore, investing in education is essential for fostering environmental empowerment and ensuring equitable access to services and resources for all individuals.

#### **4.2.3.2 Ability to influence at the political level**

Educational background empowers individuals to engage in political matters, with 25 out of 30 respondents highlighting its significance. While some express disinterest in politics, *“education enables them to distinguish between beneficial and detrimental policies, particularly regarding gender-centric issues.”* Critical thinking skills, research abilities, and an informed perspective gained through education equip individuals to actively participate in political discussions and advocate for their views. Despite varying levels of interest in politics, education provides the knowledge, skills, and platforms necessary to engage in political advocacy, as reported by 27 participants. Instances of Engagement in Political Discussions or Activities Influencing Political Decisions: *“Respondents actively participate in discussions, join women's groups, and work on campaigns to influence decisions related to women's rights and gender equality,”* as mentioned by 24 participants. Education enables engagement in organizational discussions, decision-making processes, and advocacy

for positive changes in communities, as reported by 26 participants. Participation in debates, forums, and student organizations allows leveraging education to influence political decisions, as highlighted by 28 participants. Education provides a platform to engage in economic policy discussions, advocate for entrepreneurship, and contribute to debates on infrastructure planning and development, influencing political decisions, according to 25 respondents. *“Despite limited practical involvement in politics, respondents emphasize their ability to contribute to political discussions, advocate for policy changes, and engage in activities influencing political decisions, a sentiment”* expressed by 28 participants.

The findings demonstrate the empowering role of education in enabling individuals to have a voice in political matters and influence decision-making processes. Education equips individuals with critical thinking skills, research abilities, and informed perspectives necessary for active participation in political discussions and advocacy. Despite varying levels of interest in politics, education provides the knowledge, skills, and platforms needed to engage in political activities effectively. By leveraging their education, individuals can contribute to discussions on important issues, advocate for policy changes, and influence political decisions, thereby promoting civic engagement and democratic participation. Therefore, investing in education is essential for fostering political empowerment and ensuring active citizenry in society.

#### **4.2.3.3 General Questions**

##### **i. Empowerment to Influence Political Matters through Educational Background**

Among the participants, 10 expressed *“disregards in politics but acknowledged that their education empowered them to differentiate between good and bad policies, particularly those with gender-centric implications.”* Additionally, 8 respondents highlighted that *“their educational background improved their ability to analyze political views, enhancing their argumentative skills to discuss and influence others regarding their political perspectives.”* Education was noted as providing critical thinking skills, research abilities, and an informed perspective by 11 participants, enabling them to engage in informed discussions, advocate for their views, and actively participate in the political process. Despite a lack of interest in

politics, 9 respondents mentioned that *“education empowered them to have a voice in political matters by equipping them with knowledge, skills, and platforms to engage in political discussions and advocacy.”*

## **ii. Instances of Engagement in Political Discussions or Activities Influencing Political Decisions**

Regarding instances of engagement in political discussions or activities influencing political decisions, 10 participants cited their active participation in such discussions, their involvement in women's groups, and their contribution to campaigns aimed at influencing decisions related to women's rights and gender equality. Education enabled 9 respondents to engage in organizational discussions, influence decision-making processes, and advocate for positive changes within their communities. Some participants (8) highlighted their involvement in debates, forums, and student organizations, leveraging their education to influence political decisions. Education provided 9 respondents with a platform to participate in economic policy discussions, advocate for entrepreneurship, and engage in debates on infrastructure planning and development, ultimately influencing political decisions. Despite limited practical involvement in politics, 8 participants emphasized *“their capacity to contribute to political discussions, advocate for policy changes, and engage in activities that influence political decisions.”*

Analysis: The analysis highlights the empowering role of education in enhancing political engagement among individuals. While some participants expressed disinterest in politics, the majority recognized how education equipped them with critical thinking skills, research abilities, and a broader, informed perspective, enabling them to actively participate in political discussions and influence political decisions. It revealed that education fosters the capacity to analyze policies, particularly those related to gender issues, and empowers individuals to contribute to discussions, join advocacy groups, and work on campaigns that drive change. Education also provides platforms for individuals to engage in debates on diverse issues such as economic policy and infrastructure development, thus amplifying their political influence. Even those with limited practical involvement in politics acknowledged that education helped them differentiate between beneficial and detrimental policies and advocate for informed political change. Overall, the findings underscore education's transformative role in fostering political

empowerment, encouraging civic participation, and enabling individuals to contribute meaningfully to societal progress and democratic processes. Therefore, investing in education is essential for cultivating an informed, active citizenry capable of shaping political outcomes and driving positive social change.

### **iii. Integrating Empowerment in Daily Life and Overcoming Challenges in Higher Education for Women in Balochistan**

The responses from participants shed light on the integration of personal, relational, and environmental empowerment into their daily lives. Prioritizing personal growth, nurturing relationships, and striving for positive impacts were key themes among the respondents. They emphasized the importance of balancing their plans according to their needs, staying updated with knowledge, and executing tasks effectively to maintain empowerment. Education, research, and planning emerged as essential tools for integrating empowerment into daily life, alongside advocating for gender equality, supporting community initiatives, and making informed decisions. Many participants actively participated in community initiatives, mentored and supported other women, and fostered a sense of community and empowerment. Communication skills were highlighted as crucial for engaging with others effectively and advocating for rights. Additionally, striving for work-life balance, fostering positive relationships, and participating in initiatives benefiting the community were mentioned as ways to integrate empowerment into daily life. Respondents leveraged their time management skills, professional networks, and environmental consciousness to balance personal and professional commitments, advocate for political changes, and promote sustainability.

### **iv. Challenges Faced by Women Pursuing Higher Education in Balochistan and Strategies for Overcoming Them:**

Women pursuing higher education in Balochistan faced several challenges, including limited access to quality education, cultural norms, societal expectations, gender biases, financial constraints, and transportation issues. To overcome these challenges, participants suggested various strategies, such as seeking scholarships, financial assistance, and mentorship, participating in awareness campaigns, challenging stereotypes, advocating for gender equality, and supporting initiatives to improve educational infrastructure. Determination, resilience, and community support

were identified as crucial factors in overcoming challenges related to cultural norms, limited access to education, and gender biases. Respondents emphasized the importance of excelling academically and professionally to challenge stereotypes and advocate for increased access to education and equal opportunities for women in STEM fields. Support from family, mentorship, seeking online learning opportunities, and challenging societal norms were highlighted as strategies for overcoming financial constraints and limited job opportunities for women in Balochistan. Despite facing societal stereotypes and limited opportunities, respondents demonstrated perseverance, sought mentorship, advocated for gender equality, and challenged gender norms to pursue their educational and career goals. The success of women in overcoming these challenges serves as an inspiring example for others, encouraging them to pursue their educational goals and challenge societal norms.

**v. Changes Needed at Societal or Institutional Levels to Promote Women's Empowerment Through Education**

Qualitative data gathered from participants in Balochistan underscored various changes needed at societal and institutional levels to promote women's empowerment through education. According to 10 respondents, improved access to quality education, awareness campaigns challenging gender stereotypes, and policies supporting women's education and economic empowerment are crucial. Additionally, 12 respondents emphasized *“the importance of encouraging a broader range of professions for women beyond traditional roles like teaching and medicine, along with providing support for women to pursue education in various fields.”*

Two participants stressed the necessity of awareness campaigns and societal changes to challenge traditional gender norms hindering women's empowerment. Others highlighted the need for the establishment of new universities, short courses for females, better transportation facilities, and equipped institutions to facilitate women's access to education. Promoting gender equality, ensuring better opportunities, protective laws for women's rights, and increasing awareness among males about the importance of women's roles were also mentioned. Gender-inclusive curricula, equal access to education, safe learning environments, mentorship, and support networks were deemed vital for promoting women's empowerment through education. Collaborative efforts between government bodies, educational institutions,

NGOs, and community leaders were emphasized to address the multifaceted challenges hindering women's empowerment through education.

#### **vi. Additional Insights on the Relationship between Higher Education and Women's Empowerment in Balochistan**

Additional insights provided by participants highlighted the indispensability of women's education in all circumstances. Efforts to ensure access to education for all women, regardless of their circumstances, were underscored. Providing free and quality educational institutions in Balochistan accessible to all was seen as a crucial step in addressing the deprivation of women from education and paving the way for their empowerment. Increasing higher education opportunities for females in Balochistan was deemed essential for their empowerment and success. Participants emphasized that education is the key to unlocking the doors of success, with the quantity and quality of education directly impacting the level of success and empowerment of women.

- a. **Integration of Empowerment into Daily Life:** Participants demonstrated a holistic approach to empowerment, integrating personal, relational, and environmental aspects into their daily routines. Prioritizing personal growth, nurturing relationships, and striving for positive impacts were frequent themes among respondents. They highlighted the importance of balancing tasks according to individual needs, staying informed, and executing responsibilities effectively. Education, research, and strategic planning emerged as crucial tools for integrating empowerment into daily life, alongside advocating for gender equality and supporting community initiatives. Many actively engaged in community projects, providing mentorship, and fostering a sense of empowerment. Communication skills were underscored as essential for effective engagement and advocacy, while efforts to maintain work-life balance and contribute to community initiatives were highlighted.
- b. **Challenges and Strategies in Pursuing Higher Education:** Women pursuing higher education in Balochistan faced significant challenges, including limited access to quality education, cultural norms, gender biases, financial constraints, and transportation issues. In response, participants suggested various strategies, such as seeking scholarships, participating in awareness



campaigns, and advocating for gender equality. They highlighted the importance of resilience and community support in overcoming these challenges, emphasizing the need to excel academically and professionally to challenge stereotypes. Strategies like seeking mentorship, exploring online learning opportunities, and challenging societal norms were also mentioned to address financial constraints and limited job opportunities. Despite facing societal stereotypes and obstacles, participants demonstrated resilience, advocated for gender equality, and challenged norms to pursue their educational and career aspirations. Their success serves as an inspiration for others, encouraging them to pursue educational goals and challenge societal norms.

- c. **Societal and Institutional Changes for Women's Empowerment:** The qualitative data highlighted the necessity of societal and institutional changes to promote women's empowerment through education. Participants stressed the importance of improved access to quality education, awareness campaigns challenging gender stereotypes, and supportive policies. They emphasized the necessity of encouraging women to pursue a broader range of professions and addressing traditional gender norms. Suggestions included establishing new universities, enhancing transportation facilities, and promoting gender-inclusive curricula. Collaborative efforts between government bodies, educational institutions, NGOs, and community leaders were deemed essential to address the multifaceted challenges hindering women's empowerment through education. Additionally, participants stressed the indispensability of women's education, emphasizing the need for accessible educational opportunities to empower women and pave the way for their success and societal advancement.

The findings highlight the intersection of personal, relational, and environmental empowerment in the lives of women in Balochistan, with participants integrating these elements into their daily routines. They emphasized the importance of balancing personal growth, nurturing relationships, and contributing to community initiatives while advocating for gender equality. Education, research, and planning were critical tools used by respondents to navigate daily challenges, and many engaged in mentorship roles to foster empowerment within their communities.

Despite the obstacles faced by women in Balochistan, such as limited access to quality education, societal norms, financial constraints, and transportation issues, participants demonstrated resilience and a proactive approach to overcoming these challenges. Strategies included seeking scholarships, participating in awareness campaigns, and challenging gender biases, with a focus on academic excellence and professional development as a means to challenge stereotypes. Furthermore, participants advocated for societal and institutional changes, such as improved access to education, gender-inclusive curricula, and better transportation infrastructure, to support women's empowerment. Collaborative efforts from government bodies, educational institutions, NGOs, and community leaders were deemed essential in creating an enabling environment for women's education and empowerment. This analysis underscores the importance of creating accessible educational opportunities and challenging traditional gender roles to enhance women's empowerment, ultimately paving the way for their success and societal advancement in Balochistan.

The findings underscore the multidimensional nature of empowerment and the challenges faced by women pursuing higher education in Balochistan. Despite obstacles, participants demonstrated resilience, advocated for gender equality, and actively engaged in efforts to overcome societal norms. The qualitative data highlighted the importance of societal and institutional changes to promote women's empowerment through education, emphasizing improved access to quality education, awareness campaigns challenging gender stereotypes, and supportive policies. Collaborative efforts between stakeholders are essential to address these challenges and create an enabling environment for women's empowerment in Balochistan. By prioritizing accessible educational opportunities and challenging traditional gender norms, Balochistan can pave the way for the success and societal advancement of its women.

#### **4.3 Overall Integrated Analysis**

The combination of quantitative and qualitative data underscores the multifaceted nature of self-confidence among respondents. While the quantitative data indicates generally positive but moderate satisfaction levels, qualitative data can provide the necessary context to understand these findings in depth. This triangulation allows for a more nuanced interpretation and supports a comprehensive analysis of

illustrating how higher education impacts self-confidence through both measurable outcomes and personal experiences.

The quantitative score of 3.43 for personal empowerment aligns with qualitative insights indicating that higher education significantly boosts self-confidence, knowledge, and decision-making abilities. The qualitative data provides context to the quantitative scores, highlighting the transformative role of education in enhancing personal empowerment.

The high average *M* score of 3.41 for relational empowerment corresponds with qualitative findings that higher education empowers women to influence community and household decisions and manage time effectively. Education also enhances their ability to confront gender-based violence and contribute to community initiatives, reinforcing the quantitative scores.

The average *M* score of 3.32 for environmental empowerment is supported by qualitative evidence that higher education significantly enhances access to essential services and resources and equips individuals for political engagement. Despite a lower score in political influence, qualitative data shows that education fosters critical skills necessary for political advocacy, complementing the quantitative findings.

The triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data reveals a comprehensive understanding of women's empowerment. Higher education emerges as a pivotal factor in enhancing personal, relational, and environmental empowerment, with qualitative insights providing depth to the quantitative scores. This triangulated analysis underscores the transformative impact of education on various aspects of women's lives, reinforcing the need to promote educational opportunities for empowerment.

Women described how education enabled them to participate in economic activities, from managing home finances to contributing ideas to family businesses, highlighting the role of education in enhancing their economic agency. Several participants mentioned their involvement in community activities, such as organizing educational workshops and leading community projects, indicating that higher education equips them with the skills and confidence to take on leadership roles. Education was frequently associated with personal growth, improved self-esteem, and confidence. Women expressed that education helped them make informed decisions,

manage household tasks more effectively, and advocate for themselves and others. Higher education was also seen as a tool for raising awareness and advocating against gender-based violence. Educated women felt more empowered to support others and engage in activism within their communities.

The interviews revealed that education contributes to women's understanding of their civic rights and enhances their participation in political discussions and community meetings. This thematic analysis explored the impact of higher education on women's empowerment in Balochistan, revealing that education plays a crucial role in economic empowerment, social and community leadership, personal development, advocacy against gender-based violence, and political engagement. Themes indicate that higher education not only enhances personal capacities and confidence but also empowers women to actively participate in and lead community and political activities, thereby contributing to societal change. These findings underscore the transformative power of higher education in enabling women to achieve greater autonomy and influence within their communities.

The comparison of cumulative findings across the three main dimensions of empowerment personal, relational, and environmental reveals nuanced insights into the impact of higher education on women in Balochistan. While all dimensions demonstrate significant positive effects, variations exist in the extent and nature of empowerment achieved.

**Personal Empowerment:** Higher education significantly enhances women's self-confidence, knowledge, and autonomy, with an average cumulative *M* score of 3.43. Women feel empowered to express opinions, navigate challenges, and serve as role models in their communities.

**Relational Empowerment:** Education equips women with the skills and resources to engage meaningfully in community development, decision-making, and economic activities, yielding an average cumulative *M* score of 3.18. Women exercise control over household assets, contribute to family decisions, earn independent income, and manage time efficiently.

**Environmental Empowerment:** Educational attainment improves women's access to essential services, healthcare, and political participation, reflected in an

average cumulative *M* score of 3.42. Women play active roles in advocating for environmental concerns, shaping policies, and influencing community development.

#### **4.4 Summary**

Chapter 4 analyzed the data on higher education's impact on women's empowerment in Balochistan. It began with an overview of the data set, followed by an exploration of personal empowerment, highlighting improvements in self-confidence, decision-making, and awareness of rights. Relational empowerment was examined through communication skills, household decision-making, and community involvement. The chapter also addressed environmental empowerment, focusing on access to services and resources and workplace opportunities, supported by statistical evidence. Tables and figures clarified data and illustrated connections between education and empowerment. The findings emphasized the transformative role of higher education, laying a solid foundation for the subsequent discussion and conclusions.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **SUMMARY, FINDINGS, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Summary**

This chapter provides a comprehensive summary and analytical discussion of the study's findings on the role of higher education in empowering women in Balochistan. It elaborates on how higher education enhances personal, relational, and environmental empowerment, underpinned by qualitative and quantitative data. The discussion links these findings to existing literature, demonstrating their alignment with broader research while highlighting the transformative potential of higher education in challenging socio-cultural norms and fostering economic and political participation among women. The chapter concludes by affirming the critical role of higher education in advancing women's empowerment and proposes targeted recommendations. These recommendations focus on increasing access to education, integrating empowerment-related content into curricula, promoting employability, fostering community engagement, and enhancing political participation. Through these measures, Chapter 5 outlines a strategic approach to leveraging higher education as a pivotal tool for gender equity and social change in Balochistan, serving as both a conclusion and a call to action for stakeholders involved in educational policy and program development. The objectives of the study were to determine the role of higher education on the 'Personal Empowerment of women in Balochistan, investigate the influence of higher education on promoting the 'Relational Empowerment' of women in Balochistan, and explore the contribution of higher education on 'Environmental Empowerment' of women in Balochistan.

This study carried out aims to unpack the multitude of reasons that keep confining Balochistani women to the domestic sphere of society despite receiving higher education. The target population included graduated women (2011 to 2020) from University of Balochistan. The divisions of Balochistan taken into account included Quetta, Loralai, and Kalat, who graduated from and belong to the defined districts where the population of the study. The women on the job had contacted through workplaces like hospitals, education institutes, corporate offices, etc. The

quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, and the qualitative data were analyzed through thematic analysis.

## **5.2 Findings**

Findings have been presented based on the seven research questions of the study. The first research question was:

### **Question 1. “To what extent is higher education improving women’s self-confidence and personal autonomy?”**

The statistical analysis highlights a positive impact of higher education on women's self-confidence and personal autonomy, though with variations across different fields and socio-economic backgrounds.

#### **i. Impact on Women’s Self-Confidence**

- 60.0% of respondents reported a significant increase in confidence, while 3.55% expressed moderate satisfaction with their empowerment.
- Mean satisfaction scores ( $M = 3.45\text{--}3.60$ ) indicate a generally positive but varied effect, suggesting that while many women gain confidence through education, others experience more limited improvements.
- Women pursuing degrees in STEM and business fields reported higher confidence levels than those in arts and social sciences, likely due to better career prospects and societal recognition.

#### **ii. Impact on Personal Autonomy**

- M scores ranging from 3.35 to 3.50 indicate an increase in personal autonomy, particularly in decision-making related to career, finances, and personal life.
- Women from business, law, and social sciences reported greater autonomy than those in nursing and teaching, demonstrating field-specific disparities in empowerment.
- Despite these improvements, family and societal expectations continue to moderate women's ability to exercise full autonomy in personal and professional spheres.

The qualitative analysis provides in-depth insights into the impact of higher education on self-confidence and autonomy, revealing challenges and contextual influences that shape women's experiences.

**i. Impact on Women's Self-Confidence**

- Higher education strengthens critical thinking, self-expression, and decision-making skills, contributing to increased confidence in social and professional interactions.
- Many respondents attributed their improved confidence to academic exposure, leadership roles in university settings, and networking opportunities.
- However, cultural expectations, family influence, and societal norms often limit the full development of self-confidence, particularly in conservative communities where women's assertiveness is discouraged.

**ii. Impact on Personal Autonomy**

- Education provides women with greater awareness of their rights and choices, allowing them to make informed decisions regarding careers, financial independence, and personal relationships.
- Some respondents reported difficulty in fully exercising autonomy due to familial and societal restrictions, which continue to shape women's choices even after obtaining higher education.
- Women with degrees in social sciences and law were more engaged in advocacy and independent decision-making, while those in healthcare and teaching fields faced greater constraints due to traditional gender norms in their professions.

Cumulative findings indicated that higher education significantly contributes to women's self-confidence and personal autonomy, though its impact varies based on individual and contextual factors. 60.00% of respondents reported confidence in voicing their opinions, while 3.55% were moderately satisfied with their self-confidence improvement ( $M = 3.45\text{--}3.60$ ). Education enhances assertiveness, particularly in professional fields such as law and medicine, where women exhibit stronger decision-making abilities. Additionally, high satisfaction with autonomy-related indicators ( $M = 3.35\text{--}3.50$ ) suggests that education fosters greater control over



personal choices and independence. However, variations in empowerment experiences reflect differences in career opportunities, societal expectations, and economic conditions. While education provides a strong foundation for self-confidence and autonomy, structural barriers and cultural constraints continue to shape the extent to which women can fully exercise their independence. Cases where education did not lead to empowerment:

- i. **Limited professional opportunities:** Some respondents, despite attaining higher education, reported facing barriers in securing employment, limiting their ability to exercise independence and self-confidence.
- ii. **Socio-cultural restrictions:** A few respondents highlighted that their families still dictated major life decisions, restricting their autonomy despite their educational qualifications.
- iii. **Disparities in empowerment by field:** Women in STEM and business fields reported higher confidence, while those in arts and social sciences felt their education provided fewer tangible opportunities for empowerment.
- iv. **Structural barriers:** Some respondents noted that gender biases in workplaces continued to limit leadership opportunities, making their education less impactful in translating into real-world empowerment.

Thus, while higher education is a critical tool for self-confidence and empowerment, its impact is not uniform and is contingent on socio-economic, cultural, and structural factors. Policy interventions and supportive societal changes are needed to ensure that education effectively translates into empowerment for all women in Balochistan.

## **Question 2. "How does higher education improve individual knowledge, opinions, and attitudes on women's economic role in Balochistan?"**

The statistical analysis reveals that higher education enhances knowledge acquisition, decision-making skills, and attitudes toward women's economic participation, though challenges remain in applying this knowledge in practical settings.

### **i. Improvement in Individual Knowledge and Decision-Making**

- 45.9% of respondents are moderately satisfied with their knowledge and decision-making abilities ( $M = 2.71$ ), while 66% express satisfaction with the skills acquired through education ( $M = 2.88$ ).
- Higher education improves financial literacy and economic awareness, but its practical application is limited due to restricted job opportunities.
- Women with degrees in STEM and business report greater confidence in economic decision-making, while those in humanities and social sciences feel less prepared for economic participation.

## **ii. Shaping Women's Opinions on Economic Participation**

- 74.00% of respondents support the economic role of women ( $M = 3.33$ ), indicating a positive shift in societal attitudes.
- 75.30% endorse women's workforce participation ( $M = 3.38$ ), reflecting growing awareness of economic rights and opportunities.
- Women exposed to courses on gender studies, economics, and entrepreneurship demonstrate greater acceptance of women's participation in business and professional careers.

## **iii. Challenges to Economic Empowerment**

Despite increased knowledge and positive attitudes, several barriers limit women's full economic empowerment:

- **Limited Employment Opportunities** – A degree does not always translate into job opportunities, restricting financial independence.
- **Cultural Constraints** – Traditional gender roles and societal norms discourage women from pursuing careers and entrepreneurial ventures.
- **Field Disparities** – Women in STEM and business fields report better career prospects, whereas social sciences and humanities graduates face limited job opportunities.
- **Workplace Challenges** – Gender pay gaps, workplace discrimination, and lack of leadership opportunities hinder women's professional growth.

The qualitative analysis provides deeper insights into the personal experiences and perceptions of women regarding their economic roles, highlighting both empowerment and structural limitations.

**i. Improvement in Individual Knowledge and Decision-Making**

- Respondents acknowledged significant improvements in critical thinking, financial literacy, and economic decision-making, allowing them to assess career choices more effectively.
- 12 out of 30 interviewees reported substantial improvements in their ability to make economic decisions, particularly in budgeting, investment awareness, and career planning.
- However, many respondents noted that knowledge alone is insufficient as job opportunities and workplace inclusion remain limited.

**ii. Shaping Women's Opinions on Economic Participation**

- Higher education broadens women's perspectives on gender equality and enables them to advocate for their economic rights.
- Respondents highlighted exposure to professional role models and diverse economic perspectives as key factors in shifting their opinions toward women's workforce participation.
- Women with internship experiences or professional networking opportunities expressed greater confidence in entering the workforce.

**iii. Challenges to Economic Empowerment**

- Many women reported frustration over limited job prospects, with family expectations and social pressures restricting their ability to apply their skills in the workforce.
- Some respondents emphasized workplace discrimination and lack of career advancement opportunities as major deterrents to long-term economic empowerment.

- Despite increased awareness of financial independence, cultural norms still prioritize men as primary economic providers, limiting women's economic mobility.

Cumulative findings indicated that higher education plays a significant role in shaping women's knowledge, opinions, and attitudes toward their economic role in Balochistan, though individual experiences vary. 45.9% of respondents were moderately satisfied with knowledge expansion ( $M = 2.71$ ), while 66% expressed satisfaction with skill acquisition ( $M = 2.88$ ). Education enhanced critical thinking, enabling women to make informed decisions regarding health, finances, and relationships. However, differences in educational benefits suggested that the impact of knowledge acquisition varied among individuals. Regarding economic roles, 74% of respondents acknowledged the importance of women's economic contributions ( $M = 3.33$ ), while 75% supported women's workforce participation ( $M = 3.38$ ). Education reinforced the understanding of gender equality and economic empowerment, fostering positive attitudes toward women's inclusion in the labor market. Nevertheless, individual variations in perceptions highlighted diverse experiences with the practical application of education in economic settings.

While higher education generally enhances knowledge and decision-making, its impact is not uniform across all women. The findings reveal certain limitations:

- i. Limited Practical Application:** Some respondents felt their education remained theoretical, lacking the practical training needed for real-world application.
- ii. Field-Specific Disparities:** Women in STEM and business fields reported higher satisfaction, whereas those in social sciences and humanities felt their knowledge did not directly translate into career advancement.
- iii. Socio-Economic Barriers:** A few respondents struggled to apply their knowledge effectively due to restricted job opportunities and financial limitations.
- iv. Cultural Constraints:** Some women reported that despite acquiring knowledge, they were not given the autonomy to make personal or financial decisions, limiting their empowerment.

Thus, while higher education plays a crucial role in expanding knowledge, its impact varies based on individual experiences, socio-economic backgrounds, and career opportunities. To maximize its transformative potential, there is a need for greater emphasis on practical application, career alignment, and societal acceptance of women's autonomy.

**Question-3. "To what extent is higher education playing its role in the non-acceptance of gender-based violence (GBV) among women in Balochistan?"**

Statistical analysis confirms that higher education significantly enhances women's awareness of GBV and strengthens their rejection of such practices, though external barriers hinder their active resistance.

**i. Higher Education's Role in Rejecting GBV**

- The M scores range from 3.34 to 3.36, indicating a generally strong awareness and non-acceptance of GBV among educated women.
- 64% of women acknowledge that higher education has increased their understanding of women's rights and legal protections against GBV.
- 70% express agreement that education empowers them to challenge GBV-related injustices, though only 48.6% feel confident in actively opposing such issues in their communities.

**ii. Barriers to Active Resistance against GBV**

Despite an increase in awareness and understanding, several barriers prevent women from actively resisting or reporting GBV:

- **Cultural Resistance:** Traditional societal norms and family pressures discourage open discussion of gender-based violence, limiting women's ability to challenge it.
- **Limited Institutional Support:** Universities lack clear policies, reporting mechanisms, or counseling services for GBV survivors, reducing the effectiveness of awareness and advocacy efforts.
- **Fear of Retaliation:** Concerns over social backlash, family dishonor, or personal consequences prevent women from speaking out against GBV.

- **Field Disparities:** Social sciences and law students are more engaged in GBV advocacy, while STEM students show comparatively lower involvement, likely due to curriculum differences and reduced exposure to gender-related discussions.

The qualitative findings provide deeper insights into the lived experiences of educated women, highlighting how knowledge of GBV does not always translate into active resistance due to social and institutional constraints.

#### **i. Increased Awareness and Understanding of GBV**

- Most respondents acknowledged that higher education broadened their awareness of GBV, equipping them with legal knowledge and support-seeking strategies.
- Several women shared that exposure to gender studies, legal frameworks, and human rights courses helped them identify abusive behaviors that were previously normalized in their communities.
- Respondents with law or social sciences backgrounds emphasized that education helped them recognize legal protections, while those in STEM fields expressed limited awareness of legal frameworks related to GBV.

#### **ii. Challenges in Translating Awareness into Action**

- Many women admitted that while higher education empowered them intellectually, they still felt hesitant to challenge GBV in their personal or community spaces.
- Fear of retaliation emerged as a consistent theme, with respondents explaining that publicly addressing GBV could result in family or social backlash.
- Women lacked trust in law enforcement and institutional responses, believing that reporting GBV cases would not lead to justice due to systemic weaknesses in the legal system.

#### **iii. Influence of Field of Study on GBV Awareness**

- Students in law, social sciences, and humanities were more likely to engage in advocacy efforts, including awareness campaigns and policy discussions.

- STEM and medical students reported less engagement with GBV issues, attributing it to their academic focus on technical subjects rather than social justice topics.

Cumulative findings indicated that higher education plays a pivotal role in shaping women's perspectives on the non-acceptance of gender-based violence (GBV) in Balochistan. The findings indicate a high satisfaction level regarding the recognition and addressing of GBV, with mean scores ranging from 3.34 to 3.36. Education has been instrumental in fostering advocacy, raising awareness, and promoting gender equality, equipping women with the knowledge and confidence to challenge GBV.

However, the degree of impact varies among individuals, largely depending on their exposure to gender-focused discussions, academic discourse, and advocacy initiatives. Women who actively engage in such activities demonstrate a stronger stance against GBV, while those with limited exposure exhibit a comparatively moderate impact.

Despite strong overall support, some respondents identified barriers that limited the real-world impact of their education in combating gender-based violence:

**i. Cultural and Family Resistance:** A few respondents noted that, despite their education, family and societal norms still discouraged them from openly addressing gender-based violence.

**ii. Limited Institutional Support:** Some participants expressed that while universities raised awareness, there were few concrete mechanisms for reporting or addressing gender-based violence on campuses or in workplaces.

**iii. Fear of Retaliation:** A small number of respondents acknowledged that, although they understood the importance of speaking out, fear of personal or professional consequences prevented them from actively engaging in advocacy.

**iv. Variability in Exposure to Gender-Focused Education:** Women who studied gender studies, law, or social sciences reported greater engagement in advocacy, whereas those in STEM fields felt their education provided limited exposure to gender-based violence issues.

**Question 4. "To what extent is higher education enabling women to have control over their household assets, involvement in decision-making, independent income, and control over time?"**

Statistical data highlights that higher education significantly enhances women's ability to manage household assets, participate in decision-making, earn an independent income, and control their time. However, barriers such as cultural norms, economic constraints, and regional disparities continue to moderate the extent of empowerment.

**i. Control Over Household Assets**

- Higher education positively correlates with women's empowerment in managing household assets and financial decision-making.
- M scores indicate high levels of satisfaction, with most educated women feeling empowered in asset control, autonomy, and resource allocation.
- Over 65% of respondents report that education has improved their financial literacy, enabling them to budget, save, and invest wisely.

**ii. Barriers**

- **Cultural Resistance:** Traditional gender roles continue to limit women's control over assets and major financial decisions.
- **Economic Dependency:** Many women remain financially reliant on male family members, restricting their autonomy in financial matters.
- **Limited Leadership in Financial Crises:** Even educated women often lack decision-making authority in critical financial situations.
- **Field Disparities:** Women in STEM and business fields report greater financial independence than those in humanities and education.

**iii. Involvement in Household Decision-Making**

- Higher education significantly enhances women's participation in financial and resource-related decisions, with M scores ranging from 3.32 to 3.39.
- 70% of educated women report high involvement in household decision-making, with minimal dissatisfaction (2%–2.6%).



- Education fosters confidence, financial literacy, and managerial skills, allowing women to actively engage in key household decisions.

#### **iv. Barriers**

- **Cultural Norms:** Traditional gender roles continue to restrict women's decision-making power, especially in rural settings.
- **Economic Dependence:** Women without independent income often have limited influence over major household decisions.
- **Limited Authority over Major Financial Decisions:** Even educated women rarely make sole financial decisions, particularly in conservative households.
- **Urban vs. Rural Divide:** Women in urban areas report greater autonomy than those in rural communities.

#### **v. Independent Income**

- Higher education substantially improves financial independence, with M scores ranging from 3.32 to 3.54.
- Women in business, finance, and engineering report the highest levels of financial independence, attributing success to technical and practical skills acquired through education.
- 60% of respondents believe that higher education directly contributes to their ability to earn a sustainable income.

#### **vi. Barriers**

- **Economic Limitations in Non-Financial Fields:** Women in humanities and social sciences experience slower financial growth due to fewer high-paying job opportunities.
- **Gendered Wage Gaps:** Even in high-paying industries, women continue to earn less than men for similar roles.
- **Cultural Expectations & Household Responsibilities:** Many educated women face career restrictions due to domestic duties, limiting their financial autonomy.

#### **vii. Control Over Time**

- M scores ranging from 3.65 to 3.85 indicate that higher education enhances women's ability to manage time efficiently.
- Educated women report improved ability to balance responsibilities, prioritize tasks, and manage personal and community activities.
- Structured academic programs instill discipline, contributing to better time allocation and multitasking skills.

#### **viii. Barriers**

- Urban vs. Rural Divide – Urban women benefit more from educational support, time management resources, and work-life balance strategies.
- Family Responsibilities – Rural women face greater caregiving duties, limiting their time for self-development and employment.
- Support Systems – Institutional and family support play a critical role in enabling women to manage their time effectively.

The qualitative findings provide deeper insights into how education influences women's autonomy over household assets, decision-making, financial independence, and time management.

#### **i. Control Over Household Assets**

- Women with higher education report improved financial knowledge and budgeting skills, but many still lack decision-making authority in family asset management.
- Some women shared that while they contribute financially, ultimate decisions on asset allocation remain male-dominated.
- STEM and business graduates reported higher control over financial matters, while those in social sciences had limited decision-making roles.

#### **ii. Involvement in Decision-Making**

- Many respondents expressed that education increased their confidence in voicing opinions, but final household decisions were often made by male family members.

- Women in dual-income households reported greater decision-making authority, particularly in financial and childcare-related matters.

### **iii. Independent Income**

- Women with professional degrees (engineering, business, IT) described greater financial independence, while those in education and humanities reported challenges in securing high-paying jobs.
- Several respondents noted that workplace barriers, such as gender discrimination and pay gaps, hindered their financial progress despite their educational qualifications.

### **iv. Control Over Time**

- University education instilled time management skills, but family responsibilities often dictated daily schedules, especially for married women.
- Women in STEM and professional careers found better work-life balance, while those in teaching or caregiving roles faced time constraints due to household duties.

Cumulative findings indicated that higher education serves as a critical enabler of women's empowerment in household decision-making, financial independence, and time management. Statistical findings indicate high levels of satisfaction ( $M = 3.32$  to  $3.85$ ) regarding control over household assets, independent income, and decision-making involvement. Education enhances financial literacy, confidence, and managerial skills, allowing women to actively participate in economic and household decisions. However, qualitative findings highlight persistent barriers that restrict full autonomy. These include traditional gender norms, economic dependency, and wage disparities.

Despite the general positive trends, several respondents pointed out challenges that prevented their education from fully translating into empowerment and autonomy:

**i. Cultural and Societal Constraints:** Some participants noted that, even though they received higher education, deeply ingrained cultural norms and traditional gender roles still limited their ability to exercise full autonomy. In

many cases, societal expectations influenced their career choices or personal life decisions.

**ii. Limited Career Opportunities:** Although education empowered many to pursue their desired career paths, others faced limitations due to a lack of opportunities or gender discrimination in the workforce. In rural or conservative areas, even educated women struggled to find employment that matched their qualifications, diminishing the impact of their education on their autonomy.

**iii. Family and Community Expectations:** Some respondents acknowledged that while they felt more empowered on an individual level, family or community expectations often played a significant role in shaping their decisions. The pressure to fulfill traditional roles (e.g., as caregivers or homemakers) sometimes overshadowed their educational achievements, curbing their sense of autonomy.

**iv. Impact of Educational Field of Study:** Similar to the diversity in empowerment levels, respondents from different fields of study reported varying degrees of autonomy. Women who pursued degrees in social sciences, law, or business felt more empowered to make independent decisions in both their personal and professional lives. However, women in more traditionally gendered fields (e.g., nursing, teaching) reported fewer opportunities to apply their education to assert control over their future paths.

By incorporating these critical perspectives, the findings offer a more nuanced understanding of the role of higher education in enhancing women's autonomy, acknowledging both the empowering effects and the barriers that may limit its full potential.

**Question 5: "How are higher educational endeavors of women helping them influence the community?"**

Higher education significantly enhances women's ability to influence their communities by fostering confidence, leadership skills, critical thinking, and social engagement. However, the extent of influence varies due to socio-cultural, institutional, and economic constraints.

Statistical data indicates that educated women engage in social initiatives, advocacy, and leadership roles, with M scores ranging from 2.94 to 3.24, reflecting moderate to strong community involvement.

#### **i. Community Engagement and Leadership**

- Over 60% of respondents reported that higher education enhanced their ability to contribute to community development.
- Women with higher education degrees actively participate in workshops, awareness campaigns, and advocacy efforts related to education, health, and women's rights.
- M scores indicate that many educated women aspire to take on leadership roles, but structural and cultural barriers limit their opportunities.

#### **ii. Forms of Community Involvement**

Educated women contribute to their communities in multiple ways:

- Workshops and Awareness Campaigns – Many women participate in and organize initiatives addressing education, health, and women's rights.
- Social Advocacy – Higher education empowers women to advocate for policy changes, legal rights, and community development projects.
- Leadership and Decision-Making – Education strengthens critical thinking and communication skills, enabling women to advise or lead community organizations.

#### **iii. Barriers**

- Limited Leadership Access – Gender biases restrict women from holding formal leadership positions in community organizations.
- Institutional Barriers – A lack of governmental and organizational support reduces opportunities for meaningful community engagement.
- Cultural Norms – Traditional gender roles discourage women from actively participating in public affairs.
- Scale of Impact – The degree of influence varies based on factors such as family background, economic status, and field of study.

The qualitative findings highlight that while education provides women with leadership skills and social awareness, external factors often limit their practical influence.

**i. Community Leadership and Advocacy**

- Educated women actively engage in awareness programs, but many face social resistance when advocating for women's rights and policy changes.
- Some respondents reported that they serve as informal advisors in their communities, but lack decision-making authority in formal community affairs.
- Women in STEM and social sciences were more likely to participate in policy-related advocacy, while those in education and humanities focused on grassroots-level initiatives.

**ii. Barriers to Community Influence**

- Gender Stereotypes – Many women expressed that their leadership potential is undervalued due to deeply ingrained societal norms.
- Institutional Limitations – Even in professional roles, many women struggle to attain leadership positions due to male-dominated organizational structures.
- Economic Dependence – Women without financial independence are often unable to actively engage in community initiatives due to household responsibilities.

Cumulative findings indicated that higher education enhances women's community influence by equipping them with skills and confidence to lead initiatives such as workshops and awareness campaigns, as reflected in *M* Scores ranging from 2.94 to 3.24. Qualitative findings confirm that education empowers women to voice opinions, organize events, and advocate for social issues. However, while some women attain leadership roles and initiate large-scale projects, others contribute on a smaller scale due to societal norms and restricted access to leadership opportunities. Thus, while education strengthens community engagement, its impact varies based on structural and cultural barriers.

Despite the overall positive findings, several respondents pointed out factors that limited their ability to fully apply their education in influencing their communities:

**i. Limited Access to Leadership Roles:** While many participants expressed a desire to lead community initiatives, some noted barriers in accessing formal leadership positions. Gender biases and societal expectations about women's roles often constrained their ability to take on high-profile or influential leadership roles in the community, even if they had the skills and knowledge.

**ii. Institutional and Structural Barriers:** Some respondents highlighted the challenges posed by institutional and structural barriers. For example, while higher education may have provided the tools to engage in community work, the lack of support from local institutions or the absence of platforms for community projects limited their ability to bring about tangible change.

**iii. Cultural and Social Norms:** Despite the benefits of education, some women faced resistance from traditional or conservative communities, where cultural norms and gender roles hindered their active participation in certain community activities. In these contexts, education was not always sufficient to overcome the deep-rooted social expectations placed on women.

**iv. Variation in Scale of Contributions:** Respondents reported a wide range in the scale of their community contributions. While some women played active roles in organizing large-scale initiatives or leading projects, others were involved in smaller, more localized efforts. This divergence suggests that the impact of higher education on community influence may depend on available opportunities and individual circumstances.

By incorporating these critical perspectives, the findings reflect a more nuanced understanding of the ways higher education can influence women's roles in their communities. It is clear that while education empowers many women to contribute meaningfully, the extent of this empowerment and the opportunities to apply it are shaped by a variety of external factors.

**Question 6. "How well is higher education preparing women to deal with gender-based violence (GBV)?"**

Higher education plays a crucial role in equipping women with the awareness, confidence, and advocacy skills needed to recognize, respond to, and challenge GBV. The quantitative data, with M scores ranging from 3.50 to 3.77, indicates that educated women report a higher ability to address GBV, access legal support, and

engage in advocacy efforts. However, social, cultural, and structural barriers continue to limit the full realization of this empowerment.

Statistical findings highlight that women with higher education exhibit increased confidence in identifying and addressing GBV.

- M scores ranging from 3.50 to 3.77 indicate that educated women are well-prepared to seek help, challenge societal norms, and advocate against GBV.
- Over 70% of respondents agreed that higher education enhanced their ability to identify GBV and access support systems.
- Women with university degrees demonstrated higher confidence in reporting GBV incidents compared to those with lower educational attainment.

Findings based on qualitative data related to this question were as follows:

### **1. Awareness and Recognition**

- Educated women demonstrate greater awareness of GBV, recognizing various forms of abuse, including physical, emotional, psychological, and financial violence.
- Women with formal education are more likely to perceive certain behaviors as unacceptable and assert their rights against gender-based discrimination.

### **2. Confidence in Seeking Help**

- Higher education increases women's willingness to report GBV and seek institutional support (e.g., police, legal services, and women's protection centers).
- Women in urban areas reported higher confidence levels in accessing legal and institutional support systems.

### **3. Advocacy and Community Engagement**

- Many educated women actively participate in awareness campaigns, legal reform initiatives, and community discussions about GBV.



- Women in social sciences and law-related fields report higher engagement in GBV advocacy, whereas STEM graduates tend to have lower involvement.

#### **4. Integration of Ethical and Religious Teachings**

- Many respondents highlighted that education, combined with religious and ethical perspectives, reinforces their commitment to justice and gender equality.
- Some women emphasized that religious teachings, when interpreted correctly, support gender rights and discourage violence.

#### **5. Barriers to Effective Preparedness**

Despite these advancements, several challenges limit the effectiveness of higher education in fully preparing women to address GBV.

##### **i. Urban vs. Rural Divide**

- Urban women, with greater access to education and resources, report a stronger ability to respond to GBV than those in rural areas, where social stigma and restricted mobility limit intervention efforts.

##### **ii. Cultural Norms and Social Resistance**

- Traditional gender roles discourage women from openly addressing GBV, particularly in conservative communities.
- Some respondents noted that fear of social backlash prevents victims from reporting abuse or seeking justice.

##### **iii. Limited Institutional Support**

- Many universities lack clear policies or structured support mechanisms for addressing GBV cases.
- Women reported that on-campus counseling and protection services are inadequate or inaccessible.

##### **iv. Disparities in Educational Access**

- Women with minimal educational attainment engage less in GBV related discussions and advocacy, highlighting gaps in preparedness across different education levels.

Cumulative findings indicated that higher education plays a significant role in preparing women to address gender-based violence (GBV) by raising awareness and fostering advocacy for gender equality, as reflected in M Scores ranging from 3.50 to 3.77, with minimal dissatisfaction (1.6% 2.9%). The data indicates that education enhances women's understanding of GBV, equipping them with the knowledge and confidence to challenge discriminatory norms and support survivors. However, a divergence exists, as rural participants' demonstrated lower engagement in GBV advocacy, likely due to cultural constraints and limited access to support networks. While higher education strengthens women's capacity to address GBV, its impact varies based on geographic and social factors.

## **6. Critical Perspective: Variations in the Impact of Education on Gender-Based Violence**

Despite the positive trends in the data, there were some notable variations in the impact of education on women's responses to GBV:

- i. **Urban vs. Rural Divide:** While education universally contributed to a heightened awareness of GBV, the extent of its impact was more pronounced in urban areas and among women with higher levels of formal education. In rural areas, some participants with less access to formal education showed lower levels of engagement with GBV advocacy. These women often had limited exposure to educational programs or resources that could provide the necessary tools and support to combat GBV effectively. This suggests that while education fosters positive changes, the full benefits may be more readily accessible in urban areas where educational infrastructure and awareness programs are more developed.
- ii. **Cultural and Societal Norms:** Despite increased awareness and advocacy, societal and cultural barriers continue to influence how women engage with and respond to GBV. In some rural contexts, deeply ingrained cultural norms may hinder the extent to which women challenge traditional views on gender roles and violence. Although education has been shown to empower women in

these regions, the broader societal shifts necessary for tackling GBV may require additional factors, such as community support and institutional change.

iii. **Impact of Limited Formal Education:** In some cases, participants with lower levels of formal education or limited exposure to gender equality curricula expressed less proactive engagement with issues related to GBV. This highlights the need for more inclusive and comprehensive educational programs that specifically address gender-based violence and empower women with the tools to advocate for themselves and others in all contexts, regardless of educational background.

**Question 7. "What is the role of higher education in empowering women in terms of access to services and resources and the ability to influence at the political level?"**

Higher education plays a transformative role in enhancing women's access to essential services and fostering their political participation. The quantitative findings indicate strong correlations, with M scores ranging from 3.73 to 3.83 for access to services and 2.74 to 2.90 for political engagement. However, socioeconomic disparities, cultural barriers, and institutional limitations continue to mediate the extent of empowerment women experience in both areas.

Findings based on quantitative data related to this question are as follows:

**i. Access to Essential Services and Resources**

- M scores ranging from 3.73 to 3.83 suggest that women with higher education demonstrate greater confidence in accessing healthcare, financial, and technological resources.
- Over 75% of respondents agreed that education enhanced their ability to seek healthcare services, access financial resources, and advocate for better infrastructure.
- More than 60% of women with higher education reported that they actively seek opportunities for further learning for themselves and their families.

**ii. Political Influence and Engagement**

- M scores between 2.74 and 2.90 indicate a moderate level of political engagement among educated women, suggesting that higher education fosters awareness but does not necessarily translate into direct political participation.
- Nearly 50% of educated women reported engagement in civic activities such as voting, attending political discussions, or supporting advocacy movements, but only a small percentage pursued leadership roles.
- Women with degrees in social sciences, law, and public administration showed higher political engagement compared to those in STEM and business fields.

Findings based on qualitative data related to this question are as follows:

**i. Higher Education and Access to Essential Services**

Higher education improves women's ability to navigate critical services and resources, enabling them to:

**1. Access to Healthcare and Sanitation**

- Educated women exhibit higher health literacy, allowing them to seek medical services, demand reproductive healthcare rights, and make informed health decisions.
- Women with higher education were more likely to access prenatal and postnatal care and encourage vaccinations for their children.

**2. Secure Clean Water and Infrastructure**

- Women with education advocate for improved sanitation and infrastructure in their communities, especially in rural areas where access to these services is often limited.

**3. Pursue Educational and Professional Opportunities**

- Higher education increases women's ability to secure further learning opportunities, ensuring access to scholarships, vocational training, and professional development programs.

**4. Develop Digital Literacy and Access to Online Services**

- Women with higher education exhibit stronger digital literacy, allowing them to access online financial services, e-governance platforms, and networking opportunities.
- Digital literacy also enables women to participate in online advocacy and awareness campaigns.

## **ii. Higher Education and Political Influence**

Although higher education strengthens political awareness, its impact on direct political participation remains limited due to various structural barriers.

### **1. Development of Critical Thinking**

- Education enhances women's ability to analyze political issues, engage in discussions, and make informed electoral decisions.
- Women with higher education were more likely to participate in policy debates and engage with governance issues at local levels.

### **2. Advocacy for Policies and Social Change**

- Educated women contribute to policy discussions and legal reforms related to gender rights, labor laws, and education policies.
- Many women reported supporting social movements addressing gender equality, environmental sustainability, and women's political representation.

### **3. Participation in Civic and Electoral Activities**

- While many women vote and engage in community discussions, fewer take up leadership roles due to institutional and cultural constraints.
- Respondents noted that political spaces remain male-dominated, making it challenging for women to enter leadership positions despite having the necessary qualifications.

### **4. Barriers to Full Empowerment**

Despite the positive impact of higher education, several challenges continue to restrict women's access to services and political engagement:

**i. Urban vs. Rural Divide**

- Women in urban areas report greater access to healthcare, digital resources, and financial services, while rural women face infrastructural and mobility constraints.

**ii. Socioeconomic Status**

- Wealthier women leverage education more effectively, while financially disadvantaged women struggle to utilize their knowledge due to economic limitations.
- 

**iii. Cultural and Institutional Barriers**

- Traditional gender norms limit women's autonomy in healthcare and employment.
- Some women lack family or institutional support to fully utilize their educational qualifications.

**5. Barriers to Political Influence**

**i. Deep-Rooted Gender Norms**

- Societal expectations discourage women from engaging in politics, reinforcing the belief that politics is a male domain.

**ii. Limited Institutional Support**

- Women's participation in politics remains symbolic in many cases, with few women holding actual decision-making power.

**iii. Socioeconomic Constraints**

- Lower-income women have fewer opportunities to engage in politics due to financial barriers.
- Women from wealthier backgrounds are more likely to enter political spaces through established family networks.

**iv. Lack of Mentorship and Networks**

- Women who lack mentorship and peer support struggle to build political connections, further limiting their influence in governance and policy-making.

Cumulative findings indicated that higher education significantly empowers women by enhancing access to essential services and increasing political engagement. With M Scores ranging from 3.73 to 3.83, women reported high satisfaction with improved access to healthcare, clean water, sanitation, and educational opportunities. Education also strengthened their ability to navigate systems, leverage technology, and secure financial resources such as scholarships and loans. However, the influence of higher education on political engagement was moderate to high, as indicated by M Scores of 2.74–2.90. While education fostered advocacy skills, policy influence, and confidence, enabling women to engage in political processes, their participation remained limited due to structural and societal constraints.

## **5. Critical Perspective: Variations in Political Engagement by Context**

While the overall impact of education on political empowerment is positive, some variations in political engagement outcomes were observed:

**i. Urban Areas:** In urban settings, where educational opportunities are more accessible, women were more likely to engage in political activities and advocacy. Many women reported being involved in local politics, advocating for environmental policies, and participating in decision-making forums. These women had greater access to platforms for political discourse and were more likely to pursue careers in politics or civil society organizations.

**ii. Rural Areas:** In contrast, women in rural areas faced more challenges in political engagement. Despite having access to education, many reported that traditional gender roles, limited access to political platforms, and cultural restrictions hindered their ability to participate in political processes. While some rural women did report gaining confidence through education, the social and institutional barriers in rural areas were more restrictive, limiting the extent of their political involvement.

**iii. Impact of Socioeconomic Status:** Education provided political empowerment across socioeconomic levels, but those from higher-income backgrounds were more likely to have the resources and support systems

necessary to actively engage in politics. They were able to access political networks and platforms, attend political events, and voice their opinions more freely. Conversely, women from lower-income backgrounds, although benefiting from education, often faced additional financial and social barriers that restricted their ability to participate fully in political processes.

**iv. Cultural and Institutional Barriers:** While education equipped women with the necessary skills for political engagement, cultural and institutional barriers often limited their ability to translate this education into active political participation. In some cases, societal expectations around women's roles, particularly in rural areas, prevented them from engaging in political discussions or advocacy. These women faced additional challenges in advocating for policy changes, especially in patriarchal contexts where women's voices were less heard in public and political spheres.

**v. Support Systems:** Women with access to strong support networks, such as family, peers, or mentors, were more likely to participate in politics and advocate for change. These women reported feeling more confident in expressing their political views and participating in political discourse. On the other hand, women without such support systems struggled to overcome societal pressures and were often less engaged in political matters, even if they had received an education that equipped them with the skills to do so.

### **5.3 Discussion**

This study explored the extent to which women are empowered on a personal, relational, and environmental level after receiving higher education. These three aspects provide the basis of the research. On a personal level, it aims to decipher the contribution of education to Balochistani women's decision-making power and self-autonomy in the domestic sphere. On a relational and environmental level, was digging deeper into the difference that education has made, and to what extent the educated Balochistani women empowered in terms of advocating themselves, taking part in politics, financial independence and stability, as well as, their involvement in household decisions. It carried out aims to unpack the multitude of reasons that keep confining Balochistani women to the domestic sphere of society despite receiving higher education.



Findings unfolded that Higher education's role in personal empowerment, with Average *M* score 3.55 particularly in developing confidence and self-management skills, are evident despite the lack of statistically significant findings in quantitative measures. While results suggest a generally positive trend, and a complex interaction between education and empowerment that may not be fully captured through standard quantitative approaches. Studies like those by Malhotra and Schuler (2005) have similarly noted that education increases women's confidence and negotiation power within households and communities, thus enhancing personal empowerment. This aligns with the qualitative findings where education was frequently associated with personal growth and improved self-esteem among women in Balochistan. The significant influence of employment status on empowerment scores is highlighted in the high average *M* score of 3.41 for the relational dimension of empowerment. Educated women who are employed tend to report higher empowerment levels, which are consistent with literature indicating that employment can enhance women's relational networks and economic independence (Kabeer, 2001). Furthermore, the qualitative data from enrich the understanding by showing how higher education equips women with skills for economic participation and leadership, facilitating their role in economic decision-making and community activities. This dual impact enhances personal and relational empowerment, bridging the gap between educational attainment and practical empowerment.

The findings revealed that Environmental empowerment through higher education is multifaceted, encompassing improved access to services, community leadership, and political engagement. The average *M* score of 3.32 for environmental empowerment is supported by qualitative evidence that higher education significantly enhances access to essential services and resources, and equips individuals for political engagement. These dimensions align with qualitative insights into how education fosters community influence and activism against gender-based violence. This is particularly relevant in the context of Balochistan, where traditional barriers often limit women's engagement in public and political spheres. Similarly, another research conducted by Stromquist (2015) indicates that education empowers women to participate more actively in political and community life, supporting the idea that educational interventions can lead to broader societal change.

The linkage between higher education and improved economic roles, though indirectly shown through employment status, is a critical aspect of empowerment. The Qualitative findings reinforced that employed women, presumably with higher educational levels, demonstrate greater empowerment. This mirrors the arguments presented by King and Hill (1993), who found that higher education increases women's participation in the labor market and their economic autonomy. In Balochistan, the direct correlation between educational attainment and economic activity highlighted in the interviews underscores the transformative potential of education in changing economic dynamics for women. The results explore the triangulation of personal empowerment among women in Balochistan, and suggest a nuanced impact of higher education on personal empowerment. Despite the lack of statistically significant findings in the quantitative analysis, the qualitative data reveal that themes of personal development and confidence are prevalent among participants. This indicates that higher education plays a crucial role in enhancing personal empowerment through the development of self-management skills and confidence. This observation aligns with the findings of Malhotra and Schuler (2005), who noted that education increases women's confidence and negotiation power within households and communities, contributing significantly to their personal empowerment. Furthermore, the research conducted by Stromquist (2006) supports the idea that education not only provides knowledge but also fosters a sense of self-worth and confidence, which are critical components of personal empowerment.

The discrepancy between the quantitative and qualitative findings in may suggest that traditional measures of empowerment might not fully capture the subtleties of how education influences personal aspects of empowerment, such as self-perception and confidence. This complexity has been highlighted in studies like that of Kabeer (2005), who argues that empowerment is a multifaceted process that extends beyond measurable outcomes and includes changes in self-worth and individual agency. These results are further enriched by qualitative insights, where themes of economic participation and community leadership were frequently highlighted. This dual approach reveals that not only does higher education prepare women for the workforce, but it also equips them with the necessary skills and confidence to take on leadership roles within their communities. The correlation between higher education, employment, and relational empowerment is supported by

the work of Kabeer (2001), who argues that access to employment and the resulting economic independence are key factors in enhancing women's agency and their relational networks within and beyond the household. Additionally, the research by Hill and King (1993) found that educational advancements for women lead to greater economic participation and influence in community and societal decision-making processes, which aligns well with the findings of our study.

The research supports the broader discourse on education's role in enhancing community engagement and leadership among women. According to Stromquist (2006), education provides women with the skills and confidence required to participate effectively in public and political spheres, a necessity for substantive environmental empowerment. Furthermore, the studies by Wang and Hannum (2008) highlight that educational attainment is crucial for women's involvement in community decisions and initiatives that directly affect their living conditions, such as access to clean water and healthcare.

The discussion illustrates that higher education is a key driver of environmental empowerment, enabling women to take on leadership roles and engage in community and political activities. It is through these roles that women can effect change and advocate for broader societal improvements, including those related to environmental and public welfare issues. The data further underscore this impact, with significant discussions around women's roles in community influence and activism. This evidence points to the fact that education does not merely provide academic knowledge but also serves as a pivotal tool for societal engagement and change. The research supports the broader discourse on education's role in enhancing community engagement and leadership among women. According to Stromquist (2006), education provides women with the skills and confidence required to participate effectively in public and political spheres, a necessity for substantive environmental empowerment. Furthermore, the studies by Wang and Hannum (2008) highlight that educational attainment is crucial for women's involvement in community decisions and initiatives that directly affect their living conditions, such as access to clean water and healthcare.

The findings revealed that higher education is a key driver of environmental empowerment, enabling women to take on leadership roles and engage in community and political activities. It is through these roles that women can effect change and

advocate for broader societal improvements, including those related to environmental and public welfare issues. Supporting this, the work of Kabeer (2001) emphasizes that empowerment, particularly through economic independence, involves acquiring the ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied. Education is highlighted as a crucial factor in enabling these choices. Moreover, research by Lloyd and Grant (2004) has shown that women with higher educational levels are more likely to participate in the labour market and have greater control over their earnings and other household assets, reinforcing the notion that education can lead to greater economic empowerment. These observations from our study are aligned with broader research, which suggests that education not only prepares women for employment but also fundamentally alters their role within the economic sphere of their communities. Through educational attainment, women are not just participants but are empowered agents capable of influencing economic decisions both within their households and in broader community contexts.

The discussion underscores the nuanced ways in which education influences different aspects of women's responses to gender-based violence. While the quantitative data highlight some limitations, the overwhelming qualitative evidence suggests a transformative impact of higher education in enabling women to lead and advocate for change, enhancing their agency and involvement in movements against gender-based violence. However, the data provide a contrasting and richer narrative, revealing that discussions on empowerment in decision-making within households are prevalent among the educated women surveyed. This suggests that while the quantitative measures may not capture significant direct effects, education still plays a crucial role in empowering women in less measurable but critically important ways, such as enhancing their confidence and perceived capacity to make decisions.

This complexity aligns with the arguments made by scholars like Agarwal (1997), who noted that women's control over assets and decision-making is often influenced by broader societal norms and personal self-efficacy, which can be enhanced through educational experiences. Furthermore, the research by Lloyd and Grant (2004) supports the idea that education leads to greater involvement in decision-making processes, not necessarily by changing immediate economic roles but by transforming societal perceptions and self-identity.

The importance of education in enhancing community influence is supported by research from scholars like Norris and Inglehart (2001), who found that higher education contributes significantly to civic engagement and political participation among women. This is further substantiated by the work of Putnam (2000), who argued that education strengthens civic muscles, making individuals more likely to engage in various forms of community and political life.

The findings revealed that a deeper insight, emphasizing that educational endeavours significantly contribute to better handling and awareness of gender-based violence. This robust support from qualitative evidence underscores that while direct practical skills related to handling gender-based violence might not show significant improvement, education plays a crucial role in empowering women to become advocates for change and to challenge societal norms perpetuating violence. This dichotomy between quantitative and qualitative findings highlights the complex dynamics of educational impact. While practical skills to address violence might not be significantly enhanced, the broader cognitive and psychological empowerment through education equips women with the ability to challenge and change the societal structures that sustain gender-based violence. This aspect is supported by the works of researchers such as Jejeebhoy (1998) and Kabeer (2005), who argue that education increases women's awareness of their rights and their capability to challenge oppressive norms.

However, the findings offer a contrasting and more positive perspective, emphasizing significant increases in civic awareness and political engagement among educated women. This difference between the quantitative and qualitative outcomes highlights the complexity of how educational impacts are manifested and suggests that traditional quantitative approaches may not fully capture the transformative effects of education on empowerment. The findings align with theories proposed by scholars like Norris and Inglehart (2001), who argue that higher education enhances civic literacy and political efficacy, leading to increased participation in political processes. This is supported by Putnam's (2000) theory that education strengthens civic muscles, thereby increasing individuals' likelihood to engage in civic activities and political life.

The research underlines the crucial role of education in empowering women beyond mere academic achievements, facilitating broader societal engagement, and

providing them with the tools necessary to access important services and actively participate in shaping political and community decisions. Although data did not reveal significant differences, the qualitative insights consistently showed an increase in self-confidence and autonomy among educated women. This discrepancy suggests that traditional empirical measures may not fully capture the subtleties of how education influences psychological and personal aspects of empowerment. According to the literature (Stromquist, 2006), education enhances women's self-perception and agency, enabling them to make informed decisions and assert their autonomy in various life aspects, which is strongly reflected in the narratives from the study. The data profoundly illustrate education's role in advocating against gender-based violence, a finding not directly captured through the quantitative approach. This aspect of empowerment, where education provides women the tools to challenge and reject violence, is crucial. As highlighted by Jejeebhoy (1998), education leads to greater awareness of legal rights and a higher likelihood of taking action against abuse, which aligns with the reported increase in advocacy and support for victims observed among participants.

Higher education's role in enhancing women's influence in their communities and participation in political processes is evident from the qualitative data. This aligns with studies by Norris and Inglehart (2001), which argue that higher education contributes to higher political and civic engagement among women. The findings from Balochistan suggest that education not only empowers women personally and economically but also elevates their role in societal and political arenas, highlighting the comprehensive impact of education on various facets of empowerment.

#### **5.4 Conclusions**

Based on the objectives, following conclusions are envisaged;

1. Higher education significantly enhances women's self-confidence, autonomy, economic awareness, and resistance to gender-based violence in Balochistan. It fosters decision-making skills and independence, yet cultural and structural barriers limit its full impact, especially in rural areas. Educated women are more aware of their economic roles and pursue financial independence, but employment barriers and gender pay gaps persist. Education also strengthens women's ability to recognize and resist gender-based violence, though societal norms and institutional weaknesses remain challenges.

2. Higher education plays a vital role in enhancing women's control over household assets, decision-making, financial independence, and time management, contributing to their relational empowerment. Educated women are more engaged in community initiatives and advocacy, yet cultural restrictions and institutional barriers limit their leadership roles. Additionally, higher education strengthens women's awareness and preparedness against gender-based violence, but social norms and fear of retaliation hinder their ability to take action.
3. Higher education significantly enhances women's access to essential services, resources, and political engagement in Balochistan. Educated women are more aware of their health rights, financial opportunities, and digital resources, enabling them to navigate and advocate for improved services. Furthermore, higher education fosters critical thinking and civic awareness, encouraging women's participation in political discourse, policy advocacy, and community leadership. However, structural barriers, socio-economic disparities, and cultural norms continue to limit their full engagement.

## **5.5 Recommendations**

Following recommendations are given on the basis of conclusions of study;

1. Higher education significantly contributes to women's self-confidence and personal autonomy, however cultural and structural barriers, particularly in rural areas, limit its full impact. To address these gaps, universities may implement mentorship programs, leadership training and scholarship initiatives to further strengthen women's decision-making abilities. Moreover, NGOs may facilitate awareness campaigns and mentorship networks to create inclusive environments that encourage autonomy in academic and professional spaces.
2. Higher education raises women's awareness of their economic roles, persistent employment barriers and gender wise discrimination in salary structure restrict their financial independence. To mitigate these challenges, it is recommended that universities may integrate financial literacy, entrepreneurship, and career development courses into their curricula to promote economic empowerment. Moreover, NGOs may also provide networking opportunities, skill-building programs, and mentorship to enhance women's financial independence.

3. Higher education strengthens women's participation in household decision-making however; traditional gender roles and economic dependency continue to limit full autonomy. To address this, it is recommended that universities may promote financial literacy initiatives and expand women's access to economic resources. NGOs may also support women through mentorship programs to enhance their decision-making capabilities.
4. Higher education strengthens women's influence in the community by equipping them with leadership skills and confidence. However, societal restrictions and institutional barriers continue to limit their access to leadership roles. To bridge this gap, universities may support collaborations between universities and local organizations in order to promote women's leadership. Furthermore, NGOs may develop outreach programs and community engagement activities to provide women with platforms to participate in decision-making and advocacy.
5. Higher education has been instrumental in raising awareness and fostering advocacy against Gender Based Violence (GBV). However, cultural norms and geographic barriers hinder some women's ability to take action. To address this gap, universities may integrate GBV awareness programs into their curricula, including self-defense training, legal rights education, and gender studies. Additionally, accessible reporting mechanisms should be made available, while partnerships with NGOs may help expand awareness campaigns and provide essential services such as legal aid, psychological support, and safe spaces, particularly in rural areas.
6. Higher education equips women with the knowledge to navigate essential services and engage in political and civic activities. However, societal norms, structural barriers, and socio-economic disparities still restrict their full participation in governance and decision-making. To address this gap, universities may integrate civic education, leadership training, and policy-making workshops into academics. NGOs may offer political internships and advocacy training to equip women with the necessary skills for active participation in governance and decision-making.



## **5.6 Recommendations for Further Research**

- 1.** Further research may examine the long-term effects of higher education on women's personal autonomy, career advancement, and leadership roles. A longitudinal study could provide deeper insights into how educational experiences translate into sustained empowerment over time.
- 2.** Since cultural expectations significantly influence women's empowerment, future studies may explore how traditional norms either support or hinder the practical application of higher education in fostering autonomy, decision-making, and social mobility.
- 3.** Considering the variations in empowerment across different geographic locations, further research can compare the experiences of educated women in urban and rural Balochistan. Such a study would highlight region-specific challenges and inform targeted interventions.
- 4.** Future studies may assess the impact of mentorship initiatives, leadership training, and financial literacy programs on women's ability to navigate economic, social, and political structures. Evaluating these programs could help refine strategies for improving women's self-confidence and economic independence.
- 5.** Since higher education enhances women's understanding of legal rights and advocacy against Gender Based Violence (GBV), research may explore how well higher education prepares women to influence policy changes, participate in governance, and engage in community activism.
- 6.** With the rise of online learning, further research could investigate how digital education platforms contribute to women's empowerment, particularly for those in remote areas. Understanding the role of technology in expanding access to knowledge and resources can help bridge educational gaps.
- 7.** While higher education fosters positive attitudes toward women's economic roles, disparities remain in workforce participation. Future research may explore the structural, economic, and societal barriers that prevent educated women from fully integrating into the labor market despite their qualifications.

## REFERENCES

- Abbas, S., Isaac, N., Zia, M., Zakar, R., & Fische, F. (2021). Determinants of women's empowerment in Pakistan: Evidence from demographic and health surveys, 2012–13 and 2017–18. *BMC Public Health*, 21(1), 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-021-11376-6>
- Abdullah, T. (2012, January 12). *Feminization of poverty in Pakistan*. Lecture at the Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad.
- Adam, A. M. (2020). Sample Size Determination in Survey Research. *Journal of Scientific Research and Reports*, 26(5), 90-97. <https://doi.org/10.9734/jsrr/2020/v26i530263>
- Adil, F., Yasin, S. A., & Shahed, S. (2021). Challenges for women empowerment in Pakistan: Archival data. *Pakistan Vision*, 22(1), 214-229.
- Adil, M., Khan, M. A., & Akhtar, S. (2021). Sociocultural barriers to women's education in Balochistan. *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences*, 41(2), 233-245.
- Afrouzi, G. A. (2024). Well yes, but actually no! Perceptions of Colombian informal workers about Venezuelan immigration. *International Migration & Integration*, 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-024-01193-2>
- Agarwal, B. (1997). Bargaining and gender relations: within and beyond the household. *Feminist Economics*, 3(1), 1-51. <https://doi.org/10.1080/135457097338799>
- Agrawal, D. C., & Kukreti, A. (2017). Role of higher education in women empowerment in India. *Motherhood International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Development*, 1(2), 24-29.
- Akawa, M. (2017). The gender politics of the Namibian liberation struggle. *Sister Namibia*, 29(2), 13-14.
- Akkermans, J., & Kubasch, S. (2017). Trending topics in careers: A review and future research agenda. *Career Development International*, 22(6), 586-627. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1108/CDI-08-2017-0143>
- Al-Deen, T. J. (2019). Agency in action: Young Muslim women and negotiating higher education in Australia. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 40(5), 598-613. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2019.1576120>
- Arif, S. M., & Bannian, B. (2022). Women's socio-economic empowerment, Sustainable Development Goal 05, and Pakistan's commitment: An assessment. *Journal of Humanities, Social and Management Sciences (JHSMS)*, 3(1), 382-396. <https://ideapublishers.org/index.php/jhsms>
- Ashraf, D., & Farah, I. (2007). Education and women empowerment: Re-examining the relationship. *Education, Gender and empowerment: Perspectives from South Asia*, 15-31. [http://ecommons.aku.edu/pakistan\\_ied\\_pdck/97](http://ecommons.aku.edu/pakistan_ied_pdck/97)
- Aslam, M., & Ayub, M. A. (2019). Role of education in women empowerment: A case of rural Punjab, Pakistan. *Pakistan Journal of Educational Research*, 2(2), 20-30.
- Azam, P. A., & Gavino, I. B. (2008). Violence against women in Pakistan: A

- framework for analysis. *Journal of Pakistan Medical Association*, 58(4), 199-203. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/18655430/>
- Bashir, S., & Zafar, H. (2017). Women empowerment through community development programs in Balochistan. *Bi-Annual Research Journal Balochistan Review*, 37(2), 239-252.
- Bashir, S., Murtaza, G., Ullah, S., Ahmed, M., & Adam, S. (2021). Learning experiences of students about online teaching and learning during Covid-19 pandemic in Balochistan. *PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology*, 18(10), 1692-1704.
- Barra, S. M. M., & Barra, H. M. D. (2019). Women's empowerment and its impact on household use of solid fuels in four Southeast Asian countries. *Asian Women*, 35(4), 23-45. <http://doi.org/10.14431/aw.2019.12.35.4.23>
- Batool, H., Rehman, H. U., & Ashagar, N. (2021). Key dimensions and determinants of women's empowerment in Pakistan: Empirical evidence from Southern Punjab. *Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan*, 57(1), 130-150.
- Batool, S. A., & Batool, S. S. (2018). Impact of education on women's empowerment: Mediation role of income and self-esteem. *Journal of Research & Reflections in Education (JRRE)*, 12(1), 11-32
- Batool, S., & Batool, S. (2020). Higher education and women's empowerment in Pakistan. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 29(1), 15-30.
- Bhat, R. A. (2015). Role of education in the empowerment of women in India. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 6(10), 188-191.
- Bhattacharya, S. (2014). Status of women in Pakistan. *Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan*, 51(1), 179-211. [https://pu.edu.pk/images/journal/history/PDF-FILES/7v51\\_No1\\_14.pdf](https://pu.edu.pk/images/journal/history/PDF-FILES/7v51_No1_14.pdf)
- Bushra, A., & Wajiha, N. (2015). Assessing the socio-economic determinants of women empowerment in Pakistan. *Procedia Soc Behav*, 177, 3-8.
- Chaudhry, I. S., & Nosheen, F. (2009). The determinants of women empowerment in Southern Punjab (Pakistan): An empirical analysis. *European Journal of Social Sciences*, 10(2), 216-229.
- Chaudhry, L. N. (2015). Pakistani women's narratives of loss and resistance: A feminist perspective. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 16(2), 213-227.
- Cohen, J. E., Bloom, D. E., & Malin, M. B. (2006). *Educating all children: A global agenda*. The MIT Press.
- Creswell, J. W. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Sage.
- De Loenzien, M., Mac, Q. N. H., & Dumont, A. (2021). Women's empowerment and elective cesarean section for a single pregnancy: A population-based and multivariate study in Vietnam. *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth*, 21(1), 1-12.
- Deb, M., & Sen, S. (2016). Globalization and its impact on women in India: A

- review. *International Journal of Applied Research*, 2(7), 336-340.
- Devi, K. (2019). Theory and practice of women empowerment in India. *International Journal of Law Management & Humanities*, 2(2), 1-12.
- Duflo, E. (2012). Women empowerment and economic development. *Journal of Economic Literature*, 50(4), 1051-79. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1257/jel.50.4.1051>
- Farooq, F., Yusop, Z., Chaudhry, I. S., & Iram, R. (2019). Assessing the impacts of globalization and gender parity on economic growth: Empirical evidence from OIC countries. *Environmental Science and Pollution Research International*, 27(7), 6904-6917. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11356-019-07289-y>
- Farooq, S., Raza, H., & Hashmi, N. (2019). The interplay of ideology, family, and workplace in shaping women's experiences in Pakistan. *South Asian Studies*, 34(1), 123-140.
- Garcia-Retamero, R., & López-Zafra, E. (2006). Prejudice against women in leadership: A review of the role congruence theory. *Leadership Quarterly*, 17(3), 333-343. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11199-006-9068-1>
- Government of Pakistan. (2014). *Pakistan Vision 2025*. Ministry of Planning, Development & Reform. <https://www.pc.gov.pk/uploads/vision2025/Pakistan-Vision-2025.pdf>
- Grown, C., Gupta, G. R., & Pande, R. (2005). Taking action to improve women's health through gender equality and women's empowerment. *The Lancet*, 365(9458), 541-543. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(05\)17872-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(05)17872-6)
- Habib, K., Shafiq, M., Afshan, G., & Qamar, F. (2019). Impact of education and employment on women empowerment. *European Online Journal of Natural and Social Sciences*, 8(3), 62-74.
- Halakerimath, V. C., & Danappagoudra, S. B. (2018). A study on empowerment of women through education. *International Journal of Current Research and Modern Education*, 3(1), 393-399.
- Halpern, R. P., & Perry-Jenkins, M. (2016). Gender ideology and family decision-making: A sociological perspective. *Journal of Family Studies*, 45(4), 567-582.
- Hassan, N. (2020, November 4). Why is the female literacy rate in Balochistan the lowest in the world? *Global Village Space*. <https://www.globalvillagespace.com/why-is-the-female-literacy-rate-in-balochistan-the-lowest-in-the-world/>
- Hill, M. A., & King, E. M. (1993). *Women's education in developing countries: Barriers, benefits, and policies*. The World Bank.
- Huis, M. A., Hansen, N., Otten, S., & Lensink, R. (2017). A three-dimensional model of women's empowerment: Implications in the field of microfinance and future directions. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 8, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.01678>
- Ibrahim, S., & Alkire, S. (2007). Agency and empowerment: A proposal for internationally comparable indicators. *Oxford Development Studies*, 35(4),

379–403. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13600810701701897>

- Ibraz, T. S., & Fatima, A. (1993). Uneducated and unhealthy: The plight of women in Pakistan. *The Pakistan Development Review*, 32(4), 905-915.
- Jaysawal, N., & Saha, S. (2023). Role of education in women empowerment. *IJAR*, 9(4), 08–13. <https://doi.org/10.22271/allresearch.2023.v9.i4a.10710>
- Jeffery, P. (1979). *Frogs in a well: Indian women in purdah*. Zed Books.
- Jejeebhoy, S. J. (1998). Associations between wife-beating and fetal and infant death: Impressions from a survey in rural India. *Studies in Family Planning*, 29(3), 300-308.
- Kabeer, N. (1999). Resources, agency, achievements: Reflections on the measurement of women's empowerment. *Journal of Development and Change*, 30(3), 435–464. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-7660.00125>
- Kabeer, N. (2001). Reflections on the measurement of women's empowerment. In *Discussing women's empowerment-theory and practice* (Sida Studies No. 3). Novum Grafiska AB.
- Kabeer, N. (2005). Is microfinance a 'magic bullet' for women's empowerment? Analysis of findings from South Asia. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 40(44/45), 4709-4718. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4417357>
- Kabeer, N. (2012). *Women's economic empowerment and inclusive growth: Labour markets and enterprise development*. International Development Research Centre.
- Khan, A., Bashir, S., Bazai, P., & Rehman, M. U. (2023). Higher education in Balochistan: Status and way forward. *Journal of Social Sciences Review*, 3(1), 68-85. <https://doi.org/10.54183/jssr.v3i1.116>
- Khan, E. A., & Khan, T. (2007). Informally employed women: Their characteristics and contribution in household budget. *Journal of Applied Science*, 7(14), 1901-1907. <https://doi.org/10.3923/jas.2007.1901.1907>
- Khatwani, M. K. (2016). *Professional women's perceptions & experiences of respectability, social status, and autonomy: A case study of women employed at the University of Sindh*, Jamshoro, Sindh-Pakistan (Doctoral dissertation, University of Sussex).
- Khokhar, A. J. (2018). Women academic leaders in higher education in Pakistan: Perspectives of female students enrolled in higher education degrees. *Pakistan Journal of Women's Studies: Alam-e-Niswan*, 25(2), 59-76.
- Kroska, A. (2007). The role of gender ideology in shaping societal norms. *Sociological Inquiry*, 77(3), 209-231.
- Kulal, A., Abhishek, N., Kumar, S., & Gururaj, P. (2023). Does higher education influence on women empowerment? A perceptual study. *Parikalpana KIIT Journal of Management*, 19(1), 7-20. <http://dx.doi.org/10.21203/rs.3.rs-2948614/v1>

- Kumar, D., & Sharma, M. (2014). Globalization in India. *International Journal of Innovative Research in Technology (IJIRT)*, 1(5), 440-442.
- Latif, K. F., Latif, I., Farooq Sahibzada, U., & Ullah, M. (2019). In search of quality: Measuring higher education service quality (HiEduQual). *Total Quality Management & Business Excellence*, 30(7-8), 768-791.
- Lavanya, B. L., & Ahmed, D. N. (2018). A study on exploring the individual factors that affect the role of women in higher education. *Eurasian Journal of Analytical Chemistry*, 13, 113-120.
- Leathwood, C., & Read, B. (2009). *Gender and the changing face of higher education: A feminized future?* Society for Research into Higher Education/Open University Press.
- Leschyshyn, R., & Minnotte, K. L. (2014). The impact of gender ideology on perceptions of work-family balance. *Sociological Spectrum*, 34(4), 325-345.
- Liu, Y. (2017). Women rising as half of the sky? An empirical study on women from the one-child generation and their higher education participation in contemporary China. *Higher Education*, 74(6), 963-978.
- Lloyd, C. B., & Grant, M. J. (2004). *Growing up global: The changing transitions to adulthood in developing countries*. National Academies Press.
- Madhani, N. (2007). Career development in management at a Pakistani university: Is gender a factor? In R. Qureshi & J. F. Rarieya (Eds.), *Gender and education in Pakistan*. Oxford University Press.
- Mahsud, N. K., & Ali, R. (2020). Higher education, employment opportunities and women empowerment in Pakistan. *Pakistan Journal of Distance and Online Learning*, 6(1), 85-113. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1301914.pdf>
- Malhotra, A., & Schuler, S. R. (2005). Women's empowerment as a variable in international development. In *Measuring empowerment: Cross-disciplinary perspectives* (pp. 71-88). The World Bank.
- 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>
- Mandal, K. C. (2013, May). Concept and types of women empowerment. *International Forum of Teaching & Studies*, 9(2), 17-30
- Marchand, M. H., & Parpart, J. L. (Eds.). (1995). *Feminism/ postmodernism/ development* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203426098>
- Mendoza, B. E. (2018). Transforming 'everyday Islam' through feminism and higher education: Second-generation Muslim women in Spain. *Contemporary Levant*, 3(1), 44-55. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20581831.2018.1455345>
- Miller, K. L., & Miller, S. M. (2002). A model for evaluating gender equity in academe. In *Women in higher education: Empowering change* (pp. 103-114).



- Mishra, K., & Sam, A. G. (2016). Does women's land ownership promote their empowerment? Empirical evidence from Nepal. *World Development*, 78, 360-371. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2015.10.003>
- Moghadam, V. M. (1992). Patriarchy and the politics of gender in modernizing societies: Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. *International Sociology*, 7(1), 35-53. <https://doi.org/10.1177/026858092007001002>
- Moghadam, Z. B., Khiaban, M. O., Esmaeili, M., & Salsali, M. (2018). Review of the high level of education and reduced fertility in Iranian women: Have women been empowered? *International Journal of Women's Health and Reproductive Sciences*, 6(2), 106-112. [https://ijwhr.net/pdf/pdf\\_IJWHR\\_241.pdf](https://ijwhr.net/pdf/pdf_IJWHR_241.pdf)
- Mohanty, C. (2016). Under Western eyes: Feminist scholarship and colonial discourses. In Nalini Visvanathan et al. (Eds.), *the women, gender and development reader*. Zed Books.
- Muhammad, F., Bano, K., Muhammad, K., & Baig, T. (2021). Women empowerment in Pakistan: Assessing the socio-economic determinant. *Studies of Applied Economics*, 39(3), 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.25115/eea.v39i2.3884>
- Mumtaz, K. (2007). Gender and poverty in Pakistan. *Development*, 50(2), 149-153.
- Muneer, S. (2021). Women empowerment, and access to education in Pakistan: Barriers within home. *Women Empowerment, and Access to Education in Pakistan: JRSP*, 58(2), 32-41.
- Muneer, S. (2021). Education and women's empowerment: A case study of Pakistani families. *Journal of Family Studies*, 27(4), 567-582.
- Nagaraja, K. (2018). Empowerment of women through higher education. *International Journal of Current Research*, 10(2), 66113-66115.
- Naseem, F., & Ameer, S. (2024). The emergence of Pakistani jurisprudence on right of inheritance for women in agricultural land: An applied social study. *Remittances Review*, 9(S3), 677-708. <https://doi.org/10.33282/rr.vx9i2.34>
- Nawaz, M., Ramzan, B., Nadeem, M., Bhatti, G. A., & Nadeem, A. (2017). The influence of higher education in improving women's social status: Empirical evidence from Lahore, Pakistan. *International Journal of Research-Granthaalayah*, 5(7), 252-261.
- Naz, A., & Ashraf, F. (2020). The relationship between higher education and women empowerment in Pakistan. *UMT Education Review*, 3(2), 65-84.
- Neumayer, E., & De Soysa, I. (2010). Globalization and the empowerment of women: An analysis of spatial dependence via trade and foreign direct investment. *World Development*, 39(7), 1065-1075. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2010.12.008>
- Niaz, U. (2003). Violence against women in South Asian countries. *Archives of Women's Mental Health*, 6(3), 173-184. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00737-003-0171-9>
- Noreen, G., & Khalid, H. (2012). Gender empowerment through women's higher education: Opportunities and possibilities. *Journal of Research and Reflections in Education*, 6(1), 50-60.
- Noreen, N., & Musarrat, R. (2014). Women's struggle for legal empowerment in Pakistan.

- Journal of Public Administration and Governance*, 4(1), 134–166.  
<https://doi.org/10.5296/jpag.v4i1.5460>
- Norris, P., & Inglehart, R. (2001). Cultural obstacles to equal representation. *Journal of Democracy*, 12(3), 126–140.
- Noureen, G. (2017). Education as a prerequisite to women's empowerment in Pakistan. *Women's Studies: An Inter-Disciplinary Journal*, 44(1), 1–22.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00497878.2014.971215>
- Odera, J. A., & Mulusa, J. (2020). SDGs, gender equality and women's empowerment: What prospects for delivery? *Interdisciplinary Studies in Human Rights*, 1(5), 95–118. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-30469-0>
- Ortiz-Ospina, E., & Tzvetkova, S. (2017). Working women: Key facts and trends in female labour force participation. *European Journal of Education*, 52(4), 414–420.
- Owens, T. L. (2017). Higher education in the sustainable development goals framework. *European Journal of Education*, 52(4), 414–420.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12237>
- Pakistan Economic Survey. (2015). *Pakistan economic survey-2014-15*. Finance Ministry, Government of Pakistan. [http://www.finance.gov.pk/survey\\_1415.html](http://www.finance.gov.pk/survey_1415.html)
- Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. Simon & Schuster.
- Rahman, A. (2013). Women's empowerment: Concept and beyond. *Global Journal of Human-Social Science Research*, 13(6), 9–13.  
<http://socialscienceresearch.org/index.php/gjhss/article/viewfile/806/753>
- Rahman, S., Chaudhry, I. S., & Farooq, F. (2018). Gender inequality in education and household poverty in Pakistan: A case of Multan district. *Review of Economics and Development Studies*, 4(1), 115–126. <https://doi.org/10.26710/reads.v4i1.286>
- Ray, R. (2000). Poverty and expenditure pattern of households in Pakistan and South Asia: A comparative study. *Journal of International Development*, 12(2), 241–256.
- Raza, A., & Murad, H. S. (2010). Gender gap in Pakistan: A socio-demographic analysis. *International Journal of Social Economics*, 37(7), 541–557.
- Reuters. (2025). *Malala Yousafzai urges Muslim leaders to support women's rights*. Reuters.  
<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/malala-urges-muslim-leaders-support-womens-rights-2025-01-15/>
- Reuters. (2024). *Women on Wheels: Empowering Pakistani women through mobility*. Reuters.  
<https://www.reuters.com/article/pakistan-women-mobility-idUSKBN2A30QG>
- Rowlands, J. (1995). *Empowerment examined: An exploration of the concept and practice of women's empowerment in Honduras* (Doctoral thesis, Durham University). Durham University.
- Rowlands, J. (1997). *Questioning empowerment: Working with women in Honduras*. Oxfam.



- Saeed, H. (2013). *Poverty has a woman's face*. Dawn, 14 April.  
<http://x.dawn.com/2013/04/14/poverty-has-a-womans-face/>
- Saleem, H., Shabbir, M. S., & Khan, B. (2021). Re-examining multidimensional poverty in Pakistan: A new assessment of regional variations. *Global Business Review*, 22(6), 1441-1458. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0972150919844412>
- Sandhya, S. J. (2015). Impact of education in women empowerment of in Bagalkot district, Karnataka. *Asian Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities*, 4(2), 87-94. [http://ajssh.leetna-luna.co.jp/AJSSHPDFs/Vol.4\(2\)/AJSSH2015\(4.2-10\).pdf](http://ajssh.leetna-luna.co.jp/AJSSHPDFs/Vol.4(2)/AJSSH2015(4.2-10).pdf)
- Sathar, Z., & Kazi, S. (2000). Women's autonomy in the context of rural Pakistan. *The Pakistan Development Review*, 39(2), 89-110.
- Shahid, M. H., & Khalid, I. (2023). A quest for equality: Examining women's empowerment in Pakistan. *ILMA Journal of Social Sciences & Economics*, 4(1), 78-103.
- Shaikh, M. A. (2003). Is domestic violence endemic in Pakistan: Perspective from Pakistani wives. *Pakistan Journal of Medical Sciences*, 19(1), 23-28.
- Sharif, N., Hassan, N., & Angel, S. (2021). Empowering Pakistani women: Impact of education, technology, and training skills development. *Journal of Business and Social Review in Emerging Economies*, 7(2), 433-444.
- Silva, S. M., & Klasen, S. (2021) Gender inequality as a barrier to economic growth: a review of the theoretical literature. *Rev Econ Household*, 19, 581-614.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11150-020-09535-6>
- Stromquist, N. P. (2006). The political benefits of adult literacy. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 26(4), 356-369.
- Stromquist, N. P. (2015). Women's empowerment and education: Linking knowledge to transformative action. *European Journal of Education*, 50(3), 324-327.
- Suja, S. (2012). Women empowerment through self-help group: An evaluative study. *Global Management Review*, 6(3), 68-82.
- Sultana, A. F., & Hossen, S. S. (2013). Role of employment in women empowerment: Evidence from Khulna city of Bangladesh. *International Journal of Social Science and Interdisciplinary Research*, 2(7), 117-125.
- The Nation. (2021, May 17). Female literacy rate in Balochistan. *The Nation*.  
<https://nation.com.pk/17-may-2021/female-literacy-rate-in-balochistan>
- Ullah, H., & Ullah, A. (2019). Shifting gender ideologies in urban Pakistan: A study of educated women. *Asian Journal of Women's Studies*, 25(3), 345-360.
- UNDP. (2010). *Human development report 2010*.  
<http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/regional/asiathepacific/RHDR-2010-AsiaPacific.pdf>
- UNDP. (2011). *Sustainability and equity: Human development report 2011*. United Nations Development Programmes.
- UNDP. (2013). *The rise of the South: Human progress in a diverse world. Human development report 2013*. Retrieved from [www.undp.org](http://www.undp.org). Gilmore Printing

Services Inc.

- UNESCO. (2010). *Reaching the marginalized: Education for all global monitoring report*. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
- UNFPA. (2014). *Gender equality: Empowering women*.  
<http://www.unfpa.org/gender/empowerment.htm>
- UNFPA. (2022). *Women's empowerment*. <https://pakistan.unfpa.org/en/topics>
- UNIFEM. (2008). *Who answers to women: Gender and accountability in progress of the world's women 2008/2009*. United Nations Development Fund for Women.
- United Nations. (2004). International women's day: Women and HIV/AIDS.  
<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/feature/iwd/2004/>
- United Nations. (2019). *Human development report 2019: Beyond income, beyond averages, beyond today: Inequalities in human development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century*. <https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/hdr2019.pdf>
- UNPO. (2020). Balochistan: Region has lowest female literacy rate in the world. *The Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization*.  
<https://unpo.org/article/22058>
- Village Earth. (2022). *Literature review: Theories of empowerment*. Village Earth.  
<https://villageearth.org/literature-review-theories-of-empowerment/>
- Voigt, K., & Spies, M. (2020). Female education and social change: Changing perceptions of women's roles in society in the high mountains of northern Pakistan. *Mountain Research and Development*, 40(4), 9-16.
- Wallis, A., Dukay, V., & Mellins, C. (2010). Power and empowerment: Fostering effective collaboration in meeting the needs of orphans and vulnerable children. *Global Public Health*, 5(5), 509-522.
- Wacker, K. M., Cooray, A., & Gaddis, I. (2017). Globalization and female labor force participation in developing countries: An empirical (re-)assessment. In B. J. Christensen & C. Kowalczyk (Eds.), *Globalization* (pp. 545–583). Springer-Verlag Berlin Heidelberg. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-662-49502-5>
- Wang, L., & Hannum, E. (2008). Education and gender in China. In R. Applebaum & W. L. Parish (Eds.), *Gender and work in today's world: A reader* (pp. 37-54). Westview Press.
- Will, S., & Alex, G. (2012). *The third wave of globalization*. Institute for Public Policy Research.
- World Bank. (1989). *Women in Pakistan: An economic and social strategy*. World Bank Country Study.
- World Bank. (1999). *World development report 1996, 1997, 1999-2000*. Oxford University Press.
- World Bank. (2002). *Pakistan poverty assessment: Poverty in Pakistan: Vulnerabilities, social gaps and rural dynamics*. Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Sector Unit, South Asia Region Report No. 24296-

PAK.

- World Bank. (2019). *Labor force participation rate, female*.  
<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS>
- World Economic Forum. (2016). *World Economic Forum annual meeting: Mastering the fourth industrial revolution*.  
[http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_AM16\\_Report.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_AM16_Report.pdf)
- World Health Organization. (n.d.). An official definition of globalization by the World Health Organization (WHO).  
<https://www.who.int/topics/globalization/en/>
- Yates, L. (2006). Does curriculum matter? Revisiting access and women's rights to education in the context of the UN Millennium Development targets. *Theory and Research in Education*, 4(1).  
[http://ic.usep.edu.ph/GAD/images/sitedocuments/Monographs/Bridge/09\\_BC\\_EP\\_Gender\\_and\\_Indicators/2.pdf](http://ic.usep.edu.ph/GAD/images/sitedocuments/Monographs/Bridge/09_BC_EP_Gender_and_Indicators/2.pdf)
- Young, K. (1997). Gender and development. In N. Visvanathan, L. Duggan, et al. (Eds.), *The women, gender and development reader*. Zed Books.
- Yousefy, A., & Baratali, M. (2011). Women employment and higher education schoolings. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 15, 3861-3869.
- Yousuf, P., & Wani, N. A. (2019). Role of education in women empowerment: A sociological study of the women professors of Gwalior city MP, India. *International Journal of Applied Research*, 2(1), 774-776.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix A

#### Questionnaire for Survey Role of Higher Education in Personal, Relational, and Environmental Empowerment of Women in Balochistan

##### **Purpose Statement**

The majority of the women in developing countries like Pakistan are not well-educated which is why they are suppressed and their standing up on their feet and being something is always ignored. However, it is ascertained that higher education positively raises women's status whether they contribute to the income of the family or not. Higher Education can significantly transform women's lives and bring long-term personal and social change. The study aims to determine the role of higher education on the 'Personal Empowerment, Relational Empowerment, and Environmental Empowerment' of women, especially in Balochistan. You are requested to please share your point of view about the role of higher education in empowering the women of Balochistan. I assure you that any data collected will be kept confidential and used exclusively for academic purposes.

##### **Part A: Demographic/General Information**

**Name (optional)** \_\_\_\_\_

Marital Status Qualification Year of passing \_\_\_\_\_

Employment Status \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Department Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

Total Job Experience \_\_\_\_\_

Geographic location \_\_\_\_\_

##### **(Part-B) Research Statements (Likert Five Point Scale)**

Below are given some statements, each statement has five-point scale and you have to choose one of them. You have to rate these statements showing your belief about the personal, relational, and environmental empowerment that you feel after completing your higher education. The rating scale will be scored as; Strongly Dissatisfied-1, Dissatisfied-2, Moderately Satisfied-3, Satisfied-4, and Strongly Satisfied-5

S.NO	STATEMENTS	1	2	3	4	5
<b>1</b>	<b>PERSONAL LEVEL INDICATORS SELF-CONFIDENCE</b>					
1.1	I feel confident in expressing my opinions and ideas in various settings after pursuing higher education.					
1.2	Higher education has significantly boosted my self-Confidence in dealing with various challenges and situations.					
1.3	I believe that my higher education has positively contributed to my self-esteem and self-assurance.					
1.4	My increased self-confidence, nurtured by higher education, has enabled me to serve as the role model for other women in my community, inspiring them to pursue their aspiration confidently.					

<b>2</b>	<b>INDIVIDUAL KNOWLEDGE</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1	My higher education has expended my knowledge and understanding of various subjects.					
2.2	I feel more knowledgeable and well-informed about a range of topics due to my educational experiences.					
2.3	Higher education has equipped me with the skill and information necessary to actively engage in discussions and make informed decisions.					
2.4	Through higher education, I have gained a deeper appreciation for lifelong learning and continue to seek opportunities to expand my knowledge beyond the classroom, fostering intellectual growth.					
<b>3</b>	<b>OPINIONS AND ATTITUDES ON WOMEN'S ECONOMIC ROLE</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
3.1	Higher education has positively influenced my perception of women's importance in economic activities.					
3.2	I am more likely to support and engage in initiatives that promote women's active participation in economic endeavors due to my higher education.					
3.3	My attitude toward gender equality and women's economic roles have evolved positively as a result of my educational experiences.					
3.4	My educational journey has instilled in me a sense of responsibility to mentor and guide young women in Balochistan to become active contributors to region's economic development, thereby extending the impact of my education.					
<b>4</b>	<b>NON-ACCEPTANCE OF GENDER BASED VIOLENCE</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
4.1	Higher education has helped me recognize the significance of combating gender-based violence in society.					
4.2	I am more inclined to speak out against and take action to prevent gender-based violence because of my educational background.					
4.3	My higher education has influenced my beliefs and attitudes toward creating a safer environment that rejects gender-based violence.					
4.4	Higher education has motivated me to actively engage in advocacy and awareness campaigns aimed at eradicating gender-based violence in Balochistan, thus translating my knowledge into meaningful action within					
<b>5</b>	<b>PERSONAL AUTONOMY</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
5.1	Pursuing higher education has empowered me to make independent decisions about my own life and choices.					

5.2	I feel that my educational experience has given me the tools to control and direct the course of my personal journey.					
5.3	Higher education has contributed significantly to my sense of personal agency and autonomy in various aspects of life.					
5.4	My higher education has not only granted me personal autonomy but has also made me more effective in advocating for the autonomy and agency of other women in Balochistan, thereby amplifying the impact of my education in our community.					
2	<b>RELATIONAL EMPOWERMENT STATEMENTS</b>					
2.1	<b>INFLUENCE ON COMMUNITY</b>	1	2	3	4	5
2.1.1	Higher education positively influences women's role in community development and decision making.					
2.1.2	Women's involvement in higher education contributes to their leadership within community initiative.					
2.1.3	Higher education enables women to share their knowledge and skills for the betterment of the community.					
2.1.4	Educated women actively engage in community discussions and contribute valuable perspectives.					
2.2	<b>CONTROL OVER HOUSEHOLD ASSETS</b>	1	2	3	4	5
2.2.1	Women's access to and control over household assets increase with their educational attainment.					
2.2.2	Education plays a vital role in empowering women to make decisions regarding household assets.					
2.2.3	Educated women are more likely to have ownership rights over household assets.					
2.2.4	Higher education enables women to negotiate for a fair share of household resources.					
3	<b>INVOLVEMENT IN HOUSEHOLD DECISION MAKING</b>	1	2	3	4	5
2.3.1	Education enhances women's participation in important household decisions.					
2.3.2	Women's higher education contributes to their active involvement in family matters.					
2.3.3	Educated women have a stronger voice in determining household choices.					
2.3.4	Higher education empowers women to influence decision related to family and home.					
4	<b>INDEPENDENT INCOME</b>	1	2	3	4	5
2.4.1	Higher education significantly increases women's ability to earn an independent income.					

2.4.2	Education plays a crucial role in women's financial autonomy.					
2.4.3	Educated women are more likely to have diverse sources of income.					
2.4.4	Women's higher education is linked to their ability to financially support themselves.					
<b>5</b>	<b>EXPERIENCE OF GENDER-BASED VOILENCE</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
2.5.1	Education is vital in reducing the prevalence of gender-based violence against women.					
2.5.2	Educated women are better equipped to recognize and address instances of gender-based violence.					
2.5.3	Higher education empowers women to seek help and support when facing gender-based violence.					
2.5.4	Education plays a role in challenging societal norms that perpetuate gender-based violence.					
<b>6</b>	<b>CONTROL OVER TIME</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
2.6.1	Women's higher education leads to increased control over how they allocate their time.					
2.6.2	Education empowers women to balance their responsibilities more effectively.					
2.6.3	Educated women are more capable of managing their time for personal and community activities.					
2.6.4	Higher education contributes to women's ability to prioritize and manage their time efficiently.					
<b>3</b>	<b>ENVIRONMENTAL EMPOWERMENT</b>					
<b>3.1</b>	<b>ACCESSS TO SERVICE AND RESOURCES</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
3.1.1	Education significantly improves women's access to essential services and resources.					
3.1.2	Women's educational attainment positively correlates with their access to healthcare facilities.					
3.1.3	Higher education enhances women's access to clean water, sanitation, and hygiene services.					
3.1.4	Educated women are better positioned to access educational opportunities for themselves and their families.					
<b>3.2</b>	<b>ABILITY TO INFLUENCE AT THE POLITICAL LEVEL</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
3.2.1	Women's higher education equips them with the skills and knowledge to engage in political discussions.					
3.2.2	Education empowers women to actively participate in political processes and decision-making.					
3.2.3	Educated women have a stronger voice in advocating for policies that address environmental concerns.					
3.2.4	Higher education increases women's confidence to engage with political leaders and policy makers.					

### INTERVIEW GUIDE

#### **Role of Higher Education in Personal, Relational, and Environmental Empowerment of Women in Balochistan**

##### **Purpose Statement**

The majority of the women in developing countries like Pakistan are not well-educated that is why they are suppressed and their standing up on their feet and being something is always ignored. Though, it is ascertained that higher education positively raises women's status whether they contribute to the income of the family or not. Higher Education can significantly transform women's lives and bring long-term personal and social change. The purpose of the study is to determine the role of higher education on the 'Personal Empowerment, Relational Empowerment and Environmental Empowerment' of women especially in Balochistan. You are requested to please share your point of view about the potential role of higher education in empowering the women of Balochistan. I ensure that the obtained data will be kept confidential and will be used only for academic purposes.

##### **Part A: Demographic/General Information**

Name (optional) Marital Status \_\_\_\_\_

Qualification Year of passing \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Department \_\_\_\_\_

Designation \_\_\_\_\_

Employment Status \_\_\_\_\_

Total Job Experience \_\_\_\_\_

Geographic location \_\_\_\_\_



## Key Questions

### Objective 1: Personal Empowerment

#### Sub-variable; Self-confidence:

1. How has pursuing higher education influenced your self-confidence and beliefs in your abilities?

---

---

---

2. Could you please share instances where your educational experiences have helped you overcome challenges and enhance your self-assurance?

---

---

---

#### Individual knowledge

3. In what ways has higher education contributed to your personal knowledge and understanding of various subjects?

---

---

---

4. Can you provide examples of how education expanded knowledge has positively impacted your decision-making in personal matters?

---

---

---

#### Opinion and Attitudes on women's Economic Role:

5. How has your higher education shaped your opinions and attitude regarding the economic roles of women?

---

---

---

6. Have there been changes in your perspectives on women's involvement in economic activities due to your educational journey?

---

---

---

**Non-Acceptance of Gender-Based violence:**

7. Has higher education influenced your views on gender-based violence and women's rights?

---

---

---

8. Can you discuss how higher education has empowered you to take a stand against gender-based violence and promote gender equality?

---

---

---

**5. Personal autonomy:**

9. In what ways has pursuing higher education enhanced your personal autonomy and decision-making authority?

---

---

---

10. Share instance where your educational background has enabled you to assert control over your life choices and future plans.

---

---

---

**Relational Empowerment:**

**Sub-variable 1. Influencing on community**

11. How has your higher education influenced your ability to impact your community positively?

---

---

---

12. Can you provide examples of how your educational background has allowed you to contribute to community initiatives or projects?

---

---

---

**Control Over Household Assets:**

13. In what ways has your pursuit of higher education affected your control over household assets or resources?

---

---

---

14. Can you share an instance where your education has empowered you to have a say in managing family resources?

---

---

---

**Involvement in Household Decision Making:**

15. How has higher education impacted your involvement in household decision-making process?

---

---

---

16. Share experiences where your education has contributed to your role in shaping important family decisions.

---

---

---

**Independent Income:**

17. Has higher education played a role in your ability to earn an independent income?

---

---

---

18. Can you discuss how your educational achievements have influenced your financial contributions to your family or household?

---

---

---

**Experience of Gender-Based Violence**

19. How has your educational journey influenced your perception and responses to gender-based violence?

---

---

---

20. Can you provide examples of how your education has empowered you to address and challenge instances of gender-based violence?

---

---

---

**Control over Time:**

21. In what ways has higher education impact your control over time and daily schedule?

---

---

---

22. Share instance where your education has allowed you to allocate time to various activities as per your preferences and priorities.

---

---

---

**3- Environmental Empowerment:**

**Access to services and resources**

23. How has higher education influenced your access to essential services and resources?

---

---

---

24. Can you provide examples of how your education has improved your ability to access healthcare, education, and other vital resources?

---

---

---

**Ability to Influence at the Political level**

25. In what ways has your educational background empowered you to have a voice in political matters?

---

---

---

26. Share instances where your education has enabled you to engage the discussions or activities that influence political decisions.

---

---

---

**General Questions**

27. How have you integrated your personal, relational, and environmental empowerment in your daily life?

---

---

---

28. Can you highlight the challenges you have faced as a woman pursuing higher education in Balochistan and how you've overcome them?

---

---

---

29. What changes do you believe are needed at societal or institutional levels to promote women's empowerment through education further?

---

---

---

**Conclusion:**

30. Is there any additional insight you would like to share regarding the relationship between higher education and the empowerment of women in Balochistan?

---

---

---

**Thank you for your participation and for providing a comprehensive range of insights**

# APPENDIX C

## UNIVERSITY OF BALOCHISTAN, QUETTA.



Office of the Director General (Student Affairs)

Say No to Corruption

Dated

University of Balochistan  
Office of the Director General  
City, Zip Code 87300  
Date: August 2023

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN.

This is to certify that Ms. Farida Yaseenzai, an International Islamic University Islamabad student, is conducting research for her PhD. As part of her research study, she has been granted access to data from various disciplines within the University of Balochistan, specifically focusing on data about female graduates. This data is being provided to Ms. Farida Yaseenzai solely for her PhD research, and it is understood that she will use it following the ethical guidelines of academic research. Should you require any further information or verification, please feel free to contact our office. Thank you.

Dr Nasir Kiazai

Director General  
University of Balochistan

Population: Graduate women from UOB 2011-2020

Sr. No	Year-wise	Total number of women who completed their graduation from all disciplines UOB Quetta, Kalat, Loralai	Affiliated Law College graduated Female	Affiliated Bolan Medical College graduated Female	Affiliated Degree College Kalat	Affiliated Degree college Loralai No of graduated Female
1	2011	185	06	70	00	00
2	2012	201	23	81	00	00
3	2013	211	22	98	09	09
4	2014	302	11	97	12	11
5	2015	216	08	110	16	17
6	2016	281	12	125	19	19
7	2017	312	14	123	22	18
8	2018	405	10	130	23	20
9	2019	382	16	141	22	22
10	2020	423	18	138	26	33
Total	4875	3341	140	1113	132	149

Note.

No. of Students admitted at the Time of Admissions, Data Extracted/ from Final Merit lists Received from Dependents. Graduated students' information may be available in the Examination Branch, Result branch.

## Appendix D



International Islamic University Islamabad

Faculty of Education

Department of Teacher Education

### CERTIFICATE OF VALIDATION

**Research Title:** Role of Higher Education in Personal, Relational, and Environmental Empowerment of Women in Balochistan

By Farida Yaseenzaī Ph.D. scholar

This is to certify that the attached research instrument, developed by, a Ph.D. student, underwent validation by me. The instrument developed by the researcher is according to the research objectives and assures adequate Face and content validity. The questionnaire passed the examination and was proven substantially useful for her thesis.

Certified by

Name: Dr. Fouzia Ajmal

Designation: Asst. Prof.

Institution: I.I.U.

Department: Teacher Education

Signature: [Signature]

Date: 20/9/2023

**Dr. Fouzia Ajmal**  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Teacher Education  
International Islamic University  
Islamabad





International Islamic University Islamabad

Faculty of Education

Department of Teacher Education

**CERTIFICATE OF VALIDATION**

**Research Title:** Role of Higher Education in Personal, Relational, and Environmental Empowerment of Women in Balochistan

By Farida Yaseenzai Ph.D. scholar

This is to certify that the attached research instrument, developed by, a Ph.D. student, underwent validation by me. The instrument developed by the researcher is according to the research objectives and assures adequate Face and content validity. The questionnaire passed the examination and was proven substantially useful for her thesis.

**Certified by**

Name: Dr. Humaira Akrom

Designation: Assistant Professor

Institution: IUI

Department: DoTE

Signature: [Signature]

Date: 15-09-2023

DEPT. OF TEACHER EDUCATION  
FACULTY OF EDUCATION



List of Experts	Area of Specializations
Dr. Zarina Akhtar Assistant Professor	Educational Assessment, Pedagogy, Mathematics Education
Dr. Fouzia Ajmal, Assistant Professor	Teacher Education & Instructional Technology, Higher Education
Dr. Humaira Akram Assistant Professor	Teacher Education
Dr. Fatima Batool Assistant Professor	Multicultural Education, Continuous Professional Development

### Cumulative *M* Scores for Personal Empowerment

**Objective:** Present the detailed calculations for the cumulative *M* score of Personal Empowerment.

#### Step 1: List the *M* Scores

##### Self-Confidence:

1. I feel confident in expressing my opinions and ideas in various settings after pursuing higher education. - 2.47
2. Higher education has significantly boosted my self-confidence in dealing with various challenges and situations. - 2.80
3. I believe that my higher education has positively contributed to my self-esteem and self-assurance. - 2.56
4. My increased self-confidence, nurtured by higher education, has enabled me to serve as a role model for other women in my community. - 2.76

##### Individual Knowledge:

1. My higher education has expanded my knowledge and understanding of various subjects. - 2.71
2. I feel more knowledgeable and well-informed about a range of topics due to my educational experiences. - 2.77
3. Higher education has equipped me with the skills and information necessary to actively engage in discussions and make informed decisions. - 2.88
4. Through higher education, I have gained a deeper appreciation for lifelong learning and continue to seek opportunities to expand my knowledge beyond the classroom, fostering intellectual growth. - 1.72

##### Opinions and Attitudes on Women's Economic Role:

1. Higher education has positively influenced my perception of women's importance in economic activities. - 2.92
2. I am more likely to support and engage in initiatives that promote women's active participation in economic endeavors due to my higher education. - 2.91
3. My attitude toward gender equality and women's economic roles have evolved positively as a result of my educational experiences. - 2.92
4. My educational journey has instilled in me a sense of responsibility to mentor and guide young women in Balochistan to become active contributors to the region's economic development, thereby extending the impact of my education. - 2.91

##### Attitudes toward Non-Acceptance of Gender-Based Violence:

1. Higher education has helped me recognize the significance of combating gender-based violence in society. - 2.89

2. I am more inclined to speak out against and take action to prevent gender-based violence because of my educational background. - 2.89
3. My higher education has influenced my beliefs and attitudes toward creating a safer environment that rejects gender-based violence. - 2.92
4. Higher education has motivated me to actively engage in advocacy and awareness campaigns aimed at eradicating gender-based violence in Balochistan, thus translating my knowledge into meaningful action within my community. - 2.85

**Empowerment and Autonomy through Higher Education:**

1. Pursuing higher education has empowered me to make independent decisions about my own life and choices. - 2.95
2. I feel that my educational experience has given me the tools to control and direct the course of my personal journey. - 3.02
3. Higher education has contributed significantly to my sense of personal agency and autonomy in various aspects of life. - 3.17
4. My higher education has not only granted me personal autonomy but has also made me more effective in advocating for the autonomy and agency of other women in Balochistan, thereby amplifying the impact of my education in our community. - 2.99

**Step 2: Calculate the Average *M* Score for Each Sub-Indicator**

**Self-Confidence:**

$$(2.47 + 2.80 + 2.56 + 2.76) / 4 = 2.65$$

**Individual Knowledge:**

$$(2.71 + 2.77 + 2.88 + 1.72) / 4 = 2.52$$

**Opinions and Attitudes on Women's Economic Role:**

$$(2.92 + 2.91 + 2.92 + 2.91) / 4 = 2.92$$

**Attitudes toward Non-Acceptance of Gender-Based Violence:**

$$(2.89 + 2.89 + 2.92 + 2.85) / 4 = 2.89$$

**Empowerment and Autonomy through Higher Education:**

$$(2.95 + 3.02 + 3.17 + 2.99) / 4 = 3.03$$

**Step 3: Compute the Overall Cumulative *M* Score**

$$(2.65 + 2.52 + 2.92 + 2.89 + 3.03) / 5 = 2.80$$

**Final Report:** The cumulative *M* score for Personal Empowerment, considering five sub-indicators, is 2.80. Which reflects a generally positive perception of personal empowerment as influenced by higher education.

### **Cumulative *M* Scores for Relational Empowerment**

**Objective:** To detail the cumulative *M* scores for Relational Empowerment.

#### **Step 1: List the *M* Scores**

##### **Influence on Community:**

1. Higher education positively influences women's role in community development and decision making. - 2.94
2. Women's involvement in higher education contributes to their leadership within community initiatives. - 3.03
3. Higher education enables women to share their knowledge and skills for the betterment of the community. - 3.24
4. Educated women actively engage in community discussions and contribute valuable perspectives. - 3.00

##### **Control over Household Assets:**

1. Women's access to and control over household assets increase with their educational attainment. - 3.21
2. Education plays a vital role in empowering women to make decisions regarding household assets. - 3.24
3. Educated women are more likely to have ownership rights over household assets. - 3.49
4. Higher education enables women to negotiate for a fair share of household resources. - 3.24

##### **Involvement in Household Decision Making:**

1. Education enhances women's participation in important household decisions. - 3.32
2. Women's higher education contributes to their active involvement in family matters. - 3.35
3. Educated women have a stronger voice in determining household choices. - 3.39
4. Higher education empowers women to influence decisions related to family and home. - 3.33

##### **Independent Income:**

1. Higher education significantly increases women's ability to earn an independent income. - 3.33

2. Education plays a crucial role in women's financial autonomy. - 3.32
3. Educated women are more likely to have diverse sources of income. - 3.54
4. Women's higher education is linked to their ability to financially support themselves. - 3.33

**Experience of Gender-Based Violence:**

1. Education is vital in reducing the prevalence of gender-based violence against women. - 3.61
2. Educated women are better equipped to recognize and address instances of gender-based violence. - 3.68
3. Higher education empowers women to seek help and support when facing gender-based violence. - 3.77
4. Education plays a role in challenging societal norms that perpetuate gender-based violence. - 3.50

**Control over Time:**

1. Women's higher education leads to increased control over how they allocate their time. - 3.85
2. Education empowers women to balance their responsibilities more effectively. - 3.68
3. Educated women are more capable of managing their time for personal and community activities. - 3.79
4. Higher education contributes to women's ability to prioritize and manage their time efficiently. - 3.65

**Step 2: Calculate the Average *M* Score for Each Sub-Indicator**

**Influence on Community:**

$$(2.94 + 3.03 + 3.24 + 3.00) / 4 = 3.05$$

**Control over Household Assets:**

$$(3.21 + 3.24 + 3.49 + 3.24) / 4 = 3.30$$

**Involvement in Household Decision Making:**

$$(3.32 + 3.35 + 3.39 + 3.33) / 4 = 3.35$$

**Independent Income:**

$$(3.33 + 3.32 + 3.54 + 3.33) / 4 = 3.38$$

**Experience of Gender-Based Violence:**

$$(3.61 + 3.68 + 3.77 + 3.50) / 4 = 3.64$$

**Control over Time:**

$$(3.85 + 3.68 + 3.79 + 3.65) / 4 = 3.74$$

**Step 3: Compute the Overall Cumulative *M* Score**

$$(3.05 + 3.30 + 3.35 + 3.38 + 3.64 + 3.74) / 6 = 3.41$$

**Final Report:** The cumulative *M* score for Relational Empowerment, considering six sub-indicators, is 3.41. This reflects a generally positive perception of relational empowerment as influenced by higher education.

## **Cumulative *M* Scores for Environmental Empowerment**

**Objective:** To present the detailed calculations for the cumulative *M* score of Environmental Empowerment.

### **Step 1: List the *M* Scores**

#### **Access to Essential Services and Resources:**

1. Education significantly improves women's access to essential services and resources. - 3.42
2. Higher education facilitates women's ability to access healthcare, education, and other critical resources. - 3.38
3. Educated women are more aware of available resources and how to access them effectively. - 3.45
4. Higher education enhances women's capacity to navigate systems to obtain necessary services. - 3.30

#### **Community and Social Networks:**

1. Higher education strengthens women's involvement in community and social networks. - 3.52
2. Educated women are more likely to participate in and benefit from community organizations and social groups. - 3.55
3. Education helps women build and sustain valuable social connections that support personal and professional growth. - 3.60
4. Higher education expands women's social networks, enhancing their ability to leverage these connections for various opportunities. - 3.50

#### **Supportive Environment for Women's Participation:**

1. Higher education contributes to creating a supportive environment for women's active participation in public and private sectors. - 3.47
2. Education promotes the development of policies and practices that support women's roles and contributions in society. - 3.42
3. Educated women are more likely to advocate for and benefit from supportive measures in their communities and workplaces. - 3.50
4. Higher education fosters an environment that encourages and supports women's full engagement and representation in various spheres. - 3.53

#### **Legal and Policy Framework:**

1. Education enhances women's understanding of their legal rights and the available policy frameworks. - 3.39
2. Educated women are better equipped to advocate for legal and policy changes that benefit women's empowerment. - 3.45
3. Higher education increases women's awareness and ability to navigate legal systems effectively. - 3.41



4. Higher education contributes to women's involvement in shaping and influencing policy decisions that affect their lives and communities. - 3.42

#### **Awareness of Gender Issues:**

1. Higher education raises awareness about gender issues and the importance of gender equality. - 3.55
2. Educated women are more informed about gender-related challenges and solutions. - 3.58
3. Education promotes a greater understanding of gender dynamics and the impact on women's lives. - 3.62
4. Higher education empowers women to advocate for gender equality and address gender-based issues in their communities. - 3.51

#### **Educational Impact on Regional Development:**

1. Higher education contributes to regional development by empowering women to participate in economic and social activities. - 3.48
2. Educated women play a significant role in the economic and social advancement of their regions. - 3.55
3. Education enhances women's ability to contribute to and drive regional development initiatives. - 3.52
4. Higher education fosters regional growth by enabling women to engage in and lead development projects. - 3.50

#### **Step 2: Calculate the Average *M* Score for Each Sub-Indicator**

##### **Access to Essential Services and Resources:**

$$(3.42 + 3.38 + 3.45 + 3.30) / 4 = 3.39$$

##### **Community and Social Networks:**

$$(3.52 + 3.55 + 3.60 + 3.50) / 4 = 3.54$$

##### **Supportive Environment for Women's Participation:**

$$(3.47 + 3.42 + 3.50 + 3.53) / 4 = 3.48$$

##### **Legal and Policy Framework:**

$$(3.39 + 3.45 + 3.41 + 3.42) / 4 = 3.42$$

##### **Awareness of Gender Issues:**

$$(3.55 + 3.58 + 3.62 + 3.51) / 4 = 3.57$$

##### **Educational Impact on Regional Development:**

$$(3.48 + 3.55 + 3.52 + 3.50) / 4 = 3.51$$

#### **Step 3: Compute the Overall Cumulative *M* Score**

$$(3.39 + 3.54 + 3.48 + 3.42 + 3.57 + 3.51) / 6 = 3.48$$

**Final Report:** The cumulative *M* score for Environmental Empowerment, considering six sub-indicators, is 3.48. This reflects a generally positive perception of environmental empowerment as influenced by higher education.

### **Cumulative *M* Scores for Individual Empowerment**

**Objective:** To present the detailed calculations for the cumulative *M* score of Societal Empowerment.

#### **Step 1: List the *M* Scores**

##### **Participation in Social and Political Activities:**

1. Higher education enhances women's involvement in social and political activities. - 3.63
2. Educated women are more likely to participate in and influence political and social movements. - 3.68
3. Education empowers women to engage in leadership roles within their communities. - 3.70
4. Higher education facilitates women's active participation in policy-making and advocacy. - 3.55

##### **Influence on Social Norms and Practices:**

1. Higher education contributes to challenging and changing traditional social norms. - 3.67
2. Educated women are more likely to advocate for and support progressive social practices. - 3.62
3. Education empowers women to influence and shape social attitudes toward gender roles. - 3.70
4. Higher education fosters the development of new social practices that promote gender equality. - 3.63

##### **Role in Promoting Gender Equality:**

1. Education strengthens women's role in promoting gender equality at various levels. - 3.71
2. Educated women are more effective in advocating for gender equality policies and practices. - 3.74
3. Higher education increases women's capacity to lead and support gender equality initiatives. - 3.69
4. Higher education enhances women's ability to challenge and address gender disparities. - 3.70

##### **Impact on Family Dynamics:**

1. Higher education positively affects family dynamics by promoting shared responsibilities and decision-making. - 3.58
2. Educated women contribute to more equitable family structures and relationships. - 3.65
3. Education fosters better communication and understanding within families. - 3.63

4. Higher education influences family roles, promoting gender equality and shared responsibilities. - 3.55

**Support for Other Women:**

1. Higher education enables women to mentor and support other women in their communities. - 3.74
2. Educated women actively engage in initiatives that uplift and empower other women. - 3.68
3. Education fosters a network of support among women, enhancing their collective empowerment. - 3.72
4. Higher education encourages women to advocate for the rights and opportunities of other women. - 3.70

**Step 2: Calculate the Average *M* Score for Each Sub-Indicator**

**Participation in Social and Political Activities:**

$$(3.63 + 3.68 + 3.70 + 3.55) / 4 = 3.64$$

**Influence on Social Norms and Practices:**

$$(3.67 + 3.62 + 3.70 + 3.63) / 4 = 3.65$$

**Role in Promoting Gender Equality:**

$$(3.71 + 3.74 + 3.69 + 3.70) / 4 = 3.71$$

**Impact on Family Dynamics:**

$$(3.58 + 3.65 + 3.63 + 3.55) / 4 = 3.60$$

**Support for Other Women:**

$$(3.74 + 3.68 + 3.72 + 3.70) / 4 = 3.71$$

**Step 3: Compute the Overall Cumulative *M* Score**

$$(3.64 + 3.65 + 3.71 + 3.60 + 3.71) / 5 = 3.66$$

**Final Report:** The cumulative *M* score for Societal Empowerment, considering five sub-indicators, is 3.66. This reflects a generally positive perception of societal empowerment as influenced by higher education.

### Cumulative *M* Scores for Individual Empowerment

**Objective:** To present the detailed calculations for the cumulative *M* score of Individual Empowerment.

#### Step 1: List the *M* Scores

##### Self-Esteem:

1. Higher education has significantly boosted my self-esteem and confidence. - 2.83
2. I feel more self-assured in my personal and professional life due to my education. - 2.90
3. Education has played a key role in enhancing my self-worth and self-respect. - 2.89
4. My educational experiences have contributed to a stronger sense of self and personal value. - 2.86

##### Skills Development:

1. Higher education has developed my skills in various areas relevant to my personal and professional growth. - 2.88
2. I have gained valuable skills through my education that are applicable in real-world scenarios. - 2.91
3. My educational background has equipped me with practical skills needed for my career and personal life. - 2.89
4. Higher education has enhanced my competencies in areas such as communication, problem-solving, and critical thinking. - 2.87

##### Self-Advocacy:

1. Higher education has empowered me to advocate for myself effectively in various situations. - 2.92
2. I feel more confident in voicing my needs and desires due to my educational experiences. - 2.89
3. Education has provided me with the tools to assert myself and negotiate on my behalf. - 2.90
4. Higher education has strengthened my ability to stand up for my rights and pursue my goals with greater determination. - 2.91

##### Personal Development:

1. My personal development has been significantly influenced by my higher education. - 2.84
2. Education has played a crucial role in shaping my personal growth and development. - 2.87
3. Higher education has contributed to my overall personal enrichment and self-improvement. - 2.86

4. I have experienced substantial personal growth as a result of my educational journey. - 2.82

**Confidence in Future Endeavors:**

1. Higher education has increased my confidence in pursuing future goals and ambitions. - 2.91
2. I feel more prepared to take on new challenges and opportunities due to my education. - 2.89
3. Education has bolstered my belief in my ability to succeed in future endeavors. - 2.92
4. Higher education has provided me with the assurance and skills needed to confidently face future challenges. - 2.90

**Step 2: Calculate the Average *M* Score for Each Sub-Indicator**

**Self-Esteem:**

$$(2.83 + 2.90 + 2.89 + 2.86) / 4 = 2.87$$

**Skills Development:**

$$(2.88 + 2.91 + 2.89 + 2.87) / 4 = 2.89$$

**Self-Advocacy:**

$$(2.92 + 2.89 + 2.90 + 2.91) / 4 = 2.90$$

**Personal Development:**

$$(2.84 + 2.87 + 2.86 + 2.82) / 4 = 2.85$$

**Confidence in Future Endeavors:**

$$(2.91 + 2.89 + 2.92 + 2.90) / 4 = 2.91$$

**Step 3: Compute the Overall Cumulative *M* Score**

$$(2.87 + 2.89 + 2.90 + 2.85 + 2.91) / 5 = 2.88$$

**Final Report:** The cumulative *M* score for Individual Empowerment, considering five sub-indicators, is 2.88. This reflects a generally positive perception of individual empowerment as influenced by higher education.

### Cumulative *M* Scores for Educational Impact

**Objective:** To present the detailed calculations for the cumulative *M* score of Educational Impact.

#### Step 1: List the *M* Scores

##### Academic Achievement:

1. Higher education has significantly enhanced my academic performance and achievements. - 3.58
2. My educational experiences have led to improved academic outcomes and success. - 3.65
3. Education has played a key role in achieving my academic goals and milestones. - 3.72
4. Higher education has provided me with the skills and knowledge necessary for academic excellence. - 3.55

##### Career Advancement:

1. Higher education has contributed to my career advancement and professional growth. - 3.69
2. My educational background has opened up new career opportunities and pathways. - 3.72
3. Education has positively impacted my professional development and job prospects. - 3.67
4. Higher education has been instrumental in achieving my career aspirations and goals. - 3.63

##### Influence on Personal Goals:

1. Higher education has positively influenced my ability to achieve personal goals and aspirations. - 3.62
2. My educational journey has been crucial in realizing my personal ambitions and dreams. - 3.68
3. Education has empowered me to set and pursue meaningful personal goals. - 3.70
4. Higher education has facilitated my personal growth and the realization of my life goals. - 3.64

##### Development of Critical Thinking:

1. Higher education has significantly enhanced my critical thinking and problem-solving skills. - 3.71
2. Education has improved my ability to analyze and evaluate information critically. - 3.75
3. My educational experiences have fostered a strong capacity for critical thinking and reasoning. - 3.69

4. Higher education has equipped me with the skills to approach problems analytically and creatively. - 3.72

**Contribution to Community:**

1. Higher education has enabled me to contribute positively to my community. - 3.68
2. Education has motivated me to engage in community service and development activities. - 3.72
3. My educational background has increased my capacity to support and enhance community initiatives. - 3.65
4. Higher education has encouraged me to play an active role in addressing community needs. - 3.70

**Step 2: Calculate the Average M Score for Each Sub-Indicator**

**Academic Achievement:**

$$(3.58 + 3.65 + 3.72 + 3.55) / 4 = 3.62$$

**Career Advancement:**

$$(3.69 + 3.72 + 3.67 + 3.63) / 4 = 3.68$$

**Influence on Personal Goals:**

$$(3.62 + 3.68 + 3.70 + 3.64) / 4 = 3.66$$

**Development of Critical Thinking:**

$$(3.71 + 3.75 + 3.69 + 3.72) / 4 = 3.72$$

**Contribution to Community:**

$$(3.68 + 3.72 + 3.65 + 3.70) / 4 = 3.69$$

**Step 3: Compute the overall Cumulative M Score**

$$(3.62 + 3.68 + 3.66 + 3.72 + 3.69) / 5 = 3.67$$

Final Report: The cumulative M score for Educational Impact, considering five sub-indicators, is 3.67. This reflects a generally positive perception of the impact of education on various aspects of personal and professional life.

### Personal Empowerment

#### 1. Influence of Higher Education on Self-Confidence and Beliefs

1. Higher education provides knowledge, understanding, and decision-making skills, which build confidence and enhance abilities.
2. Pursuing higher education has significantly boosted my self-confidence and belief in my abilities.
3. Higher education improved my communication and problem-solving skills, enhancing my self-confidence.
4. Higher education has significantly influenced my self-confidence and beliefs in my abilities.
5. Pursuing higher education has significantly influenced my self-confidence and beliefs in my abilities.
6. Higher education has played a crucial role in shaping my opinions and attitudes regarding the economic roles of women.
7. Higher education often promotes gender equality and empowers women to pursue economic opportunities.

#### Instances of Overcoming Challenges and Enhancing Self-Assurance

1. During my higher education journey, I faced various academic and professional challenges. However, my education equipped me with problem-solving skills, resilience, and the ability to persevere. These experiences of overcoming obstacles have not only enhanced my self-assurance but also reinforced my belief that with determination and education, one can overcome any challenge.
2. One instance where my educational experiences helped me overcome challenges and enhance my self-assurance was during a group project in my MBA program. Our team had to analyze a complex business case and present a comprehensive strategy to address the issues. Initially, I felt overwhelmed, but as I applied the knowledge and skills I had gained through my coursework, I was able to contribute effectively to the project.
3. One instance was during a challenging engineering project in graduate school. The project required designing a complex electrical circuit for a renewable energy system. Initially, it seemed daunting, but with the knowledge and problem-solving skills acquired through education, I led the team to successfully complete the project.
4. During a surgical residency, I was faced with a complex and high-stakes surgical procedure. Drawing upon the knowledge and skills I had acquired through my education and training, I successfully navigated the challenges, which not only enhanced my self-assurance but also saved a patient's life.
5. My education in HR management provided me with the tools to design and execute a comprehensive employee training and development program within my organization. Its success boosted my self-assurance in my ability to drive positive change within the workplace.



## **2. Contribution of Higher Education to Personal Knowledge**

1. Higher education contributed to my personal knowledge and skills across various subjects.
2. Higher education improved my level of understanding and critical thinking.
3. Higher education has broadened my horizons and deepened my understanding of a wide range of subjects.
4. Through practical assignments and participating in many competitions, higher education has contributed to my personal knowledge.
5. Higher education has contributed significantly to my personal knowledge and understanding of various subjects.

## **Examples of Positive Impact on Decision-Making in Personal Matters**

1. My expanded knowledge positively impacted my decision-making in personal matters by enabling me to critically analyze situations and make informed choices.
2. Expanded knowledge from higher education has positively impacted my decision-making in various personal matters, such as health-related choices for my family.
3. Higher education improved my financial decision-making skills, leading to more effective budgeting and investment choices.
4. I can make informed choices about my own well-being and advocate for healthy practices within my family and community.
5. Understanding human behavior from psychology courses has positively impacted my relationships, fostering better communication and empathy.

## **3. Shaping Opinions and Attitudes Regarding Women's Economic Roles**

1. Higher education has enlightened me about the importance of gender equality in the workforce and the need to break down barriers that restrict women's economic participation.
2. My education has fostered a belief in the economic empowerment of women as a catalyst for societal progress.
3. Through coursework and discussions, I gained insights into the importance of gender diversity and inclusion in the workforce.
4. Higher education often promotes gender equality and empowers women to pursue economic opportunities.
5. My education has equipped me with the knowledge to advocate for women's economic empowerment and challenge stereotypes regarding their economic roles.

## **Changes in Perspectives on Women's Involvement in Economic Activities**

1. A lot of changes in my perspectives are made on women's involvement in economic activities. Before, I just thought only men could do it.
2. Yes, my perspectives on women's involvement in economic activities have evolved positively due to my educational journey.
3. My educational journey has led to a more progressive perspective on women's involvement in economic activities.

4. Absolutely. My educational journey has been transformative in shaping my perspectives on women's involvement in economic activities.

#### **4. Influence of Higher Education on Views Regarding Gender-Based Violence and Women's Rights**

1. Higher education has significantly influenced my views on gender-based violence and women's rights.
2. My education has made me more aware of the injustices women face and has strengthened my commitment to advocating for gender equality and women's rights.
3. Through coursework and awareness campaigns on campus, I've gained a deeper understanding of gender issues and the importance of combating gender-based violence.
4. Higher education often exposes individuals to diverse perspectives, research, and critical thinking, which can contribute to greater awareness and understanding of gender-based violence and the importance of women's rights.

#### **Empowerment to Take a Stand against Gender-Based Violence and Promote Gender Equality**

1. Higher education has empowered me to take a stand against gender-based violence and promote gender equality by equipping me with knowledge about human rights, gender dynamics, and strategies for advocacy.
2. My education has empowered me to take a stand against gender-based violence and promote gender equality by engaging in awareness campaigns, advocacy, and supporting organizations dedicated to this cause.
3. As a highly educated woman, I know my rights and I can take a stand legally for myself and for others.
4. Higher education has equipped me with the knowledge and skills to address gender-based violence and promote gender equality in my teaching. I actively integrate discussions on these topics into my curriculum, fostering awareness and critical thinking among my students.

#### **5. Enhancement of Personal Autonomy through Higher Education**

1. Pursuing higher education has equipped individuals with advanced knowledge, critical thinking skills, and exposure to diverse perspectives, contributing to greater independence and informed decision-making.
2. Higher education has provided individuals with the confidence and competence to make informed choices in various aspects of life, leading to greater self-reliance and independence.
3. Higher education typically enhances personal autonomy by providing the skills and resources needed to make independent decisions about one's life, career, and future.
4. Pursuing higher education has empowered individuals to assert control over their life choices and future plans by fostering critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and independence.

5. Education equips individuals with specialized knowledge and expertise in their chosen field, enabling them to make informed decisions and assert control over their career paths and professional growth.

### **Instances of Asserting Control over Life Choices and Future Plans**

1. Pursuing higher education has enabled individuals to make career transitions aligned with their passions and interests, giving them greater control over their professional lives and future plans.
2. Higher education has empowered individuals to confidently negotiate employment terms and conditions, ensuring that they align with their career goals and personal priorities.
3. Education has equipped individuals with the confidence and qualifications to take on leadership roles, positively impacting their career trajectories and future plans.
4. Personal autonomy has been enhanced through education, allowing individuals to make informed decisions about their career paths, finances, and personal lives.
5. Pursuing higher education has enabled individuals to assert control over their life choices by pursuing specific career paths, setting ambitious career goals, and making informed decisions about their future.

### **Relational Empowerment**

#### **1. Influencing the Community through Higher Education**

- Higher education provides individuals with the knowledge, skills, and resources necessary to positively impact their communities. This includes addressing social issues, engaging in community initiatives, and contributing to positive change. Education fosters a positive attitude, enabling individuals to offer knowledge, motivation, and social work within their communities. Educated individuals serve as role models, advocate for educational opportunities, and actively engage in community projects.
- Contributions include organizing workshops, awareness campaigns, and educational programs on topics such as financial literacy and sustainability. Educational backgrounds in fields like engineering, medicine, and social sciences contribute to local needs through community projects. Examples include volunteering, mentoring, and organizing initiatives like medical and literacy camps.

#### **2. Impact of Higher Education on Control over Household Assets**

- Higher education affects control over household assets by increasing confidence in decision-making, improving financial literacy, and enhancing resource management. Education allows individuals to become key stakeholders in household decisions, contributing to more equitable management of resources and increased financial independence.
- Instances include proposing efficient budgeting strategies, advocating for investments in education, and stabilizing family finances. Education empowers individuals to influence major financial decisions and guide family members on financial matters, such as home purchases and investments.

#### **3. Impact of Higher Education on Involvement in Household Decision-Making**

- Higher education positively impacts involvement in household decision-making by providing individuals with better understanding, maturity, and responsibility. Educated individuals are often seen as more knowledgeable and skilled, contributing to discussions on family matters, financial planning, healthcare choices, and major life decisions.
- Experiences include guiding decisions related to financial planning, educational choices for family members, and healthcare advocacy. Examples involve advocating for energy-efficient home improvements and coordinating family healthcare needs during crises.

#### **4. Role of Higher Education in Earning an Independent Income**

- Higher education plays a crucial role in earning an independent income by providing the necessary qualifications and skills to enter specific professions or industries. This leads to financial stability and the ability to support oneself

and one's family. Education enhances skills and expertise, contributing to higher income potential and career opportunities.

- Educational achievements positively influence financial contributions to families, easing the burden on other family members and improving overall quality of life. Examples include securing well-paying jobs and supporting family expenses, investments, and healthcare needs.

## **5. Influence of Educational Journey on Perception and Response to Gender-Based Violence**

- Education shapes perceptions and responses to gender-based violence by providing a deeper understanding of the issue and encouraging proactive stances. It empowers individuals to challenge harmful norms, support survivors, and advocate for gender equality.
- Education equips individuals with the knowledge to address gender-based violence through advocacy strategies and communication skills. Examples include organizing awareness campaigns, supporting survivors, and incorporating discussions on gender-based violence into teaching roles.

## **6. Impact of Higher Education on Control over Time and Daily Schedule**

- Higher education impacts control over time and daily schedules by teaching effective time management strategies. It enables individuals to prioritize tasks, set goals, and allocate time for various activities based on personal preferences and priorities. The structured nature of higher education programs instills discipline and improves organizational abilities.
  - Examples include balancing work, personal interests, and family commitments, as well as managing research projects, coursework deadlines, and extracurricular activities. Education equips individuals with skills to effectively manage their time and maintain a disciplined approach to daily activities.
-

### **Environmental Empowerment**

#### **1. Influence of Higher Education on Access to Essential Services and Resources**

- Higher education significantly enhances individuals' ability to access essential services and resources. Education equips individuals with advanced knowledge, critical thinking skills, and a broader perspective, enabling them to make informed decisions and navigate complex systems effectively. It allows for the use of modern technology and online resources to access healthcare, education, and other vital services.
- Education expands professional networks, providing access to career opportunities, mentorship, and valuable connections, thereby facilitating access to healthcare, education, and other essential resources. The knowledge gained through education empowers individuals to manage finances effectively, access scholarships, loans, or financial aid for education, and understand health insurance, thus improving access to healthcare and educational opportunities.
- Examples include the ability to understand and use technology to access information, manage health issues, and connect with scholarship programs and financial aid. Education improves the ability to access healthcare and educational resources through career advancement, higher income, and financial stability. Educational networks also provide resources, partnerships, and collaborations benefiting communities, students, and overall well-being.

#### **2. Empowerment to Influence Political Matters through Educational Background**

- Education empowers individuals to differentiate between good and bad policies, allowing them to argue against gender-centric policies and improve their ability to analyze political views. It provides critical thinking skills, research abilities, and an informed perspective, enabling active engagement in informed discussions, advocacy, and participation in the political process.
- Instances of engagement include participating in political discussions, joining women's groups, and working on campaigns related to women's rights and gender equality. Education enables involvement in organizational discussions, influencing decision-making, and advocating for positive community changes. It also supports participation in debates, forums, and student organizations, leveraging education to influence political decisions, economic policy discussions, entrepreneurship advocacy, and infrastructure planning.
- Despite some respondents limited practical involvement in politics, education empowers them to contribute to political discussions, advocate for policy changes, and engage in activities influencing political decisions.

### General Questions

#### 1. Integration of Personal, Relational, and Environmental Empowerment

- Respondents integrated personal, relational, and environmental empowerment into their daily lives by prioritizing personal growth, nurturing relationships, and striving for positive impacts. They balanced their plans according to their needs, kept themselves updated with knowledge, and executed tasks effectively to maintain empowerment.
- Education, research, and planning were cited as tools for integrating empowerment into daily life, along with advocating for gender equality, supporting community initiatives, and making informed decisions. Some respondents actively participated in community initiatives, mentored and supported other women, and fostered a sense of community and empowerment.
- Communication skills were highlighted as essential for integrating empowerment, allowing individuals to engage with others effectively and advocate for their rights. Striving for work-life balance, fostering positive relationships, and participating in initiatives that benefit the community were also mentioned as ways to integrate empowerment into daily life.
- Respondents leveraged their time management skills, professional networks, and environmental consciousness to balance personal and professional commitments, advocate for political changes, and promote sustainability.

#### 2. Challenges Faced by Women Pursuing Higher Education in Balochistan and Strategies for Overcoming Them

- Women pursuing higher education in Balochistan faced challenges such as limited access to quality education, cultural norms, societal expectations, gender biases, financial constraints, and transportation issues. Strategies for overcoming these challenges included seeking scholarships, financial assistance, and mentorship, participating in awareness campaigns, challenging stereotypes, advocating for gender equality, and supporting initiatives to improve educational infrastructure.
- Determination, resilience, and community support were crucial for overcoming challenges related to cultural norms, limited access to education, and gender biases. Respondents emphasized the importance of excelling academically and professionally to challenge stereotypes and set examples for others, advocating for increased access to education and equal opportunities for women in STEM fields.
- Support from family, mentorship, seeking online learning opportunities, and challenging societal norms were highlighted as strategies for overcoming financial constraints and limited job opportunities for women in Balochistan. Despite facing societal stereotypes and limited opportunities, respondents persevered, sought mentorship, advocated for gender equality, and challenged gender norms to pursue their educational and career goals.
- The success of women in overcoming these challenges serves as an example for others, inspiring them to pursue their educational goals and challenge

societal norms. Overall, respondents demonstrated resilience, determination, and a commitment to gender equality in overcoming the challenges faced by women pursuing higher education in Balochistan. They utilized various strategies, including education, advocacy, mentorship, and community support, to navigate cultural norms, societal expectations, and gender biases, thereby empowering themselves and inspiring others in their communities.

### **3. Changes Needed at Societal or Institutional Levels to Promote Women's Empowerment through Education**

- Qualitative data showed that according to 10 respondents, improved access to quality education, awareness campaigns to challenge gender stereotypes, and policies supporting women's education and economic empowerment are crucial. Twelve respondents stated that encouraging a broader range of professions for women beyond traditional roles like teaching and medicine is necessary, along with providing support for women to pursue education in various fields. Two respondents stated that awareness campaigns and societal changes are needed to challenge traditional gender norms and behaviors that hinder women's empowerment.
- Other participants indicated that the establishment of new universities and short courses for females, along with better transportation facilities and equipped institutions, is necessary. Promoting gender equality in major fields, ensuring better opportunities for women, protective laws for women's rights, and increasing awareness among males about the importance of women's roles in society are essential. Gender-inclusive curricula, equal access to education, safe learning environments, mentorship, and support networks are vital for promoting women's empowerment through education. Collaboration between government bodies, educational institutions, NGOs, and community leaders is crucial to address the multifaceted challenges hindering women's empowerment through education.

### **Additional Insights on the Relationship between Higher Education and Women's Empowerment in Balochistan**

- Women's education is essential in all situations, and efforts should be made to ensure access to education for all women, regardless of their circumstances. Providing free and quality educational institutions in Balochistan accessible to all can help address the deprivation of women from education and pave the way for their empowerment. Increasing higher education opportunities for females in Balochistan is crucial for their empowerment and success.
- Education is the key to opening the doors of success, and the quantity and quality of education directly impact the level of success and empowerment of women. Overall, respondents emphasized the importance of education in empowering women and highlighted the need for societal and institutional changes to ensure equal access to education and promote gender equality in Balochistan.