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Women's Empowerment in Pakistan: The Effect and Role of Social Media and Its Implications

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ABSTRACT

The study critically examines women's empowerment in Pakistan through the lens of social media, revealing a complex landscape with mixed implications. While digital activism and online platforms offer unprecedented opportunities for awareness and networking, the quantitative findings indicate that social media use has an insignificant direct impact on key empowerment metrics. Specifically, female internet usage showed no significant effect on women's decision-making autonomy regarding healthcare, contraceptives, or abortions. Furthermore, it did not significantly alter perceptions of domestic violence, which many women still accept as a normal course of life due to deep-seated cultural norms, social pressures, and fear of divorce. A significant negative correlation was found between education and early marriage, as well as the acceptance of physical abuse, highlighting education as a crucial factor. However, the persistence of gender disparities, honor killings, and systemic patriarchal structures continues to overshadow digital gains. The research concludes that while social media serves as a vital tool for connection and expression, its effectiveness in driving substantive empowerment is currently limited without simultaneous efforts to address foundational socioeconomic barriers, improve digital literacy, and enforce legal protections against online and offline violence. Consequently, social media is not a panacea but a single element within a much broader struggle for gender equality in Pakistan.

Keywords: *Women's Empowerment, Pakistan, Social Media, Digital Activism, Domestic Violence, Gender Disparities, Decision-Making Autonomy, Cultural Norms, Healthcare Access, Early Marriage, Patriarchy.*

Introduction

Women's empowerment is pivotal to any society's growth and development trajectory. The increasing awareness of women's equality and rights has made women's empowerment a major global priority based on certain global opportunities like educational opportunities. UN Women and the Malala Fund are two initiatives that aim to remove obstacles such as cultural prejudices, child marriage, and inadequate educational infrastructure. Women have become more active in politics over time. The recent evidence presents that there are female leaders in several nations, such as Ursula von der Leyen at the European Commission and Jacinda Ardern of New Zealand. Affirmative action and quotas have been used in developing nations to guarantee greater representation. However, the global gender balance in political affairs is still a problem.

Another crucial aspect of women's empowerment is their involvement in the economic affairs. Although the number of women in the workforce is rising, they frequently experience a pay disparity, a lack of leadership opportunities, and restricted access to resources like loans or land. In many areas, efforts are being made to provide women with greater economic possibilities and to reduce the gender wage gap. Women's decent employment is promoted by groups such as the International Labor Organization (ILO).

For women to be empowered, access to reproductive rights and healthcare is essential. Obstacles to healthcare for many women still exist, ranging from stringent abortion laws to a lack of maternal services. Women are battling for improved access to healthcare in many places, such as Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa.

Social conventions and gender-based violence frequently restrict women's independence. The challenges women confront have been brought to light by international movements such as #MeToo, #TimesUp, and campaigns against child marriage and FGM (Female Genital Mutilation). Although social views are gradually shifting, it will take years to eradicate long-standing customs and behaviors.

Through programs like UN Women, which seeks to advance gender equality and women's empowerment worldwide, the UN, through its many agencies, supports women's empowerment. The Global Fund for Women, which offers funding to regional women's organizations, is one of several non-governmental organizations (NGOs) advocating for change. All of these issues have been highlighted due to the increased access of social media through increased digitalization. Social media promotes women's rights and women's empowerment. Disparities persist, nevertheless, particularly in areas that are underdeveloped or in war areas.

Among developing countries, in Pakistan, whether in rural or urban areas, women continue to face needless discrimination and systemic inequalities (Raza et al.2023). Nevertheless, women have been striving tenaciously to secure a higher position in society by actively breaking the barriers of illiteracy and gaining access to their necessary social and economic rights. The role of women has significantly shifted from being predominantly homemakers to becoming essential income producers all around the world, including in Pakistan. In contemporary contexts, they may also actively participate in the social, economic, and political decision-making processes that shape their lives and communities (Hussain, 2022). As a direct consequence of this transformation, women's empowerment becomes critical for advancing gender equality. In the twenty-first century, women's empowerment necessitates that women possess the capacity and autonomy to make strategic choices both in their private and public lives. Consequently, it is of utmost importance to develop effective strategies aimed at enhancing women's empowerment, along with understanding the intended consequences of achieving gender equality. These principles should serve as a guiding framework for every non-governmental organization, policymaker, and individual who genuinely cares about the pressing issues surrounding women's rights and equality in every facet of life. On the contrary, in Pakistan women still expose domestic violence both in rural and urban areas, even while also earning members of the families. Furthermore, considering the domestic violence and abusive behavior of husbands as a normal course of life. According to research by the Aurat Foundation (2020), 2,297 incidents of violence against women occurred in 25 areas of Pakistan during the COVID-19 pandemic. Among these occurrences, 57% were reported from Punjab and 27% from Sindh, underscoring regional disparities in reported incidents. However, in metropolitan areas, women have started to recognize their rights by much approach to social media.

This paper aims to examine the role of social media in women's empowerment in Pakistan. In Pakistan, women who are financially and socially independent are still being marginalized. Women's empowerment in a male-dominated society is still an enigma. A woman is perpetually plagued by torment during all stages of her life (Maqsood et al.2024). It is impossible to define how Pakistani women grow up as daughters, how they suffer as daughters-in-law, and how many injustices they encounter when shown as mothers.

However, in such circumstances, Pakistani women use a variety of tools to assert their position. This research is especially relevant because Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is a place where change is frequently marginalized. It's intriguing because women had already begun to hold well-paid jobs in media-related sectors. This research will help us understand the link between social media and women's empowerment in contemporary society.

Background of Women's Empowerment in Pakistan

The genesis of women's movements in Pakistan can be traced back to the early 1800s, driven by private philanthropy and progressive Christian missionaries against social evils like child marriages, polygamy, sati, purdah, and a veil so heavy it made women 'more beautiful.' In 1904, women were granted the right to contest in local elections. A fair share of schools for both girls were established throughout the entire region (Sadaf & Siitonen, 2022). Pre-partition, women enjoyed a relatively high profile under the British Raj, when traditional male-dominated societies and ultra-conservative interpretations of religion were checked by the interplay of different - sometimes competing - forces. The female poverty population in Pakistan is notably high. Today, charity and partly government support poor farmers. It is estimated that more than one third of the rural population in Pakistan lives below the poverty line. More than 40 percent of women are illiterate and have limited access to formal education and extension services; hardly 3% of the women are listed among the direct beneficiaries of such services.

Socio-Cultural Factors

Since independence, the government has implemented different policies and programs to improve the socio-economic condition of Pakistani women as well as reduce gender disparities. Even today, in both the settled and tribal areas of Pakistan, women are still suffering. Gender issues are a universal concern associated with developing as well as developed countries. Individuals belonging to middle and lower classes strive for equality between themselves, while in the upper class, an apparent superiority exercised by men is taken for granted. No responsibility or status revolves around both. (Batool & Liu, 2021)(Al-shami et al., 2021) In rural areas, restricting women's lifestyles and thus creating an inferiority complex in the minds of women is considered a natural domain of women, whereas in urban areas there is still some resistance to quick stereotyping and close confinement. Such a situation is ideally conducive to reforms or conversionary movements, covering women's rights from their right to vote to being selected or appointed at any higher or lower-ranking position in any public office or body.

Significance of the Study

In contemporary times, social media serves not just as a socialization platform but also as a catalyst for social change and advocacy, as seen in countries like Pakistan. However, there is insufficient consensus and literature on whether women utilize social media for their empowerment. This research aims to explore the impact of social media on women's empowerment and fill this gap. It will critically assess if digital activism can actually facilitate women's empowerment. The findings could enrich the literature on gender and digital activism by proposing new models for understanding modern communication and the future of women's empowerment. As internet access and smartphone use rise in Pakistan, this study will evaluate the actual effects of social media on women's empowerment. Insights gained can aid community leaders and policymakers in leveraging social media to promote women's rights, fostering a more inclusive society through the empowerment of Pakistani women.

Women's Empowerment in Pakistan

Despite a history signaling possibilities and aspirations for women to be included in public and private spheres, evidence today tells us differently about the position of women in Pakistani society. Women in Pakistan are represented in various facets of society, where they are active in sports, work, politics, and media (Usman et al. 2021). However, they are also underrepresented in such fields. Women's representation in the workplace, politics, and sports is low. The position of women in Pakistani society is complicated and cannot be boiled down to single explanations. To understand women's position requires looking at various intersections of analyses that include considering historical, cultural, and political narratives. Pakistan is a patriarchal society where women are seen as the minority and gender disparity exists. In this context, prevailing norms that perpetuate misogyny can include honor killings, domestic abuse, and malnutrition of young girls, child marriage, and informal justice systems. Many people access justice through this informal system (Zulfiqar, 2022). Solutions exist that engage grassroots through the education of girls, health care, and legal services. Laws such as the Protection against Harassment of Women and Children at the Workplace Act, the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act, the Criminal Law Amendment Act, and the Punjab Women Protection Authority Act have all been seen as banners under which society's response to violence against women is developing. The Women Special Committee, along with the performance of institutions to different degrees at the provincial level regarding policies, legislative, and implementation mechanisms about recommendation 28 of CEDAW, could all be collaborative entry points. However, all of these different ways of addressing violence against women face various challenges. Many respondents will return to a lack of resources at both a human and a financial level.

Challenges and Opportunities

Challenges Faced by Women and Girls Widespread systematic discrimination against women and girls exists in Pakistan. Social, political, and economic structures are centered on a belief in the inferiority of women. Engaging in ideas about the lack of autonomy and control women should have in public, political, and financial matters is crucial. The perception of women as second-class citizens has led to many harmful cultural practices that have further exacerbated low rates of self-esteem and confidence among women. Violence, sexual rhetoric, and honor killings regularly terrorize women, threatening their socioeconomic participation and independence. Prospective dissenters must think about these forces before asserting their rights, frightening many from taking any action against the status quo (Amani et al., 2024).

The power of authority, control over resources and land, level of education, labor force participation, and networking abilities are all areas where women often exhibit a lack in comparison to men. This reduces the opportunities women can access and the life choices available to them. In turn, this has economic breadth, with losing out on a presumed 50 percent of the population experienced in market activities causing an estimated actual productivity loss in Pakistan of 33 percent. Families, communities, and the wider economy also lose out on the additional options, creativity, insights, experience, products, and problem-solving that a wider skill field socio-economically adds. Rather than growing and developing people from all pools of potential, this habituation and reliance on the male socio-economic pool can leave entire economies and fields in need of rejuvenation and diversification across experience pools that have been previously alienated as not being main production roles. **Opportunities for Change** There is a growing number of welfare and development organizations whose key focus is to promote gender equality and empowerment of women. This stems from an increasing concern regarding the low status of

women in Pakistan, which affects development. Socio-political changes are occurring to help address this, with increasing levels and opportunities to engage in education, rising work participation rates, and political campaigning. The government has also made some efforts to implement administrative changes and encourage equality and legal policy in its approach towards gender discrimination. In particular, an informal network that acts to support women has been established, seen as an innovative mentorship that is catching global attention. The mentoring group was founded on the idea of women supporting women in overcoming the professional and cultural barriers that have been erected against them. The push for empowerment for women is evident and recognizable when looking at the range and quantity of new legal assistance and professional networks being established (Karim et al.2023).

The interaction between promoting women, the challenges they face, and the networks that are in place to support them is critical when discussing challenges and opportunities for empowerment at present in Pakistan. In outlining this chapter and the interaction between the opportunities and the barriers, this will lead into the comparison and demonstration of how, where, and to what extent women as a research population have been affected by one-on-one interviewing and networking issues.

Progress and Initiatives

Pakistan adopted a Women's Empowerment Policy in 2002, which aimed at increasing women's participation in economic development and enhancing their status within society. The mindset to use knowledge and the rights of women as tools for economic growth and poverty alleviation crossed over from military to democratic government in 2008, where, in a Poverty Reduction Strategy, there is a separate discussion on how to mainstream gender in development (Butt et al.2021)(Abbas et al., 2021). The political government (2008-2013) of Pakistan has taken several steps to strengthen the organizational capabilities and statutory rights of women. This is an important move, as the dilemma the government policy faced in the past the lack of implementation becomes one of the major reasons behind the failure of both the NPA GAD and GAD policy.

Currently, there are numerous organizations in Pakistan that work for women's rights and their economic empowerment. Some of these are grassroots initiatives, while others focus on the strategic dimensions. The working group is leading the collective effort to develop the National Plan of Action for implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the guidelines offered under the Existing and Future Laws Pertaining to Violence against Women and Children and to allocate resources more efficiently (Health Organization, 2021). The National Database and Registration Authority is field testing a gender-sensitive computerized national identity card in the country. Several international organizations are supporting projects in women's empowerment in Pakistan. A program interacts with Pakistani political leadership, government agencies, donors, international development organizations, and activists to promote substantive gender-integrated programming in all sectors of development assistance. Another initiative focuses on ensuring that resources reach local organizations, including leadership and advocacy for women in the community around positive behaviors and policy-level engagement for women's right to better health.

Social Media and Women's Empowerment

Social media has brought up an entirely new conversation about women's empowerment by creating a space completely unconstrained by the physical world. This is very relevant in Pakistan, given that scarce digital literacy, low women participation in the labor force, and a generally conservative society throw a double burden on women who want their voices heard (Hassaan et al.2023). However, the literacy of internet usage has increased and the strict

gender roles are fading away. Social media campaigns for 'women's empowerment' and 'awareness' have turned out to be very productive in order to grab the attention of thousands of people. Women have excessively started breaking the societal chains the use of social media being not only limited to technology-savvy male counterparts but to a highly conservative population of women as well. Cross-gender support has increased through social media campaigns.

The technological age, on the one hand, has thrived to make the nation globally connected; on the other, it has offered women the opportunity to come out of their stone-crafted thresholds and be part of the national and international discourse in a way suited to them. The empowerment of women through social media is not only limited to urban areas, but women in remote and conservative societies of Pakistan are also benefiting from this newly spun phenomenon (Qadir, 2024). The biggest strength of social media is that it brings forward those issues that have been taboo in society. In Pakistan, digital activism has even started to overshadow the traditional forms of activism, including protests and public meetings. Social media is now becoming a part of the international campaign and has forced world organizations and human rights advocates to notice this. Digital activism does not only include the use of technology trends, but it also includes real-time protests in the light of mass telephone calls.

Overview of Social Media Usage in Pakistan

With the advent of the digital age, the use of social media has proliferated in Pakistan at an astounding rate. Principally owing to the emergence of mobile and internet penetration, the growing affordability of smartphones, competitive data packages, and social media-friendly handsets, there were an estimated 47 million internet users, 91 million mobile broadband subscriptions, and 173 million cellular subscribers in 2019 (Jamil, 2021). The percentage of the demographic under the age of 30 is 63.9%, making it a ripe market for social media companies, which have dedicated resources to tap the untapped youth market in Pakistan. There are over 35 million Facebook, 7 million Twitter, and 25 million Facebook Messenger users in the country. Pakistan is also a vibrant market for WhatsApp, due to its 250 million mobile phone subscribers. Pakistani women based in urban centers have previously been recorded facing fewer barriers in accessing and using the internet and social media.

Social media has been perceived by the public, media, and private sector as both a tool for entertainment and a space for social activism and political debate. A significant percentage of digital natives (17-23 years of age) have an account with Facebook and have been influenced by blogs and social media activism. In addition to Facebook, Twitter is also popular in Pakistani urban centers as stories, events, reports, and campaigns go viral online. Many Pakistani journalists and columnists are active on Twitter. Pakistani English, Urdu, and Pashto language bloggers also use Twitter for disseminating information to a wider mass audience. WhatsApp, the most popular smartphone messaging app in Pakistan with over 25 million active users, has often been used to communicate and share news during turbulent times. Many rallies, protests, and strikes took place in early 2019 with a sole injunction: not to rely on media reports but to rely on citizens' reports on WhatsApp. While the participation from rural areas of Pakistan is relatively unknown, the rise of social media has not ceased to engage many Pakistani women toward educated and active networking. While this is certainly an optimistic trend toward social change, it has also raised some issues around the peripheries, such as the issue of women's access and expression of self through social media, as well as the debate on why women are using social media (Shahzad & Omar, 2021)(Sarwar et al., 2023). There are challenges regarding digital assets available to Pakistani women; only 5% of

women have access to their own digital assets, while 6% of women are leading directors and managers of IT companies.

Empowerment through Social Media

One-way social media empowers women in Pakistan involves providing platforms on which they can express themselves both about their own experiences and what they hope the world will know about the lives of Pakistani women. Women have launched several online movements; these have included various hashtags, among many others. Women use social media to reach out to others experiencing similar challenges and, over time, have built communities of trust, in some cases, thousands of members strong (Aksar et al.2023; Safdar, 2023). Some even met in person, cultivating a sense of personal solidarity among these women. Participation in these online and offline communities is important for many reasons. For some women, the networks constitute a support system. For others, they are a way to help raise awareness about social issues.

Social media have had several success stories. For example, a renowned Pakistani social media influencer has managed to get a job at the United Nations in New York using social media platforms. Additionally, another Pakistani woman won an award from the Pakistani government for a digital media initiative she launched after being a participant in a tech boot camp. Many young women have started engaging in digital activism projects (Anjum et al., 2021). They use various platforms to share their message; many of them have expanded their outreach by being published in the mainstream media. For example, they might curate their images as travel bloggers, driving advertising revenue and market engagement. They also share success stories on a local version of a popular app. Muslim women in Pakistan and elsewhere are also using the digital economy to offer religious and social services ranging from matchmaking to religious translation online. Indeed, social media play a key role in spreading knowledge about affordable ways to learn about one's rights, obligations, and accessibility to essential services available for women in Pakistan. For example, one woman has extended her life coaching to a weekly radio program and on-air call-in show. Women such as her hold traditional sessions at her social enterprise office in Karachi as well as fun and fast socials to introduce women to her podcasts and online materials. Both women participate in live podcasts and webinars to answer students' questions about new tech tools, terms and conditions of companies, and to discuss topics such as cybersecurity.

Implications of Social Media on Women's Empowerment

This paper proposes that the use of social media in Pakistan has multifaceted and complex implications for women's empowerment in socio-political spaces. Positive implications would be the promotion of 'women's sense of community', the use of digital spaces as instrumental 'tools' for diverse forms of collective action, practices of support and sharing of knowledge, and 'gossip'. Digital tools in the form of social media platforms can facilitate activism, generate awareness, mobilize support against norms, and work as surveillance, especially for the unattended and unnoticed socio-political issues and communities (Li et al.2021). It changes another kind of public perception on particular issues and problematizes the policy discourses towards these communities. Similarly, while digital technologies may increase the risks of online violence, abuse, or insult, offline support groups also offer resistance and relief on the ground. Community intervention, where women get together to address their safety and other issues, is also increasing. In summary, citizens (women or others) use digital tools for policy advocacy, awareness generation, resistance building, support-seeking, and networking. The internet, including new information and communication technologies for information, communication, and networking, has not only potential but has built a platform

for new ways to manage citizens' agendas that are new in terms of context and type of resistance. Digital spaces are often referred to as free zones, even in contexts where secrecy laws, anti-censorship text, and writing are not only secretly discouraged but also condemned and punished. In a society like Pakistan, where a culture of silence prevails and is forcefully constructed or imposed, it is in this context that some see the 'ability of the internet' to allow the expression of a polarization of public agendas in ways quite different from those possible in the past. A research report on violence against women shows that because of such issues of online harassment and risk, many women are stepping back from utilizing the new technology (Aziz & Moussa, 2021). The question of women and social media is a 'wicked problem' and there are no easy solutions to this. This research aims to explore this 'wicked problem' in the Pakistani context. Arguments in this thesis maintain that there is a need to unpack the complexities and intersections of power hierarchies in society, and their effects to theorize practical steps to counter these problems. The internet reminds one of the strategies of violence, but many people argue that the internet tends to degrade and insult women more. In many ways, 'cyber-cooling' has become more difficult to control either by the state or other controls because of the sheer volume, users' preferences, and capacity to communicate this information on the net. There have been problems in regulating the internet. Critics assume that more often than not, its low rate of confidentiality in terms of security features and unknown users online has allowed many to use it as their preferred tool for harassing women. Legal systems also take time to regulate (Sultana et al.2021). There is a severe dearth of infrastructure needed for encapsulating measures to protect them, especially women, from online violence.

Social media has had several positive impacts on women's empowerment. First, it is being used by women and women's groups to bring to the fore those issues that matter to women in general (Bhat2022). Social media enables more visibility of women's issues and hence provides them a bigger platform to do collective advocacy. Second, social media is being used to provide women with an opportunity to express themselves by sharing their experiences, challenges, and success stories. These online communities enhance women's feelings of solidarity, support, and belonging. Several success stories share experiences of women who utilized social media to impart change in their communities. This is empowering as women can express their points of view, engage, learn, and become active change agents.

Third, women have started using these platforms to access information on their rights, resources, and opportunities. Young educated women are increasingly using social media platforms to access and disseminate knowledge on feminism, laws, and global trends linked to women's rights. Access to information would enable them to become more informed members of society, as access to information is a human right and is essential to the realization of all other basic rights. Lastly, the internet and social media provide the accessibility and space for sharing ideas, being a part of learning groups, and engaging in positive interactions in society. Positive interactions can inspire collective action on women's rights and women's issues in general. Moreover, it is noteworthy here that such online engagement is vital in the context of Pakistan as women are not generally allowed to attend public forums, gatherings, learning seminars, and policy interventions — particularly in the rural and conservative milieu of the country. While the debate is currently raging on the generally positive impact of social media on women's empowerment in general, and women's activism in particular, many women are subject to various forms of discrimination and waste their time dealing with an unending wave of misogynistic content on social media (Miller et al.2021). This subsection discusses a few negative impacts in detail.

Secondly, an increasing number of women around the world are affected by cyberbullying. Online harassment is harassment that takes place on the internet or mobile communication technology. The risk of accidents, bullying, and ultimately, deterrence has led to towering levels of anxiety among women in situations ranging from home to the workplace, and these incidents have had a seriously detrimental effect on women's well-being. Bullying, harassment, and trolling are ongoing problems for many individuals particularly those from marginalized groups. Particularly for women and girls, online spaces have been infiltrated by violent extremist groups and individuals who disseminate violent threats, harass girls, incite hatred against others, and spread racist and extremist ideologies. Social media platforms encourage anonymous content, which exacerbates this kind of behavior.

The prevalence of gossip and rumor-spreading among journalists has only added to the deep flaws in the cyber environment. Pumped with hate speech, cyberbullying, and manipulative propaganda, it is easy to see how misinformation about such problems can distort reality. The psychological and emotional distress caused by the perceived lack of personal security is likely to lead to the neglect of transformative strategies that could help them further improve their lives (Abbas et al.2022). Many people engaged in women's advocacy and rights initiatives have reverted to being silent. In a bid to oppose the challenges and protect oneself or personal goals, including the conservation of financial interests for some of those at the summit, remaining silent is the principal reason for not criticizing the websites they value. Nowhere have online communities and social media executives done enough to address particular hostilities and mitigate discriminatory impacts on women. These issues require technology to better mitigate gender-based violence and increase the visibility and women's capability to exercise beyond the limitations of existing infrastructures.

Data and Methodology

Data

The data from 2016-2023 has been obtained from the World Development Index (WDI) with the proxy, female using the internet, and social media platforms in Pakistan (f int), females take their own informed decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive health care (f dec), females who believe a husband is justified in beating his wife (f beat), while age and education level have been taken as control variables.

Methodology

To address our research question and find robust results, we have applied three regression models to assess the results of each DV regarding female use of social media in Pakistan during 2016-2023. The data was found at annual frequency, so the frequency conversion method has been used to convert the data to monthly frequency. This study used an annual frequency data collected from the WDI. To enhance the robustness of the results, the data has been transformed from low frequency to high frequency (annual to monthly). To achieve this objective, the quadratic sum method has been employed with Eviews and is mathematically represented as:

$$y_t = A y_t + A_1 L y_t + A_2 L^2 y_t + \dots + A_q L^q y_t + B x_t + \epsilon_t \quad 1$$

A disparity in dimension, temporal scope, and delays is currently the reason for several variations in notation: y_t is an m -dimensional vector of endogenous variables; x_t is an r -dimensional vector of exogenous variables; $t=1, \dots, t$ denotes time in an annual model, with S , the forecast horizon, conventionally set to five or ten; A, A_1, \dots, A_q constitutes a (m, m) matrix of coefficients applied to endogenous variables, specifically the elements of vector y_t , evaluated at time $t, t-1, \dots, t-q$; L is a polynomial in the lag operator L : $L y_t = y_{t-1}$, so $L^2 y_t = y_{t-2}, \dots, L^q y_t = y_{t-q}$; B is a (m, r) matrix of coefficients that multiplies exogenous variables,

namely elements of vector x_t ; and ϵ_t is an m -dimensional vector of error terms (Klein & Kushnirsky, 2005).

Results and Discussion

Domestic violence, female healthcare and early marriages constitute a critical public health and human rights concern in Pakistan, where cultural, economic, and societal factors perpetuate its prevalence. This study offers a statistical analysis of a dataset encompassing critical characteristics associated with domestic violence, including the frequency of intimidation, verbal abuse, physical abuse, age at marriage, education level, and overall age distribution. This section aims to delineate the attributes of the gathered data through summary statistics, encompassing measurements of central tendency, variability, and distribution. Furthermore, all the variables are stationary at the level.

Variables	Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max	p1	p99	Skew.	Kurt.
f int	209	12.23	2.204	9.494	15.297	9.494	15.244	-0.314	1.353
f dec	209	31.117	2.66	17	37	17	37	-3.113	18.087
f beat	209	31.146	3.82	17	54	17	38	-0.308	13.552
f mar	209	16.575	2.959	10.154	19.65	10.18	19.65	-1.035	2.313
Age	209	2.763	0.046	2.656	2.84	2.671	2.84	-0.12	1.885
Edu	209	0.193	0.183	0.088	0.888	0.088	0.842	2.211	7.037

The average intimidation frequency (f_{int}) is 12.23, with a range from 9.494 to 15.297, indicating moderate levels of reported intimidation. The average frequency of females taking own decision (f_{dec}) is 31.117, with a lower limit of 17 and an upper limit of 37. The average frequency of physical abuse (f_{beat}) is 31.146, with a broad range of 17 to 54. The average age at first marriage (f_{mar}) is 16.575, with a minimum of 10.154 and a high of 19.65, suggesting that numerous respondents married at an early age. The average education level (edu) is 0.193, with a minimum of 0.088 and a maximum of 0.888, indicating poor educational attainment within the sample. Elevated standard deviations in decision making and physical abuse (f_{dec} , f_{beat}) indicate increased variability in these responses. The first percentile (p_1) of education is 0.088, indicating that the lowest 1% of respondents possess exceedingly low education levels. The standard deviation of f_{mar} (age at first marriage) is 2.959, indicating significant variability in marriage ages within the sample. The negative skewness in f_{dec} (-3.113) and f_{mar} (-1.035) indicates that these variables exhibit lengthy left tails, signifying a higher frequency of lower values. Education (edu) exhibits a significant positive skewness (2.211), suggesting that the majority of respondents possess minimal educational attainment. The elevated kurtosis in f_{dec} (18.087) and f_{beat} (13.552) indicates a pronounced peak near the mean, accompanied by extreme values, suggesting the potential existence of outliers or a densely clustered distribution. The data indicates a high prevalence of verbal abuse (31.117) and physical abuse (31.146), with considerable variance across responders. The elevated kurtosis values for these variables suggest the presence of extreme cases, potentially reflecting the severity of domestic violence within specific population segments. The average age of first marriage is 16.575, consistent with cultural norms in Pakistan, however, also raises concerns about child marriage and its implications for women's health, education, and autonomy. Disparities in Education: The right-skewed distribution of education reveals that most respondents possess minimal educational attainment, which is frequently associated with increased susceptibility to domestic abuse. Data Distribution Challenges: The significant

skewness and kurtosis in certain variables indicate the necessity for transformations or non-parametric statistical methods in further analysis. This study presents an overview of essential characteristics in a domestic violence survey conducted in Pakistan. The results indicate prevalent verbal and physical abuse, premature marriage, and inadequate educational attainment among participants. Significant variability and non-normal distributions in certain variables require comprehensive statistical analysis, including regression modeling or structural equation modeling, to elucidate domestic violence's underlying causes and associations. Policymakers must prioritize education, legislative reforms, and awareness initiatives to tackle the persistent issues related to domestic abuse in Pakistan. Baseline regression Model 1:

$$f_dec = \beta_0 + \beta_1 f_int + \beta_2 age + \beta_3 edu + \epsilon \tag{2}$$

where:

- f_dec (dependent variable) female takes own informed decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive health care
- f_int (independent variable) Female using internet in Pakistan
- age: control Variable
- edu (education level) is included to assess whether higher education levels correlate with taking own decisions.
- ϵ represents the error term.

f_dec	Coef.	St.Err.	t-value	p-value	[95% Conf	Interval]	Sig
f_int	-0.008	0.182	-0.05	0.964	-0.367	0.35	
Age	-6.649	7.275	-0.91	0.362	-20.992	7.695	
Edu	0.34	1.76	0.19	0.847	-3.13	3.81	
Constant	49.524	22.246	2.23	0.027	5.663	93.384	**
Mean dependent var		31.117	SD dependent var		2.66		
R-squared		0.014	Number of obs		209		
F-test		0.974	Prob > F		0.406		
Akaike crit. (AIC)		1006.046	Bayesian crit. (BIC)		1019.416		
*** p<.01, ** p<.05, * p<.1							

This regression investigates that intimidation, age, and education levels do not significantly predict the frequency of female decision making about health, contraceptive and abortions (f_dec) in this sample. The model's limited explanatory ability ($R^2 = 0.014$) and non-significant F-test ($p = 0.406$) suggest the necessity for a more robust model incorporating socioeconomic, psychological, and cultural variables. Subsequent study ought to investigate nonlinear correlations, interaction effects, and supplementary predictors to enhance comprehension of domestic violence dynamics. Regression analysis is an essential statistical technique employed to investigate the connection between dependent and independent variables. This study examines the factors influencing the frequency of female decision making (f_dec) in Pakistan because family norms and pressures do not let the female take independent decisions about their health care. The model incorporates the independent and control variables of females using the internet (f_int), age, and education (edu). Table 2 presents the regression findings, encompassing coefficient estimates, standard errors, significance levels, and model fit statistics. This analysis aims to ascertain if these characteristics significantly

predict verbal abuse in the investigated population. The regression analysis indicates that the frequency of social media use, age, and education do not significantly predict the frequency of female decision making (f_dec) in this sample. The minimal R-squared value (0.014) and the non-significant F-test (p = 0.406) with negative coefficient values suggest that the model fails to sufficiently account for changes in female decision making. This needs a more holistic paradigm that integrates economic, psychological, and cultural elements.

Table 3. Diagnostic Test-Model 1

Variable	Obs	Pr(skewness)	Pr(kurtosis)	Adj	chi2(2)	Prob>chi2
Normality	209	0.000	0.000	115.710	0.000	0.000
Hetersadcaticity					863.370	0.000
DW					2.19781	0

The probabilities of Skewness and Kurtosis being 0.000 show that the residuals do not follow a normal distribution. The Chi²(2) statistic of 115.710 with a p-value of 0.000 indicates that the residuals considerably diverge from normality.

A p-value less than 0.05 indicates a violation of the normality assumption. The Chi² value of 863.370 is significantly high, and the p-value of 0.000 indicates pronounced heteroskedasticity. This indicates that the variance of residuals is not uniform, potentially resulting in biased standard errors and incorrect hypothesis testing. The DW statistic of 2.19781 indicates the absence of significant autocorrelation in the residuals. Fundamental guideline for the understanding of DW: DW ≈ 2 ⇒ Absence of autocorrelation (optimal scenario). DW < 1.5 indicates positive autocorrelation (concerning). DW > 2.5 indicates negative autocorrelation (problematic). Given that 2.19781 approximates 2, we deduce that autocorrelation is not a significant concern in this model. Baseline regression model 2:

$$f_beat = \beta_0 + \beta_1 f_int + \beta_2 age + \beta_3 edu + \epsilon \tag{3}$$

where:

- f_beat (dependent variable) females consider physical abuse as a normal course of life
- f_int (independent variable) Female using internet in Pakistan

Table 4 . Linear Regression- Model 2

f_beat	Coef.	St.Err.	t-value	p-value	[95% Conf	Interval]	Sig
f_int	-0.345	0.261	-1.32	0.187	-0.859	0.169	
Age	-8.395	10.432	-0.8	0.422	-28.962	12.172	
Edu	-4.396	2.524	-1.74	0.083	-9.372	0.58	*
Constant	59.414	31.899	1.86	0.064	-3.478	122.307	*
Mean dependent var		31.146		SD dependent var		3.82	
R-squared		0.017		Number of obs		209	
F-test		1.191		Prob > F		0.314	
Akaike crit. (AIC)		1156.699		Bayesian crit. (BIC)		1170.068	

*** p<.01, ** p<.05, * p<.1

This regression model offers insights into the relationship between f_beat and the independent variables, underscoring the necessity for a more robust modeling strategy to comprehensively comprehend the factors affecting f_beat. Subsequent study ought to rectify the aforementioned constraints to enhance the predicted accuracy and validity of the results.

This section establishes the outcomes of a linear regression analysis investigating the correlation between the dependent variable (f_beat) and three independent variables: f_int , Age, and Education (Edu). The study evaluates the degree to which these factors account for variation in the dependent variable.

The coefficient of f_int (-0.345, $p = 0.187$) indicates that a one-unit increase in f_int correlates with a decrease of 0.345 units in f_beat ; nevertheless, this effect lacks statistical significance. The negative coefficient for age (-8.395, $p = 0.422$) suggests that as age rises, f_beat diminishes; nonetheless, the elevated p-value signifies an absence of substantial impact. Education (-4.396, $p = 0.083$): The coefficient indicates that increased education correlates with a diminished f_beat score. This variable is marginally significant at the 10% level, suggesting limited evidence of an effect. The constant (59.414, $p = 0.064$) indicates that the predicted value of f_beat is 59.414 when all independent variables are set to zero. This value is also slightly relevant.

The R-squared value (0.017) indicates that merely 1.7% of the variation in f_beat is accounted for by the independent variables, signifying weak explanatory power. The F-test ($p = 0.314$) indicates that the overall regression model lacks statistical significance, implying that the independent variables do not collectively account for a substantial percentage of the variance in the dependent variable. The AIC and BIC values serve as criteria for model selection, but are chiefly advantageous when contrasting various models. The findings suggest that the regression model lacks substantial explanatory power for f_beat . The sole marginally significant predictor is Education, indicating a possible weak negative correlation with f_beat . Nevertheless, due to the low R-squared value and the absence of overall model significance, more variables should be investigated to enhance the model's explanatory capacity. Subsequent study may integrate other pertinent factors or examine interaction effects to improve model fit.

Variable	Obs	Pr(skewness)	Pr(kurtosis)	Adj	chi2(2)	Prob>chi2
Normality	209	0.062	0	40.17	0	0.000
Hetersadcativity					10.2	0.001
DW					2.06561	0

The normality test assesses if the residuals conform to a normal distribution, a prerequisite for proper hypothesis testing in OLS regression. The p-value for skewness is 0.062, which is not significant at the 5% threshold, indicating that the skewness of the residuals is not pronounced. The p-value for kurtosis is 0.000, signifying that the residuals exhibit significant deviation in kurtosis. The adjusted χ^2 statistic (40.17, $p = 0.000$) indicates substantial evidence opposing normality. Given the significance of the kurtosis test, we reject the null hypothesis of normality. The residuals exhibit a non-normal distribution, chiefly attributable to excess kurtosis, indicating the existence of outliers or heavy tails. Nonetheless, considering the sample size ($n = 209$), the Central Limit Theorem may mitigate the effects of this violation.

Heteroskedasticity Examination

Heteroskedasticity denotes the presence of unequal variance in residuals, potentially resulting in biased standard errors and influencing inferential statistics. The chi-squared statistic is 10.2, accompanied by a p-value of 0.001, signifying substantial heteroskedasticity. Given that $p < 0.05$, we reject the null hypothesis of homoskedasticity, indicating the presence of heteroskedasticity. This indicates that the standard errors in the model may be unreliable, necessitating the use of heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors. The Durbin-Watson statistic ($DW = 2.06561$) assesses autocorrelation in the residuals. The DW statistic

approximates 2, indicating the absence of significant autocorrelation. DW statistic approaching 2 signifies the absence of autocorrelation; thus, we deduce that autocorrelation is not a significant issue in this model.

$$f_mar = \beta_0 + \beta_1 f_int + \beta_2 age + \beta_3 edu + \epsilon \quad 4$$

where:

- f_mar (dependent variable) female marriage at 18 years of age
- f_int (independent variable) Female using internet in Pakistan

Table 6. Linear Regression Model 3

f mar	Coef.	St.Err.	t-value	p-value	[95% Conf	Interval]	Sig
f_int	0.304	0.115	2.65	0.009	0.078	0.531	***
Age	-9.398	4.598	-2.04	0.042	-18.463	-0.332	**
Edu	-10.637	1.112	-9.56	0	-12.83	-8.444	***
Constant	40.878	14.06	2.91	0.004	13.157	68.598	***
Mean dependent var		16.575		SD dependent var		2.959	
R-squared		0.682		Number of obs		209	
F-test		146.478		Prob > F		0	
Akaike crit. (AIC)		814.247		Bayesian crit. (BIC)		827.616	
*** p<.01, ** p<.05, * p<.1							

Table 6 displays the outcomes of an Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression model analyzing the correlation between the dependent variable and three independent variables: f_int , Age, and Education (Edu). The model elucidates the impact of these predictors on the outcome variable. The regression analysis indicates that f_int positively influences the dependent variable, whereas Age and Education negatively affect it. Among the predictors, Education demonstrates the most pronounced impact, implying that elevated education levels considerably diminish the dependent variable. The model accounts for a significant proportion of the variance ($R^2 = 68.2\%$) and is statistically significant. The expected value of the dependent variable when all independent variables are equal to zero is represented by the constant term ($\beta = 40.878$, $p = 0.004$). This coefficient is statistically significant at the 1% level, indicating that the dependent variable retains a substantial value even without the predictors. The coefficient for f_int is 0.304 ($p = 0.009$), signifying a positive and statistically significant association at the 1% level. This indicates that for each one-unit increment in f_int , the dependent variable rises by 0.304 units, assuming other variables remain constant. The 95% confidence interval ([0.078, 0.531]) indicates that the true effect of f_int is contained within this range.

The variable of age exerts a negative and statistically significant influence on the dependent variable ($\beta = -9.398$, $p = 0.042$), suggesting that an increase in age corresponds to a reduction of 9.398 units in the dependent variable. The significance at the 5% level validates the dependability of this finding. The confidence interval [-18.463, -0.332] indicates that the true effect of Age is probably negative. The variable of Education (Edu) exhibits the most substantial impact within the model, characterized by a negative and highly significant coefficient ($\beta = -10.637$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that an incremental unit of education decreases the dependent variable by an average of 10.637 units. The narrow confidence interval ([-12.83, -8.444]) reinforces the robustness of this effect.

Variable	Obs	Pr(skewness)	Pr(kurtosis)	Adj	chi2(2)	Prob>chi2
Normality	209	0	0.194	17.56	0	0.000
Hetersadcatcity					69.870	0.000
DW					2.1034	0

To ensure that the regression model is reliable, we run diagnostic tests for normality, heteroskedasticity, and autocorrelation. The results are shown in Table 7. The normality test assesses if the residuals conform to a normal distribution. The p-value for skewness is 0.000, indicating significant skewness, whereas the p-value for kurtosis is 0.194, suggesting no significant deviation from normality regarding kurtosis. The corrected chi² value (17.56, p = 0.000) signifies that the residuals considerably diverge from normality. Given that the p-value is below 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis of normality, indicating that the residuals are not regularly distributed. This may affect inference, particularly for limited sample sizes. Heteroskedasticity denotes the non-constant variance of residuals, potentially skewing standard errors and rendering statistical inference incorrect. The chi-squared statistic is 69.870, with a p-value of 0.000, signifying that heteroskedasticity is statistically significant. Given that the p-value is below 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis of homoskedasticity, indicating the presence of heteroskedasticity. This indicates that standard errors may be biased, necessitating the usage of strong standard errors. The Durbin-Watson statistic (DW = 2.1034) evaluates the presence of autocorrelation in the residuals. The DW statistic approximates 2, indicating minimal to no autocorrelation. As 2.0 represents the optimal value denoting the absence of autocorrelation, our model does not experience significant autocorrelation problems.

Conclusion

In summary, women's empowerment is an overarching multifaceted construct that intricately reflects the significant improvement in women's positions across various domains, such as socially, economically, and individually, with crucial implications for the underlying individual health and overall well-being indicators. There exists well-documented evidence that actively indicates explicit determinants of women's empowerment around the world, which include essential aspects like health, maternity, contraceptives, abortions, workforce participation, gender issues, and the discrimination faced by women, and so forth. However, it is important to note that these significant measures and factors contributing to women's empowerment are more commonly found in developing and less developed countries. Despite experiencing reasonable improvements within the labor market, as well as enhancements in the social and legal infrastructures within Pakistan, the paradigms of conventional and non-technological strategies aimed at eliminating the persistent gender gaps in Pakistan have not proven to be particularly effective in fostering substantial improvements in women's health. By having established the explicit and profound effects of the various roles of women's empowerment on health and well-being, and by also acknowledging the increasingly vital role of social media in shaping perceptions and awareness in Pakistan, the primary objective of this study was to focus critically on the intricate process and provisions on which women's health and well-being is potentially progressing toward meaningful improvements.

To validate our testable hypotheses, such that social media might affect certain behaviors towards females in Pakistan. However, the findings of this study reveal that social media has

insignificant results on the decision making of female about their healthcare, abortion, contraceptive, and early marriages in Pakistan. Furthermore, many females are concerned about domestic violence as a normal course of life or the reason may be the social pressures and fear of divorce. Moreover, the honor killing issue can also be a major reason for female behavior. Despite many female organizations, forums and awareness, the facts and figures still move in the opposite direction due to cultural factors.

Prospective Research Avenues:

Future research needs to investigate interaction effects to ascertain cultural norms, social pressures and honor issues. Examining non-linear correlations may yield further understanding of these linkages. Incorporating further control variables may enhance the model's explanatory capacity.

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