

## Role of Skill Development in Promoting Women's Social Empowerment

**Muhammad Shahid Iqbal**

PhD Scholar, Department of Social Work,  
University of the Punjab, Lahore.

**Professor Dr. Syeda Mahnaz Hassan**

Chairperson, Department of Social Work,  
University of the Punjab, Lahore.

### Abstract

Skill development training is the most important element to achieve the goal of development and women empowerment. Women are an integral part of the society, so they cannot be kept aside from the socio-economic system. Achievement of women rights and elimination of gender stereotype are the key factors for social development. The purpose of the research study was to evaluate the impact of skill development on improving women social empowerment. The current study was conducted in the Punjab with the pass-outs of District Industrial Homes. 397 respondents were selected through proportionate random sampling method. Quantitative study was conducting by using a structured interview schedule. Study findings concluded that skill development has a significant impact on improving women social empowerment. It was also found that the process of women social empowerment may be enhanced by the provision of market oriented skills and resources to utilize these skills. On the basis of the study results, it was suggested that DIHs must modernize their training program to maximize its benefits.

**Key Words:** Skill Development, Women Empowerment, Gender Stereotype, Social development District Industrial Homes.

### خلاصہ

ترقی اور خواتین کو باختیار بنانے کے مقصد کو حاصل کرنے کے لیے ہنر مندی کی تربیت سب سے اہم عنصر ہے۔ خواتین معاشرے کا اٹوٹ انگ ہیں اس لیے انہیں سماجی و اقتصادی نظام سے الگ نہیں رکھا جا سکتا۔ خواتین کے حقوق کا حصول اور صنفی دقیانوسی تصورات کا خاتمہ سماجی ترقی کے کلیدی عوامل ہیں۔ تحقیقی مطالعہ کا مقصد خواتین کو سماجی باختیار بنانے میں مہارت کی ترقی کے اثرات کا جائزہ لینا تھا۔ موجودہ مطالعہ پنجاب میں ڈسٹرکٹ انڈسٹریل ہومز کے پاس آؤٹ کے ساتھ کیا گیا تھا۔ 397 جواب دہندگان کو متناسب بے ترتیب نمونے لینے کے طریقہ کار کے ذریعے منتخب کیا گیا تھا۔ ایک منظم انٹرویو کے شیڈول کا استعمال کرتے ہوئے مقداری مطالعہ کیا جا رہا تھا۔ مطالعہ کے نتائج سے یہ نتیجہ اخذ کیا گیا ہے کہ ہنر مندی کی نشوونما کا خواتین کو سماجی باختیار بنانے میں نمایاں اثر پڑتا ہے۔ یہ بھی پایا گیا کہ خواتین کو سماجی باختیار بنانے کے عمل کو مارکیٹ پر مبنی مہارتوں اور وسائل کی فراہمی سے ان صلاحیتوں کو بروئے کار لایا جا سکتا ہے۔ مطالعہ کے نتائج کی بنیاد پر، یہ تجویز کیا گیا تھا کہ DIHs کو اپنے تربیتی پروگرام کو زیادہ سے زیادہ فوائد حاصل کرنے کے لیے جدید بنانا چاہیے۔ کلیدی الفاظ: ہنر کی ترقی، خواتین کو باختیار بنانا، صنفی سٹیریو ٹائپ، سماجی ترقی ڈسٹرکٹ انڈسٹریل ہومز۔

### INTRODUCTION

Skill development training is the most important element in the course of

development and empowering women. Provision of skills to women, accelerates social and economic development (Bayeh, 2016). It is the only solution to strengthen

her potential and awaken hidden powers for the betterment of her status in the society, which would enable her strengthen socially (Tetui et al., 2017).

Women with skills and education have entered a slew of new fields where they previously had little or no presence. Vocational and professional training must be improved in order for women to engage actively in different facets of socioeconomic life. In this regard, the first training of trainees is critical.

The process of women empowerment is to attain power, resources and improve her socio-economic status. (Mandal, 2013). Empowerment can also be expressed as an ability to make choices like that in regard to marriage, bearing children, mobility, occupation, standard of living. It may also be defined as “expansion in people’s ability to make strategic life choices in the context where this ability was previously denied” (Kabeer, 2001).it may be stated that Women's empowerment is more than an issue of personal identification; it's also about transforming the present social justice system (Stromquist, 1995)

Women are the really vulnerable groups; they have less access to information, skills, education, health facilities, right to assets, besides their own reproductive rights, because women do unpaid household work and are bound by traditional roles and customs. The progress of any society is possible only if the females are educated. It would need more and better education for girls and women which would bring about the change in their habits, perceptions, values and attitudes (Mohapatra, 2012). Societal transformation is only feasible when her real-life needs and demands are adequately understood. Different educational programs and training must be

constructed in such a way that an individual may build intellectual power and self-esteem by participating in such activities and curricula (Dawood, 2019).

Training must make efforts towards the promotion of gender in order to stop discrimination, as the aim of training is to encourage an individual and empower women. Education and training are meant to facilitate women towards the development of skills and for the attainment of knowledge in order to develop critical thinking and awareness about their life situation. The skills and the knowledge that should focus in any training programs towards women empowerment must include legal rights and advocacy and leadership skills. The Social customs with strong roots in the past are difficult to modify; as a result, a massive shift in women's position is not conceivable. With the development of vocational skills, the shackles of superstition and narrow-mindedness will burst through the optimistic viewpoint. This will ensure enhancement in women social status as well. (Tibbitts, 2002).

Empowering women is the path to achieving all of the millennium goals (Kabeer 2005). Empowerment of women and her social inclusiveness are the key constituents to development in the developing countries (Cherayi & Kumar, 2014).The term empowerment can be viewed from many dimensions like that consists of socio-economic, cultural, legal and psychological, etc. Awareness of such kind would allow people to enjoy their lives more freely. Agency, autonomy over resources and the achievements are the fundamental elements of empowerment. It allows women to make strategic choices, authority over its resources and decides her own betterment (Adjei, 2015). Before they can advocate for social change, women must first recognize that

they have the ability to act (Hansen, 2015). Women's skill development tries to modify ideas about gender roles, such as accepting women's involvement in economic, social, and political activities and having equal rights to males (Jabbar & Zaza, 2016).

Modern societies such as United State of America, and many European cultures are better places for women to get access to education or training that has also enable them to be financially independent and participate in decision-making at household and community level (Cheston & Kuhn, 2002).

However, same cannot be said of Pakistan. Poverty, socio-cultural constraints and traditional beliefs are the factors which often create male domination in societies like Pakistan. Violence against women, inadequate social services among others have been identified as the challenges to achieving targets of gender equality and women social empowerment (Qaisrani, Liaquat and Khokar , 2016). In Pakistan, the inequality of women is a matter of concern. They suffer from social, economic and political exclusion and remain at the margins. It is essential to make the invisible woman visible in political, social and economic areas, as Women have the ability to transform their own social conditions as well as the power structure of the communities in which they live (Sohail, 2014). Pakistani society is not so much different from other patriarchal and male-dominated cultures which seldom offers the other half of the population a chance to thrive and advocate for their own interests (Bhattacharya, 2014).

The basic aim of the study was to identify the role of skill development in women social empowerment. To assess this objective, specific objectives of the study

were to study the role of skill development in improvement in social status and worth of the women; to determines the improvement in autonomy of women in performing cultural and religious practices; to study the role of skill development in obtaining independence to express opinion for gender rights; and to identify the role of skill development in having freedom of mobility for excursion.

Hypothesis for the current study was “skill development has a significant impact on improving women’s social empowerment”.

### Literature Review

According to Ahmed, Wadood, & Mohammad (2020), women empowerment maybe explained as recognized as the societal authority, and control over resources in their favor. Moreover, Kabeer (2005) proposed that the concept of women empowerment can be understood through three interconnected fields: Agency, Resources, and Achievement. Agency represents the procedures by which choices are formed and fulfilled; through investment of resources agency is achieved; and Achievement is the agency's outcome which is the ultimate goal recognized as empowerment.

Empowering women does not merely mean just a theoretical stance, but rather the development of vocational skills works as the bridge between job and workforce. Skill development is also the key to household productivity, employment, and income-generating opportunities for women in order to boost them for sustainable development (Cabral & Dhar, 2019).

According to French and Strachan (2015) women face discrimination at workplace in context of economic disparity, as women perform a variety of employment role, yet

they are not treated equally with males. Further the scholar stated that institutions should be created to confirm equal access for both women and men. Employing civil societies, electronic, print and social media to improve public awareness of women's rights as well as design legislation to address gender inequality, access to both education and career possibilities, and no pay discrimination in the workplace, among other things.

According to Cornwall (2016), vocational skills improve women's empowerment and alleviate gender inequities. It was also shown that occupational skills aid in the reduction of poverty among women. In addition, the survey found that there is no structured promotion of occupational skill training. Its development is aided by individual women who work as both employees and trainers.

It was concluded and suggested in a study that women who gained vocation skills be provided with financial and logistical support to enable them to set up and follow their vocation in order to maintain women's empowerment and reduce gender inequities and poverty. The scholar urged that the government, non-governmental organizations, and other women's advocacy partners make the urgent development of vocational skills training centers a key priority on their agendas in order to make vocational education and training more accessible (Sen & Mukherjee, 2014).

Women's empowerment is a topic that is both timely and important. Women's societal empowerment is being more widely recognized as critical to realizing women's rights and improving their status, value, and acknowledgment in society (kabeer, 2008).

Institutions that provide a range of services in the framework of women's vocational training and humanitarian functions, as well as conveying inhabitant issues to governments, advocating for and monitoring policies, and encouraging political engagement via the dissemination of information. As a consequence, by providing basic education, vocational training, self-employment training, legal assistance, women's protection, and self-awareness programs, these vocational or private institutions play a crucial role in women's empowerment (Diwakar & Ahmad, 2015).

Skill development training centers play an important role in promoting women's empowerment by employing a variety of tactics. On the other hand, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) participate in vocational skills training to promote women's empowerment and gender equality. On the one hand, NGOs are said to have an impact on sustainable development in rural areas of developing countries; on the other hand, all programs carried out by NGOs with the assistance of government vocational training centers are capable of making positive contributions to the sustainable development process to some extent (Hassan & Forhad 2013).

Women's empowerment via skills education and employment in Bali, Indonesia, in which respondents' experiences of changes in their daily lives were studied, with a special focus on social empowerment and references to other realms of women's empowerment. The findings indicated individual empowerment, but because the study emphasized improvements in several aspects of their lives, it was impossible to gauge the magnitude of this shift. In general, the participants' experiences varied based on internal and external elements as well as

context, and they described various changes in their daily circumstances. In different aspects of their lives, however, all of the women describe the outcome as more or less successful (Hamzic & Ekbladh, 2017).

Pakistan has been rated as having the worst conditions in terms of gender parity and autonomy over the matters related to them. In terms of gender equality, empowerment of women, and access to education, Pakistan is still far behind the 2015 MDGs. (Akram, 2018). Male-dominated behavior and various cultural traditions impede women's participation in economic activities, and a lot of women have been deprived of right to own property (Abrar, Jali, & Islam, 2017). In a patriarchal society like Pakistan's, establishing women's empowerment is incredibly difficult because power structure are controlled by men and women have no authority to participate in decision making at household and community level (Akram, 2018).

Batool, Rehman, & Ashagar (2020) at the social, familial, and individual levels, researchers assessed the relative strength of elements that empower women. Income, employment status, self-esteem, control over one's own property, and legal understanding were also recognized as individual variables, as were the husband's support and family head as familial level elements, and the use of a mobile phone as a sociocultural component. According to the study, individual-level variables are the most important enabling elements for women's empowerment in Pakistan's patriarchal society. According to another study, patriarchy is the prevalent social structure in Pakistan.

It is extremely difficult to overcome these cultural constraints. Perceived barriers and social challenges not only minimize women

empowerment but also donates to their subservient and deprived position. As a result of societal prejudice and cultural expectations, women saw themselves vulnerable (Rafay, Habib, Tariq, & Asghar Ali, 2016). It is the reason Women's education and skill training needs to be prioritized by the government in order to socially empower them. Investment in education and training helps individuals and society to achieve the goal of social liberation (Alam, 2008).

According to Singh (2015) Economic empowerment attempts to alleviate poverty and uplift economic status, whereas social empowerment focuses on providing fundamental services such as education and healthcare. Women's empowerment also includes issues like mobility, self-esteem, and professional choices. It has been determined that women's empowerment may be achieved by taking into account the social, economic, and political factors that affect a woman's life and must be effectively gathered (Sharma, 2007).

Kabeer (2001) stated that the Women's empowerment can only be achieved by providing them with resources, increasing their understanding of their rights, and involving them in social change. In other words, empowerment refers to the capacity and process of increasing competence among women or groups so that decision-making becomes possible.

## Research Methodology

Research methodology is a complete plan of the study in which researcher decides how and where the study would be conducted, how the sample would be drawn and the whole process of the study. It was a cross sectional study which employed quantitative approach. The universe for the current

research was Punjab. Targeted population for the study were the pass-outs who had received the skill development training from District Industrial Homes (*Sanatzar*) established by Social welfare Department. To assess the impact of skill development only those pass-out were selected who had achieved the skills three years before and were utilizing their skills to generate income as well. Multistage sampling technique was used to select the sample. At first stage, nine districts of the Punjab were selected from the nine divisions of the Punjab, i.e. one district from each division and then respondents were selected by using proportionate random sampling method at

the second stage. Total sampled population in the selected nine districts was 47629, out of which sample of 397 was drawn by using a formula prescribed by Taro Yamane. An interview schedule was developed for the purpose of data collection. Data was collected by the researcher with the help of a female enumerator, who was trained accordingly. Filed visits were held for data collection. After the collection of data, data was summarized and analyzed by using SPSS software. To test the relationship between the dependent and the independent variables presented in the hypothesis, simple linear regression test was performed.

## Study Findings

**Table 1**

### *Demographic Profile of the Respondents*

Demographic Information about the Respondents	Frequency	Percent (%)
<b>Age of the respondents (Years)</b>		
Upto 20	59	14.9
21-30	165	41.5
31-40	111	28.0
41 and above	62	15.6
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single	202	50.9
Married	173	43.6
Divorced	9	2.2
Widow	13	3.3
<b>Qualification</b>		
Less than primary level	57	14.3
Middle	59	14.9
Matriculation	113	28.5
Intermediate	111	28.0
Graduation and above	57	14.3
<b>Residential status</b>		
Rural	168	42.3
Urban	229	57.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>100.0</b>



The above given table contains information regarding demographic profile of the respondents. The study findings revealed that majority of the respondents was young, as 41.5% of the respondents were in the age bracket of 21-30. While age of 28% respondents was 31-40. Whereas 15.6% of the respondents were 41 years and above, only 14.9% respondents were less than 20 years of age. Data also elucidated that more than half of the respondents were single and 43.6% were married. Although qualification did not matter to get admission in the District Industrial homes, yet it was identified through the data that a large number of the respondents were qualified. It was revealed through the data that 28.5 % of the respondents had matriculation level education and almost the same number i.e. 28% had intermediate level education. Slightly less than 15 were graduate, the same number of respondents were up to primary and 14.9% were middle. The current study was performed throughout the Punjab including rural and urban areas. Data indicated that 57.7% respondents were from urban area and 42.3 % respondents had rural background.

**Table 2*****Regression Coefficient of Skill Development on Women Social Empowerment***

	<i>B</i>	$\square$	<i>SE</i>	<i>Sig</i>
(Constant)	1.47		.17	.000
<b>Skill development</b>	.60	.53	.05	.000
<b><i>R</i><sup>2</sup></b>	.28			

Note, N=397

P<.001

Above given table contains information about the results of linear regression test. It elucidates the impact of skill development on women's social empowerment. The  $R^2$  value of .28 indicated that predictor variable explained 28% variance in the outcome variable with  $F(1,395) = 154.13, p < .001$ . The findings revealed positive impact of skill development on improvement in women's social empowerment. Hence the hypothesis "Skill development has a significant impact on improvement in social empowerment of women" was approved.

**Discussion**

Skill development has been recognized as an agent to break the existing male dominating power structure and to bring women in the mainstream (Jali and Islam, 2017). The current study revealed that development of skills plays a significant role to enhance

social status of women. It was identified that obtaining skills and inclusion in income generation activities had improved status and worth of women in the society. It was also explained in a study by Koneru (2017), that the skill development gives women social recognition and also enhances their social status at a family and social level. The respondents has been enabled to get exposure of the outside world, developed insight for better future and were more aware about their rights. It was also identified that after developing skills, women had more liberty to practice religious and cultural practices according to their own will and the respondents were also participating more in the community activities as well. Vocational skills are dynamic agent in the process of empowerment of women. These can help to bring understanding among women for their rights, encourage them to get involved in the

social activities and can ensure much respected status (Dawood, 2019). Yet the results were not in line with the findings of (Khan & Maan, 2008) who stated that less than half of the women did not have feeling of gender equity within the household and community level. It was also assessed that skill development was a significant agent to break existing male dominating social system. SD can play a significant role to aware women about their rights as equal human beings and change the gender stereotype system as well as the cultural traits. (Hansen, 2015). In their study, Khan et al. (2015) also found that education and skill training socially empower women. In such a setting, regular training and awareness programs are required to educate women about their rights and enable them to exercise them effectively (Bhattacharya, 2014). Women's skill development is one of the significant indicators to breaking social taboos, eradicating injustice in society and enhancing women's empowerment (Lohani and Aburaida, 2017).

### Conclusion

It was concluded that skill development is an important factor to secure gender equality. Women status, worth and recognition in the society can be enhanced by imparting skills in women. By gaining vocational skills women get opportunities to involve in income generation activities and due to their exposure of outside world they developed insight to better their future. Social empowerment of women is associated with their inclusion in work force with the provision of market oriented skills. Women may achieve social empowerment if they had enough resources to utilize their professional skills, so it was suggested that governmental and non-governmental agencies should develop mechanism to arrange financial resources. Another suggestion was that women must be

provided with the skill according to the market demands and modern era. As it is an unquestionable fact that no social change can be effective without the active participation of women in social set-up (Noureen, 2011).

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