

The Role of Positive Masculinity in Economic Participation of Women

Dominance

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ABSTRACT

The role of women in development is essential. Research and existing literature consistently demonstrate that women are at the intersection of economic advancement and the enhancement of a nation's living standards. Women's involvement in economic or wage-earning activities has a direct and positive impact on social standards and literacy rates within a country. Women who are knowledgeable about the job market and socially engaged are better equipped to make informed decisions for future generations, effectively manage family resources, and drive significant societal change.

To explore the situation of the role of positive masculinity in economic participation of women, a research study conducted in the Mirpurkhas district, the research investigates the factors that support or hinder women's economic participation. Data was collected through simple random sampling and analyzed with MS Excel. The findings reveal that positive masculinity significantly contributes to women's economic engagement, with 83.3% of women receiving family support and aspiring to entrepreneurship. However, the study also highlights critical challenges, including a high percentage of uneducated women in labor, barriers faced by educated women in the job market, and issues related to gender inequality and harassment. The results underscore the need for updated policies that foster women's economic empowerment and address these barriers, paving the way for a more inclusive and supportive environment for women's economic growth.

Key words: *Positive Masculinity, Economic Participation, Gender Equality, Race, Ethnicity, Legal Policies*

Introduction

Kiselica and Englar-Carlson (2010) define positive masculinity as the endorsement of traditional masculine norms that lead to beneficial outcomes, such as being a responsible father, working diligently, and providing for one's family, while rejecting harmful behaviors like aggression and emotional suppression. Seidler et al. (2016) expand on this concept by describing positive masculinity as a reimagining of masculinity that incorporates traditionally feminine traits, such as empathy, emotional expression, and caregiving, while preserving the positive aspects of traditional masculinity, including courage, responsibility, and resilience. Wong et al. (2017) further emphasize that positive masculinity focuses on the constructive and adaptive elements of masculine identity, promoting both individual and communal well-being by balancing traits like strength, protectiveness, and assertiveness.

Eversole, R., (2012). Remarkd Participation has deep and historical background in field of social development, considered as alternative grassroots in development in 1960 and 1970 and the participation remained an important subject in development process, increase in communities and policy determinations. G.M et al, (2015) stated that Participation has been viewed as a process of development because through which new skills, knowledge and attitude is transfer to the peoples, participation can make capacity of the society to solve the issues, in the community development the participation always remained the strongest advocate, because they think the participation is crucial and makes positive conditions in economic development and social development.

Likewise, women's economic participation plays a pivotal role in society. Beyond their reproductive duties, women also impart essential values and standards of

living to their children, helping shape them into responsible citizens. Historically, women have shouldered dual responsibilities, often facing significant challenges including religious, societal, cultural, and familial restrictions. While some of these restrictions may be perceived as protective in traditional and impoverished societies, they often stand in opposition to international standards of women's empowerment and gender equality. As FAO and Afzal (2009) emphasized, there is an urgent need for targeted policies to address the needs of rural women. The lack of effective policies in countries like Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, and Nepal highlights the necessity for international agencies and NGOs to take affirmative action. Developing and implementing policies that facilitate women's full participation in social and economic spheres is crucial for fostering gender equality and economic inclusion.

Shoba (2010) highlights that women are central to both the processes of childbirth and economic production, making them critical to efforts aimed at economic empowerment and improving living standards. Women, particularly in their dual roles, are often the most vulnerable, bearing the greatest burden and requiring strong support and integration. In the rural areas, women struggle to meet necessities, frequently facing higher mortality rates, food insecurity, lack of access to higher education, and employment discrimination. However, by engaging in economic activities, women can enhance their self-esteem, achieve financial stability, and help eradicate poverty.

Hundersama (2013) observed that in many societies, domestic responsibilities fall on women. Although some women receive financial support from their husbands, they often lack substantial assistance with household tasks. As a result, working women are burdened with both paid and unpaid duties.

Bolis et al. (2020) found that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the global need for care work became more pronounced, with men increasingly participating in caregiving roles. An Oxfam study conducted in 2020 revealed significant increases in male involvement in care work in countries such as Kenya (79%), the Philippines

(65%), the USA (64%), the UK (36%), and Canada (36%).

Spronk (2022) suggests that this trend indicates a growing potential for men to share domestic responsibilities more equitably. This study aims to examine positive male figures who not only contribute to household duties but also support women in achieving economic independence and participating in all economic activities. The research further proposes effective policies and amendments to promote gender equality.

From the guidance of the literature and international studies the author has observed that the positive masculinity is a strong connection of standardize the life of a working women which are bearing the load of dual domestic and professional duties it also helps those females who are suffering from societal pressure, religious and feminine traits which bounds them to stay at home specially in under developing countries like Pakistan where no such type of work is done before so there is urgent need of investigate and suggest some supportive and updated policies to the stake holders and agencies which are working for the women empowerment and indicate the ground level issue of such area where participation of women in societal and wage earning activities is not widely accepted.

This study also aims to provide valuable insights into how positive masculinity can enhance gender dynamics and bolster women's economic empowerment, thereby contributing to more equitable and inclusive economic development. By addressing these objectives, the research seeks to identify actionable strategies that promote gender equality and foster a supportive environment for women's active participation in the economy.

Objective

- To assess the correlation between positive masculinity and support for women's economic empowerment initiative.
- To propose actionable recommendations for organizations and policymakers to leverage positive masculinity in fostering women's economic inclusion.

Research question

- How positive masculinity support women to become economically empowered?
- What is the relation of positive masculinity with the other factors like socio-economic status, race, and ethnicity?
- What policies proposal can be suggested for women's empowerment. Is there any need for abandonment?

Literature review

Goldin, Claudia, (1994). stated that a small portion of women economic participation as labor force is observed in an economic transaction from agricultural to industrial economy. its due to change in small scale production at domestic level and bulk production in Industries. Females, who are mostly uneducated or having lower education, confront a shortage of labor at home and are hesitant to work as in non-agricultural and manual labor force. Although, economic wealth of home rises, and women's level of education increases, as more women's are entering in job market, on-manual and service-oriented positions that's why, the women's economic participation rate as a labor force is pro rate is expected to U-shaped in relation to economic growth.

Afzal et al. (2009) emphasized the importance of empowering rural women to elevate their social status, advocating for their recognition as valuable contributors to the workforce and for ensuring they have opportunities to work in safe and healthy environments.

Duta (2010) examined individuals living in extreme poverty, noting that despite their hard work, they often

remain trapped in chronic poverty due to limited opportunities for income growth.

The World Bank (2011) reported that women who control their own income are more likely to invest in their children's education, thereby ensuring that both daughters and sons receive schooling.

Naz et al. (2011) identified socio-cultural, economic, and political participation as critical areas for women to achieve economic independence, effectively manage their households, and become socially and economically self-sufficient.

Sanghi et al (2015) Stated that with the increase in household income levels, a woman no more enjoys working as a non-paid worker, a helper, or a conditional worker unless the work is financially rewarding (as in MGNREGA). In rural area of India, when, when these chances are less, that's why, females are unable to find profession regarding their choice (regular part-time jobs close to their households). In addition, work is restricted for unskilled labor in non-farm sector. These causes may have contributed to the exodus of women from the workforce.

Spronk et al. (2022) observed that as women enter the paid workforce to gain economic empowerment, they often face the dual burden of paid and unpaid labor, with their responsibilities for caregiving and reproductive work remaining largely unchanged. The study also highlighted the intersectional discrimination women face based on gender, race, ethnicity, citizenship status, class, and socioeconomic position. While the contribution of men to unpaid care work has slightly increased, the international labor Organization (ILO) reported in 2018 that this shift has only marginally reduced the gap, by an average of seven minutes between 1997 and 2012.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Spronk et al. (2022) found that girls were disproportionately affected, losing their jobs at higher rates and spending more time on household work compared to boys.

Wyvine Ansima Bapolisi (2024) argued for the implementation of policies that directly impact women's lives, reduce the dual burden of household duties and employment, improve food security, and contribute to the

well-being of future generations in terms of health, mental well-being, and educational attainment.

Methodology

This research employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques to provide a comprehensive understanding of positive masculinity and women's economic participation. The study also examines the societal norms, values, beliefs, restrictions, and traditional traits that influence these dynamics. A structured questionnaire was developed, and five villages in district: Mirpurkhas, Taluka: Sujja Abad, and UC: Makhan Samoon were selected for interviews and data collection to accurately assess the situation. Through this methodology, 31 interviews were conducted, comprising 18 females and 13 males from various age groups, believes, and back grounds include Relogious leaders, community leaders, heads of families and workers were interviewed the selection of those all respondent were selected on the base of their education level and working experience in both agricultural, industrial and religious those persons were also interviewed which were not familiar with masculinity and did not undergo any test or trainings to know difference of thinking style and to calculate the relationship between masculinity and women empowerment when female respondents were selected on the base of their role in societies which include working, entrepreneur, social worker, house wives, labor, divorced, civil servants, health workers, and students information was compiled and updated in MS Excel, where it was thoroughly analyzed, and the results were subsequently published.

Findings and Discussion

Demographic status of study area

Table-1(Area, Population By Sex, Sex Ratio, Population Density, Urbanproportion, Hosuehouldsizeandannual Growth Rate)

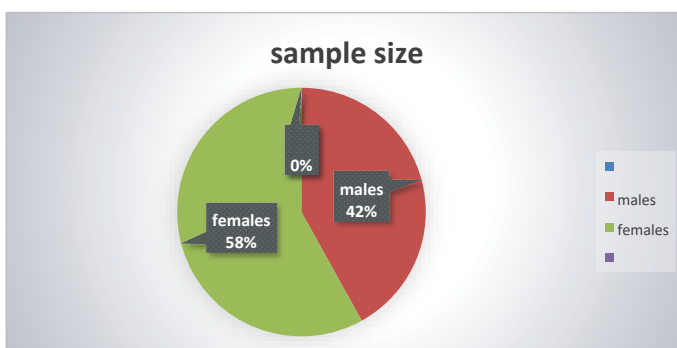
ADMN- UNIT	AREA(S Q.K.M.)	POPULATION2017(census)								POPULA TION 1998	1998- 2017 AVERAG EANNUA LGROW THRATE
		ALL SEXES	MALE	FEMALE	TR AN SG EN DE R	SEX RATIO	POPU LATI ON DENSIT Y/S. Q.K.M	URB AN PROP OR TION	AVER AGE HOUS EHO L D SIZE		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12

SINDH

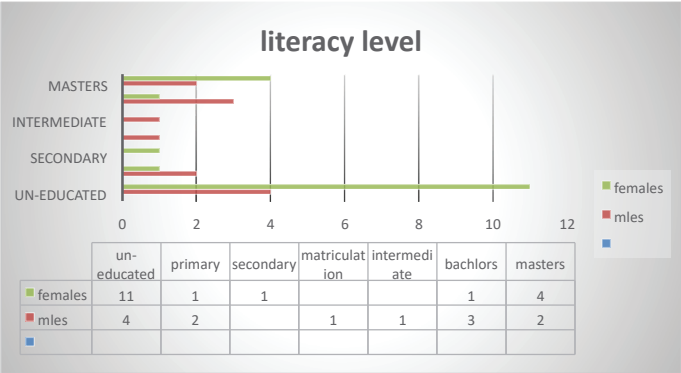
SINDH	140,914	47,854,510	24,876,186	22,972,370	5,954	10829	339,60	51.89	5.55	36,439,893	2.41
RURAL		23,021,876	11,927,892	11,091,837	2,147	10754			5.47	15,600,031	2.07
URBAN		24,832,634	12,948,294	11,880,533	3,807	10899			5.62	14,839,862	2.74
MIRPURKHAS DIVISION	28,170	4,224,945	2,213,634	2,010,774	537	11089	149,98	19.18	5.27	2,585,417	2.61
RURAL		3,414,793	1,792,654	1,621,743	396	11054			5.28	2,133,951	2.50
URBAN		810,152	420,980	389,031	141	10821			5.22	451,466	3.12
MIRPURKHAS DISTRICT	2,925	1,504,440	776,146	728,071	223	10660	514,34	28.85	5.25	1,006,329	2.13
RURAL		1,070,359	552,828	517,368	163	10685			5.15	706,154	2.21
URBAN		434,081	223,318	210,703	60	10599			5.52	300,175	1.96

languages are also spoken there like tribal Dhatki. Majority of people are engaged in agriculture and labor force work

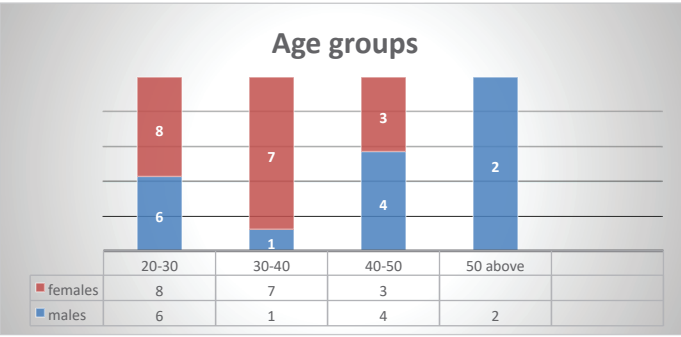
Demographic Findings



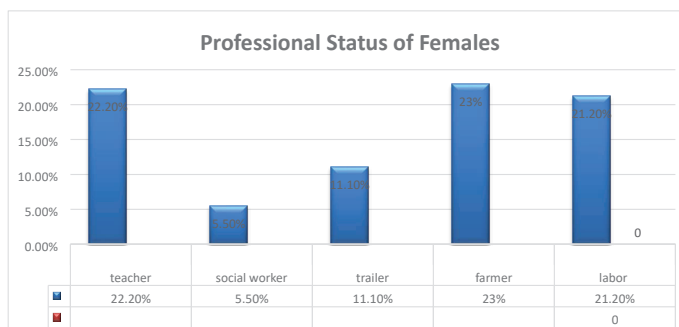
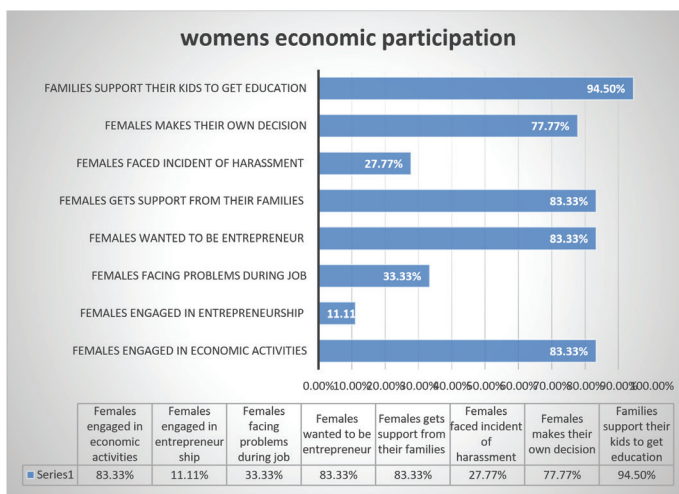
This table presents the total number of respondents, with the majority being female, accounting for 58% of the sample, while the remaining 42% were male.



This table outlines the educational levels of the respondents, revealing that the majority were uneducated, including 11 females and 4 males. Among the educated respondents, 1 female and 2 males had completed primary education, 1 female had completed secondary education, and 1 male had completed matriculation. Additionally, 1 male had completed intermediate education, while 1 female and 3 males held bachelor's degrees. Furthermore, 4 females and 2 males had attained master's degrees.

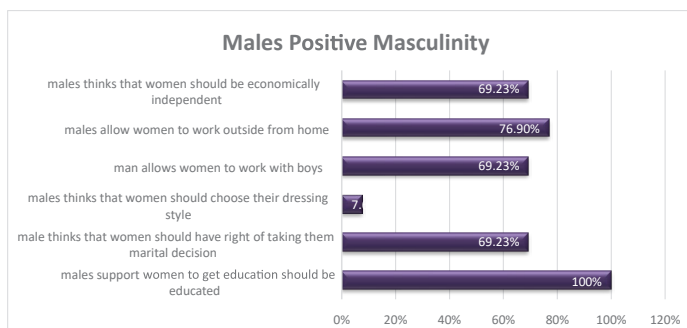


This chart explains the age distribution of the respondents. In the 20 to 30-year age range, there are 8 females and 6 males. The 30 to 40-year range includes 7 females and 1 male. For the 40 to 50-year range, there are 3 females and 4 males. In the age group above 50 years, there are 2 males.



These tables shows that the 94.50% of women's supports their family and their kids to participate in educational economy , where as 77.77% women's are participated in individual decision making and self-dependent, when 83.33% getting supportive environment from their families and those all are supporting their families economically and wanted to be entrepreneur in their life,11.11% women's are doing enterprenurship,22.20% are teachers,5.5% are social workers working in different NGOs, 23% are famers and 21.2% are doing labor jobs when 33.33% women's facing problems in job market when 27.77% women's are victim of harassment. The majority of victims of harassment are Muslims and belongs to sheikh families while few of non-Muslims like thakur and Cristian are also facing these incidents when the trend of higher job and properties is distributed among leading religious like Cristian and Muslims families

caused by higher education and majority in these areas, females belong to minority casts are discriminated on the base of religious and gender issues cause of different believes and cultural attributes among the society but these all things are neglected in schools where all Muslims and non- Muslims have equal chances of doing their studies.



This table shows the rate of positive masculinity of males, it indicates that 69.23% are in fever of women empowerment, thinks that women can take their marital decision and allows women to work with boys, 100% of males are in favor of education, when 76.90% males allow women to work outside and only 7.60% males thinks that women can choose their dressing style.

Descriptive Findings

The research provides a nuanced and comprehensive analysis of gender dynamics, economic participation, and societal constraints within a traditional and religious context.

A significant number of females are actively engaged in economic activities (83.33%); however, many are confined to low-wage, labor-intensive roles, particularly in agriculture. This is compounded by widespread illiteracy and limited educational attainment, which restrict job opportunities and perpetuate economic dependency. The gap between high entrepreneurial interest (83.33%) and low actual engagement (11.11%) highlights a disparity between potential and practical

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females, while participating in various economic activities, generally occupy less labor-intensive roles and facing difficulties compared to male, while males' supportive roles within family settings represent a positive aspect of masculinity

Rigid traditional and religious beliefs significantly restrict women's autonomy. Perceived as weaker and less

Challenges and opportunities

Women encounter significant challenges, including harassment and job-related difficulties. Women's who receive robust family support are notably motivated to pursue entrepreneurship, demonstrating a positive correlation between familial backing and entrepreneurial ambitions.

There is a positive trend in family support for both education and economic participation among females, with high levels of support reported (94.5% for education and 83.33% for economic participation). Women who receive support from their families show a strong inclination towards entrepreneurship, indicating that family backing significantly enhances their entrepreneurial aspirations.

The societal structure reveals a complex interplay between traditional beliefs, economic limitations, and

evolving gender roles. Although there is notable progress in family support and some movement towards more inclusive gender roles, entrenched cultural norms and economic constraints continue to limit women's full potential (Golden, 2006). Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that includes improving educational access, expanding economic opportunities, and enacting cultural reforms to ensure greater autonomy and empowerment for women (Inglehart, R., & Norris, P., 2003; Sen, 1999).

Recommendations

- Expand educational initiatives and resources, particularly in rural areas, to enhance literacy rates and provide opportunities for the girls / women's. This should include support for adult education and vocational training on entrepreneurship, legal policies, gender-based violence and societal issues and religious believes for both women and men.
- Develop programs that support female entrepreneurship by providing access to microfinance, business training, and mentorship. Create platforms for women to network and collaborate on business ventures and set a market where females can sale their domestic products like handicrafts and sale their products on social media.
- Facilitate job creation and skill development in agriculture like value addition, organic farming, dairy farming and kitchen guarding etc. And in industrial sectors like sport, food, medicine etc. Promote innovative initiatives and local businesses which are producing good unique products.
- Initiate community awareness campaigns to address and challenge rigid traditional and religious norms that restrict women's autonomy. Promote gender equality through media, educational programs, and community dialogues.
- Establish and enforce robust anti-harassment policies in workplaces and educational institutions. Provide training for both men and women on respectful behavior and legal rights.

- Develop and initiate programs to educate families about the benefits of supporting women's roles in education and the workforce.
- Collaborate with policymakers to advocate for laws and policies that promote gender equality and protect women's rights.

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