

TOPIC: IS EDUCATION THE ONLY WAY OF EMPOWERING WOMEN?

OUTLINE

1- Introduction

Thesis Statement: Education strengthens women's capabilities, but it is not the only way of empowering women. Broader socio-economic and legal structures also play a decisive role in shaping women's agency. While education significantly adds to the cause, the actual empowerment of women requires efforts beyond education.

2- Is education really empowering women?

3- Besides education, women can also be empowered through institutional, economic, and socio-legal mechanisms (Thesis)

- a) Ensuring equal representation in bureaucracy
- b) Increasing women's representation in parliament
- c) Ensuring equal political participation
- d) Equal pay as men in jobs
- e) Families should understand double workload on women

f) Ensuring protection laws for women

g) Empowering women through media

4. How women are empowered through education (Anti-Thesis)

a) Raises awareness of rights among masses

b) Increases job opportunities for women

c) Improves social status of women

d) Improves health literacy among women

e) Contributes to intergenerational empowerment

5. Factors indicating empowering women requires efforts beyond education (Synthesis)

a) Awareness of rights doesn't ensure their enforcement

b) Discrimination in other forms prevails in market

c) Patriarchal family structures still restrict women to household chores

d) Health-literacy cannot overcome systematic barriers

e) Educated women are restricted to household to educate their children

6- Conclusion

Essay:

History is filled with women who were a symbol of power and resilience and broke barriers without formal schooling. Women like Hazrat Khadija (RA) and Mary Kom never received formal education, yet they are still known for their contributions. Therefore, it would not be wrong to say that education strengthens capabilities of women, but it is not the only way of empowering them. Broader socio-economic and legal structures also play a decisive role in shaping women's agency. While education significantly adds to the cause, actual empowerment of women requires efforts beyond education. These efforts may include increasing women's participation in bureaucracy, parliament, and politics. Besides these women should also be given equal pay as their male counterparts and families should not over-burdenize women. Ensuring legal protections for women and increasing their representation in media can also be great contributors in the cause. Education also empowers women by awareing masses of their rights, ensuring equal job opportunities, improving their social status, and ensuring health

literacy among others. However, rights awareness does not mean anything without enforcement mechanisms. Similarly, discrimination in markets, patriarchal family structures, and systematic barriers in women's health provision clearly indicate that education alone cannot empower women.

Education is indeed a powerful tool to ensure women's empowerment. However, it is neither automatic nor absolute. It provides awareness and sometimes skills to masses, but it is not enough to ensure women's empowerment alone. It can educate the masses on what are the societal barriers, but solving them requires a broader approach. As far as the question of education empowering the women is concerned, there is no absolute answer to this. While it cannot empower women completely, it can aid to it greatly. Thus, while education is essential, true empowerment can only be achieved by a combination of education with broader structural, social, and economic reforms.

In order to empower women, education shall be a tool to ensure their equal representation in bureaucracy.

Bureaucracy is one of the most essential institutions of any country. When women hold positions in important government institutions, they gain decision making authority, influence policies, and participate in shaping national priorities. This enhances their social and political agency. For instance, Ammara Amer Khattak, a renowned CSP (Civil Servant of Pakistan) said in her interview with Dawn News that being in the bureaucracy has made her realize that women need to be on these positions in order to make their opinions matter (Dawn News, Feb 2023). Hence, equal representation of women in bureaucracy can ensure their true empowerment.

Beside bureaucracy, parliament or legislature is also an essential institution of a democratic state. Empowerment of women can be ensured by increasing their representation in the same. Legislature is responsible for making laws for the country. When women are excluded from such important institution, their rights and issues are neglected at large. Countries like Finland observed 46% of the elected members to be females which means that women are actually empowered to identify their issues and legislate on them. (The Global Economy, Dec 2024). Hence,

women can be empowered when their adequate representation is ensured in the legislature.

When women are included in bureaucracy and parliament, they are encouraged to participate in politics and succeed in securing governing positions. In Pakistan, women who take part in politics is quite low. However, those who do, secure major positions in the government. For instance, Maryam Nawaz, the chief minister of Punjab is an icon of inspiration for younger women and girls. Under her governance, Punjab has become the most advancing province of the country with 15% reduction in crime rate and 21% reduction in violent crimes (Galup survey, March 2025). Hence, increasing political participation of women can ensure their uplift.

Beside political inclusivity, ensuring financial independence of women is also requisite to empower them. This can be achieved by ensuring equal pay of working women to their male counterparts. Third world countries and ~~at~~ the global south are among those that stereotype women, thus paying lesser to women on same

grades than their male co-workers. Since finances are important for empowerment, ensuring financial independence of women can actually prove to be a big step towards their uplift.

Followed by the financial autonomy, families should understand and help women facing double workload. Women, who are financially well-to-do often have families who believe that they should do both, manage household chores and be financially independent. This is a common issue in Pakistan as well. Women who work, have to work double time to keep up with their jobs and homes. Just like Judith Butler said; we have empowered women to work outside their homes, but have forgotten to discipline men in helping women in their homes (Undoing Gender, Judith Butler, 2004). Thus, in order for women to be empowered, families must understand the dual responsibilities of women.

Beside educating families to contribute to help women, laws ensuring protection of women should also be made. Women have delicate nature and men have more power than them in terms

of physical strength. Hence, women often suffer from gender based violence in their homes and workplace. These vary from mental torture, domestic abuse, sexual abuse, and harassment and workplace. Home Based Women's Workers Federation (HBWNF) in their survey in 2024 calculated that 85% of women in Pakistan are exposed to harassment at their workplace. Due to this women are either exploited or they are forced to resign far from their jobs. Hence, ensuring laws for empowering women is a necessity.

While laws are requisite, media is also a great source to empower women. Digital media is accessible everywhere around the world. By ensuring the inclusivity of women on huge media platforms, the marginalization of women can be actually addressed. These empowerment movements can be carried out via digital platforms, newspapers, radios, among others. For instance, movements like Malala's Fund, Black lives matter, and #MeToo Movement gained global recognition which ultimately led to the resolution of their issues. These media platforms can also be used

to amplify the voices of women and ensuring their uplift. Thus, women should also be empowered by ensuring their access and inclusion to media platforms.

While these broader areas tend to empower women, education is a domain which cannot be overlooked. By educating masses, awareness of women rights is spread. It is necessary to educate women about their legal and social rights. Most of the women in rural areas are unaware of what they can have and if subject to violence of any kind, what remedies do they have available. For instance, educated women in India and Pakistan have increasingly used legal mechanisms to fight patriarchal families and spouses to get their fair share of inheritance. Thus, education can empower women by letting them know of their legal rights and remedies.

Besides awareness of rights, educating women also increases job opportunities for them. Corporate jobs that pay well, require at least graduate degrees or well reputed diplomas. If women are left uneducated,

They can never secure these jobs. This will lead them to rely on their spouse or guardians for finances. This financial dependence later on leads to mental and physical torture. Hence, educating women is requisite for their financial empowerment.

Financially empowered women observe a respectable social status. Since they become the breadwinners or at least start contributing towards finances of the families, the society starts looking at them with a sense of respect. When women are financially independent, their families actually start listening to their decisions and this leads to a more egalitarian decision making in the households. This shift can be seen in the elite societies where women do not need to do the household chores after their jobs and work hours. Hence, educating women can actually elevate their status in the social settings.

When women are educated, they understand their health issues and needs better. Since women are mostly the family makers, they need to know and understand the family's health issues and needs. Women who are

unaware of the feminine health and hygiene experience issues during menstruation as well as child birth.

According to the 2019 maternal mortality survey of UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) in Pakistan, the maternal mortality rate due to lack of prenatal care is 186 deaths per 100,000 live births. This is why educating women on their health needs is crucial. Thus, educating women actually empowers women.

Beside this, educated women can actually contribute to intergenerational empowerment. Women can educate their next generation. Mothers with education are more likely to prioritize their children's education, schooling, and awareness. UNICEF reports show that the children of educated mothers are more likely to pursue education and succeed in life and careers. Hence, education empowers women not only individually but also acts as a catalyst for broader societal progress.

While education is indeed very important, it alone cannot empower women. It definitely spreads awareness of their rights, but it doesn't ensure or guarantee the enforcement of these

rights. The rights are made by legislature and enforced by executives or bureaucracy. Merely educating women of their rights cannot ensure that these rights are enough to address their problems nor guarantees their enforcement. In order to enforce these rights and ensure their effectiveness, women should be made a general and substantial part of legislature and bureaucracy. Thus, education alone is not enough to ensure enforcement of rights.

Beside this, although education ensures numerous job opportunities for women, it does not end the discrimination of the market against them. Workplaces often do not hire female staff because of the fear of their paid maternity leaves and other stereotypes. Even if they do hire women, they are often underpaid as compared to their male counterparts. Pakistan being a developing country itself experiences this discrimination among women. About 70% of the women in corporate sector are the victims of ~~under~~ under pay. (Dawn Newspaper, Unequal Wages, 2025). Thus, educating women does not

eliminate the stereotypes of the job market.

While such stereotypes dominate, the social status of women also suffers due to the patriarchal mindsets of the families who restrict women to household chores. While education empowers women to pursue their careers, their traditional family values disapprove of this and term this as disregard of the family honor. These patriarchs then confine these educated women to the household chores. Hence, although education empowers women to gain financial independence, it also cannot change the mindsets and pressures from the families of these women.

While this patriarchal culture dominates, health literacy among women cannot overcome the structural and systematic barriers in this regard. Women are being educated on their health need, but on the other hand, the feminine and sanitary products are levied with luxury tax. This leaves women unable to take care of their health and hygiene. The problem had been discussed in the Express Tribune under

the article "The Period Tax" in Oct 2025. Hence, while education is helpful, it alone is not enough to empower women.

While health literacy and the systematic barriers remain a big problem, educated women are restricted to their household to educate their children.

While it is indeed beneficial for educated women to aid into inter-generational empowerment, patriarchal values tend to make it their sole responsibility. According to the report of 'Institute of Fiscal Studies' named 'The rise of women's employment in UK' it was noted that 40% of Pakistan's undergraduate and graduate women were actually unemployed and sewing their home in 2021. While educating generations is indeed a virtue, confining women to this actually hinders their empowerment. Hence, educated women ^{being} restricted to household ^{hinders} their empowerment.

From the above discussion, it is imperative to recognize that while education is indeed important to uplift the status of women, it alone is not enough to empower women.

Other broader factors are also requisite to achieve the cause. Women empowerment, in its true sense, can be achieved by enabling bureaucratic, parliamentary, and political access to women. To ensure their overall empowerment, it is essential to empower them financially as well as legally. While education can increase awareness among masses, it cannot actually enforce the rights of women. In order to benefit from the empowerment of women by education, they need to be included in the important institutions of the government as well. Since no nation can succeed without its women, it is requisite to ensure all the measures be taken in order to address the issues of women empowerment. As rightly said by the Hillary Clinton; "When a woman participates in the economy, everyone benefits."