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Women's empowerment and current contraceptive use among married women in Punjab: In-depth analysis of PDHS 2017-18

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Abstract---Background: It is well-known fact that less empowered married women have less uptake of contraception. Indicators of women's empowerment and demographic characteristics have strong influence on current use of contraceptive methods. The core objective of this paper is to assess the relationship between the indicators of women's empowerment (women's participation in household decision making, ownership of assets and control over her income) and current contraceptive use. Methods and Materials: In the PDHS2017-18, 10825 married women of reproductive age (15-49 years) were covered in the province of Punjab, Province. Association between indicators of women's empowerment and current contraceptive use are showed by using descriptive analysis, Cross-tabulation and Chi-Square test. Multi-variate binary logistic regression is performed to assess the net

effect of indicators of women's empowerment and background characteristics on the current use of contraceptive methods. Results: Results show that women's empowerment is a recognized tool to improve the current use of contraceptive. It is also observed that women who have not participation in household decision making, women who have not ownership of any assets and women who have not control over own income have less use of any contraceptive methods. Conclusion: It can be concluded that women's empowerment has a significant association with the current use of contraceptive. It can be gauged by the findings that contraceptive uptake can be improved by improving women status in the Punjab.

Keywords---women's empowerment, reproductive health, family planning services, contraceptive prevalence rate, unmet family planning needs.

Introduction

No one can deny the fact that Pakistani society is male dominant. Man is vested with wild powers to subjugate the women in every sphere of life. Women are considered as subservient to the men. Surprisingly, they have no control over their sexuality. They have no decision making power to decide the numbering and spacing of children. Women with less educational status, no participation in household decision making and no ownership of assets are treated as commodity. In contrast, it is evident that women with higher educational level, active participation in household hold decision making and ownership of assets have better decision making power regarding their reproductive health. Therefore, this research study is conducted to assess the relationship between women's empowerment and current contraceptive use among married women (15-49) in Punjab, Pakistan.

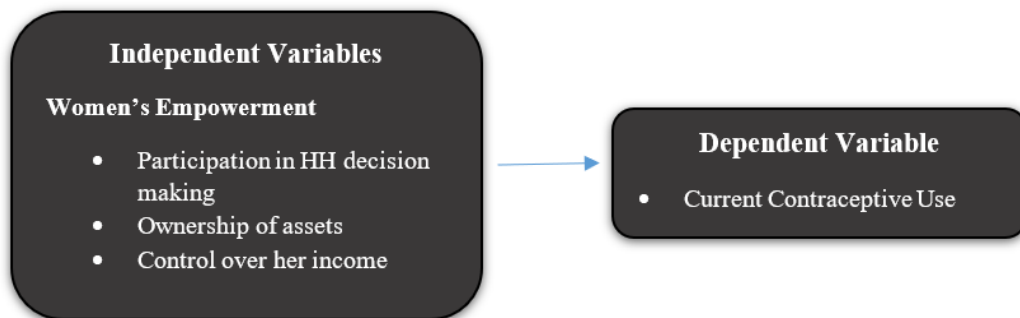
Women's empowerment refer to the provision of equitable productive opportunities and conducive working environment in order to strengthen the socio-economic status of women in the society. It diminishes the sense of dependency and encourages the sense of independency (Stoebenau & Malhotra, 2011). The term contraception is denoted as "use of any methods to delay the pregnancy and to ensure the safe sexual contacts with his/her partner (Nordqvist, 2009). It is proved that women's empowerment and current contraceptive use are closely linked. It enables women to decide about the numbering of children according to their available resources. The International Conference on Population and Development in 1994 highlighted that women are less empower relative to men. Further, it is recognized that women have restricted access to reproductive health and family planning services. It is also concluded that restrained access of women to family planning services delivery network is a major stumbling block in the way achieving optimum level of current contraceptive use.

Research Objective

The core objective of this paper is to assess the relationship between the indicators of women's empowerment (women's participation in household decision making, ownership of assets and control over her income) and current contraceptive use.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework seeks to establish the relationship between the indicators of women's empowerment and current contraceptive use. The independent variables are the selected indicators of women empowerment are (I) Participation in Household decision making (II) Ownership of assets, and (III) Control over her income.



Research Methodology

The current Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey 2017-18 is used for this research study. The dependent variable of this research paper is current contraceptive use of contraceptive methods. The response categories were recoded as 1 for 'yes' and 2 for 'no'. The women's empowerment is measured by three independent variables as (1) Women's participation in household decision making (2) Ownership of assets, and (3) control over her income.

Women's participation in household decision making is also measured by asking about who usually makes decisions about (1) respondents healthcare (2) major household purchases, and (3) visits to family and relatives? Ownership of assets also has two questions in PDHS 2017-18. One is asked about do you have own house alone or jointly? Second is asked about do you have own land alone or jointly? The response categories was recoded as 1 for 'yes' and 2 for 'no'. Control over own income by married women is another key indicator of women's empowerment in PDHS 2017-18. This question is simply coded as 1 for 'yes' and 2 for 'no'.

The data set of the province of the Punjab covered 10825 married women and analyzed using SPSS version 25.0. Descriptive statistics is done to know the accurate frequency and percentage. The chi-square test also applied at the

significant level of 5%. Binary logistic regression is used to find out the net effect of indicators of women's empowerment and demographic characteristics on the current use of contraceptive methods.

Results and Discussion

This section deals with the statistical analysis i.e. Frequency and percentage by descriptive analysis, bi-variate analysis by cross tabulation and multi-variate analysis by using binary logistic regression.

Descriptive Analysis

Table 1: Background Characteristics of Respondents

Background Characteristics	Category	Percent	Number
Age	15-24	6.3	687
	25-34	34.6	3750
	35+	59.0	6388
Number of Living Children	0	.2	25
	1-2	17.0	1845
	3-4	40.3	4358
	5+	42.5	4597
Educational Status	Illiterate	48.3	5227
	Primary	20.9	2265
	Secondary	20.5	2217
	Higher	10.3	1116
Residential Place	Urban	36.9	3991
	Rural	63.1	6834
Access to Mass Media	Yes	84.0	9094
	No	16.0	1727
Working Status	Yes	23.3	2517
	No	76.7	8304

The above table shows the percentage distribution of women interviewed, by background characteristics including age, number of living children, educational status, place of residence, access to mass media and work status. The number of women age 25-34 (34.6%) is greater than women age 15-24 (6.3%). There is also a similar pattern of increasing percentage (59 percent) with age 35 plus. The percentage of women with 3-4 children (40.3 percent) is higher than women with 1-2 children (17.0 percent). Similarly, an increasing percentage pattern (42.5) is seen with growing number of children.

The respondents' educational status has an important impact on women's empowerment and involvement in contraceptive use. Overall, 48.3 percent of all respondents are illiterate, 20.9 percent are primary, 20.5 percent are secondary and just 10.3 percent of all respondents are of higher education. Overall, the distribution of respondents by place of residence indicates that female

respondents are much more likely to be rural than female respondents in urban (63.1 percent) (36.9 percent).

In a country like Pakistan, where a vast number of women are illiterate or have no formal education, informal outlets such as mass media may play a significant role in fostering women's empowerment and contraceptive actions. As expected, the percentage of media access is much higher (84.0 per cent). In fact, only twenty three per cent of respondents engaged in jobs other than their daily housework during the 12 months preceding the study.

Table 2: Current use of Contraceptives according to empowerment Indicators

Empowerment Indicators	Categories	Current Contraceptive Use	p= Value	Number of Women
Participation in HH decision making	Yes	53.4	0.000	6049
	No	45.5		4213
Ownership of Assets	Yes	54.7	0.003	539
	No	48.1		10172
Control over her income	Yes	53.2	0.000	6049
	No	47.8		3316

P value: significant at 5%

Data on women who either used any form of contraceptive were analyzed in the above table. The dimensions of women empowerment were broadly categorized as: (I) Participation in household decision-making, (II) Ownership of assets and (III) Control of income. Two measures have been established for each dimension of women using or not using contraceptives of any kind and for overall women's empowerment: I Participation in household decision-making, (II) Ownership of assets and (III) Control of income carried out separately with contraceptive use. Women's empowerment is important in the decision-making process of contraception.

As such, we observed that the proportion of contraception use by women respondents was high in empowered women (Participation in Household Decision Taking (53.4%), Ownership of assets (54.7%) and control over her Income (53.2%). In the above table, the level of contraceptive use in women respondents is statistically significantly correlated with the empowerment of women (Participation in household decision-making and control over their income) at $p < 0.001$. It is also stated that the use of contraceptives in women respondents is statistically significantly correlated with the empowerment status of women at $p < 0.001$, except for the ownership of assets.

Multivariate Analysis Results

Table 3: Odd ratios from binary logistic regression analysis showing factors associated with the current contraceptive use among married women in Punjab, PDHS 2017-18

Variables	Categories	Model PDHS-2017-18			
		O.R*	95 C.I		
			Lower	Upper	
Empowerment Indicators	Participation in HH decision making	Yes	1.372***	1.267	1.484
		No (Ref)			
	Ownership of Assets	Yes	1.302***	1.094	1.550
		No (Ref)			
	Control over her income	Yes	1.242***	1.141	1.352
		No (Ref)			

Dependent Variable: Currently Contraceptive Use

(*OR: Odd Ratio) (***)Highly Significant Association), (N.S: Not Significant)

The association between empowerment of women, background status of women and current use of contraceptives and quasi-use of contraceptives was analyzed throughout the Chi square test (X^2) on explanatory data. A p-value of < 0.05 has been found to have a statistically significant. Relationships between the factors of contraceptive use were evaluated by using logistic regression models to identify odds ratios (OR). The dimensions of women empowerment were broadly categorized as: (I) Participation in household decision-making, (II) Ownership of assets and (III) Control of income. Significance relationship has been established for each dimension of women using or not using contraceptives of any kind and for overall women's empowerment: (I) Participation in household decision-making, (II) Ownership of assets and (III) Control of income. Women's empowerment is essential to the decision-making phase of contraception. Data on the empowerment of women with quantitative measures (Participation in household decision-making, Ownership of assets and Income Control) and the use of contraceptives revealed a very important association.

The data collection of nationally representative Pakistan Demographic Health Surveys (2017–18) was evaluated in this analysis. The odds with using contraceptive methods were significantly high among women who reported participation in household decision-making (OR 1.372) compared to ownership of assets (OR 1.302) and control of income (OR 1.242). Likewise, the odd ratio of using contraception methods were significantly higher for those respondents who indicated any media exposure (OR 0.792).

Conclusion

In South Asia, Pakistan is being one of the counties to start a national family planning program, but still has had a limited success in achieving desired outcomes. Women's empowerment is an imperative factor for good reproductive

health. In this paper, researcher examined the association between the three indicators of women's empowerment: (I) Participation in household decision-making, (II) Ownership of assets and (III) Control of income, status of women and its background characteristics with the use of contraceptive methods. The study's findings show a strong association between women's empowerment and the use of current contraceptive methods.

The study also indicates that demographic factors i.e. women's age, educational status, number of children, working status, and residential area play have a substantial impact on the use of contraceptives. It is concluded that the women's empowerment is essential to the decision-making phase of contraception. It is suggested that country like Pakistan, there must be vast opportunities for women in every field of life. Implications with respect to future steps, the government and policy makers strategically should devise a national plan to promote the empowerment of women in relation to the household decision making, economic independency and unrestricted mobility. It is also gauged by this secondary research that women's empowerment is a vital instrument to improve the current use of contraceptive among married women (15-49) in the Punjab, Pakistan.

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