



# IMPROVING MENTAL HEALTH THROUGH SOCIOECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT: EXPLORING THE ROLE OF VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP FOR GIRLS IN PAKISTAN

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## Abstract

*Mental health issues are still a serious issue in Pakistan, especially for underprivileged groups like women and girls. The impact of entrepreneurship and vocational training on Pakistani females' socioeconomic empowerment and improved mental health outcomes. By addressing the link between socioeconomic variables and mental health, this study emphasizes the need for comprehensive treatments that may break the cycle of poverty and mental health problems experienced by girls in Pakistan. The study investigates how entrepreneurship and vocational training might enhance the mental health of women in Pakistan in order to empower girls and foster independence, self-confidence, and a sense of purpose. Quantitative nature of research was used to achieve the objectives. It also considers how these actions could defy gender stereotypes and promote social mobility, leading to better mental health outcomes. The study highlights the important it is to tailor entrepreneurship initiatives and vocational training courses to the specific needs and cultural context of Pakistani girls. These programs give females the chance to develop their skills in areas including small-scale agriculture, handmade goods, technical innovation, and textiles, which can increase their employability and entrepreneurial skills. The findings of this study contribute to the body of information on socioeconomic empowerment and mental health, particularly in the context of Pakistan.*

**Keywords:** Socio-economic empowerment, Entrepreneurship, Mental Health, Vocational Training.

## INTRODUCTION

In Pakistan, mental health is still a significant problem, especially for disadvantaged groups like women and girls (Abbas et al., 2021). The complex interaction between socioeconomic factors and mental health results in a vicious cycle whereby hardship and few opportunities increase mental health difficulties and vice versa. If we want to break this cycle and give girls the power they deserve, we must look into cutting-edge techniques that address both their financial needs and mental health problems (Afza et al., 2010). In spite of the complexity of these issues, this study explores the



potential of entrepreneurship and vocational training as a means of addressing the socioeconomic needs and mental health of girls in Pakistan (Danso Boahene, 2021). Girls who take part in vocational training programs develop knowledge and real-world skills in a range of sectors, empowering them to find fulfilling careers and break the cycle of poverty. Entrepreneurship programs also offer a path to self-employment, fostering autonomy and agency while also challenging gender norms that restrict girls to a limited range of vocations (Bushra & Wajiha, 2015; Goheer, 2003).

By evaluating the corpus of qualitative research and recent literature, this study aims to provide light on the ways in which entrepreneurship and vocational training can enhance the mental well-being of females in Pakistan (Hussain & Sahibzada, 2023). It investigates how these interventions could encourage social support networks, a sense of purpose, and confidence, all of which contribute to improve the outcomes of mental health (Iqbal et al., 2022). Exploration is also given to the possibility for obtaining socioeconomic independence through improved employability, revenue generation, and potential for further advancement (Kamberidou, 2020; Khalid et al., 2020). The importance of tailoring entrepreneurship and vocational training programs to Pakistani girls' particular needs and cultural contexts is also covered in the paper. It emphasizes the value of sectors including textile, fine arts, technology services, and small-scale agriculture that can provide sustainable means of subsistence (Maqbool et al., 2021). It also draws attention to the necessity of legislative actions that remove barriers based on gender, advance equal opportunities, and create environments that allow girls to flourish both materially and intellectually (Muhammad et al., 2021).

### OBJECTIVES

The study's objectives include; determining the socioeconomic position and mental well-being of girls in Pakistan, investigating the value of vocational education for girls, and investigating the use of entrepreneurship skills to increase girls' socioeconomic empowerment.

### LITERATURE

The empowerment of women has the ability to significantly alter both the economic status of the women themselves as well as the communities in which they live (Dwivedi et al., 2014). However, it has been challenging to define and characterize empowerment (Cheston & Kuhn, 2002). Empowerment, according to Kabeer (2005), is a process that allows people who have been denied the ability to make decisions to regain that ability. In the same way, assert that women's empowerment entails giving them the same opportunities and capacity to make decisions as males in a range of contexts, such as the social, cultural, political, economic, ecological, and civil spheres (Abbas et al., 2021). Pakistani females' ability to become economically independent and experience better psychological outcomes may be aided through entrepreneurialism and vocational training (Khalid et al., 2020). Girls in Pakistan face many obstacles on their path to intellectual and economic advancement (Batool et al., 2021). They are unable to reach their full potential because of gender discrimination, ingrained cultural norms, a lack of educational options, and other issues. As a result, they experience more mental health problems like anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. Their lack of financial independence makes their lives even more precarious because they depend on others for support and are frequently subjected to inclement weather. Women must be empowered in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and sustainable development, particularly through providing them with access to vocational training and education (Kabeer, 2005; Rauf et al., 2021). The provision of vocational training for women and the support of their skill development for employment serves as a change agent, strengthening women's empowerment and reducing gender disparities in addition to stimulating growth (Rauf et al., 2021). Vocational skills serve as a link between jobs and the workforce, helping to boost family production, employment opportunities, revenue generation, and overall sustainable development.

Non-governmental organisation (NGOs) give self-awareness, legal assistance, and initiatives for basic education, technical education, and self-employment, according to Ahamad et al. (2015), who claim that NGOs play a critical role in empowering women.

These organisation employ a number of strategies, including as vocational education and training in industries like weaving and soap-making, to improve gender equality and women's empowerment (Manuh & Anyidoho, 2010). Hassan & Forhad (2013) assert that the empowerment of women through

the work of charities and volunteer organisations fosters long-term development in the rural areas of developing countries.

According to the concept provided by the Brundtland Commission, sustainable development aspires to meet present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own (Saba & almas, 2018; Stephen, 2018). The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) place a particular focus on the role that women's empowerment and equal opportunity for women play in achieving each goal (Jerneck et al., 2017; Razavi, 2016). The promotion of gender parity and the engagement of women in all political, economic, environmental, and social decision-making processes, according to Noor et al. (2022) in order to advance socially and economically and to meet the goals of sustainable development, it is essential to empower women through the acquisition of occupational skills and to care for girls' mental health (Rehman et al., 2020).

The involvement of NGOs and the recognition of gender equality as a fundamental principle of sustainable development serve to stress the significance of women's empowerment in transforming communities and improving general well-being (Abbas et al., 2021; Khalid et al., 2020). Finally, by highlighting the potential of entrepreneurship and vocational training as tools for improving the quality of life for girls in Pakistan, this study contributes to the body of knowledge on socioeconomic empowerment and mental health. These programs can pave the way for a more upbeat and inclusive future since they enable girls to thrive and contribute to the development of their communities and the nation as a whole by promoting mental health and enhancing economic opportunities (Batool et al., 2021).

## METHODOLOGY

Quantitative research approach was used for conducting the research, to explore the role of entrepreneurship and vocational training with regards to improve the mental health and socio-economic empowerment of girls in Pakistan. About 200 girls were selected as sample from different regions of Pakistan. Stratified sampling technique was applied which was based on the age, socioeconomic status, and educational background. Cronbach alpha of structured questionnaire was .854. Descriptive and inferential statistics were applied including correlation analysis and regression analysis to find relationship between study variables.

### Data Analysis

**Table 1** *Demographic of the Respondents*

	n	%
Age		
20-24	46	23
25-29	37	18.5
30-34	73	36.5
35-30	44	22
Qualification		
Intermediate	41	20.5
Bachelors	91	45.5
Masters	49	24.5
Others	19	9.5
Employment status		
Employed	109	54.5
Unemployed	91	45.5

Table 1 shows that most of the girls are from age 20-24. Where girls mostly have bachelors level education which allows them to be economically empowered. It also shows that 54.5 % are employed in different sectors.

**Table 2** *Correlation between Mental Health, Socioeconomic Empowerment, Vocational Training and Entrepreneurship of Girls in Pakistan*

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Age	1	.91**	.78**	.80**	-.40**	.41**	.62**
Qualification		1	.75**	.57**	-.66**	.45**	.56**
Employment Status			1	.55**	.20**	.52**	.63*
MH				1	.91**	.13*	.17**
SE					1	.33**	.33**
VT						1	.71**
EN							1

Note: MH=Mental Health, SE=socioeconomic status, VT=Vocational Training, EN=Entrepreneurship.

Table 2 indicates the relationship between variables, all demographic variables including age have significant correlation with mental health .80\*\*, socioeconomic empowerment -.40\*\*, vocational training .41\*\*, and entrepreneurship .62\*\*. Qualification also indicates that significant correlation value of mental health .57\*\*, socioeconomic empowerment -.66\*\*, vocational training .45\*\*, and entrepreneurship .56\*\*. Employment of girls also effects on the variables which have significant correlation with mental health .55\*\*, socioeconomic empowerment .20\*\*, vocational training .52\*\*, and entrepreneurship .63\*\*. The table also shows that girls who have vocational trainings and business owners have stable economic status. Vocational training and entrepreneurship have significant impact on the social economic empowerment and psychological health of Pakistani girls.

### DISCUSSION

Pakistan is a developing country with a male-dominated social structure. As a result, women have little opportunities to start their own businesses, yet data reveals that owing to knowledge for all, girls are now receiving valuable knowledge. Taking charge of your own fate: According to Byrne et al. (2019), women's "strong curiosity" and "passion" can lead to new business endeavors. Women are their own bosses and have entire freedom to act as they see fit. The desire to achieve one's own success and accomplishment drives the motivation to establish a firm, and economic rewards may become less significant for female entrepreneurs (Rehman et al., 2020).

The findings also demonstrate how social, economic, and cultural factors might predict women's empowerment, which benefits Pakistani girls' mental health. The data revealed a high association between a woman's age and her level of empowerment, which increased stronger as women aged. The findings revealed that education was a very good predictor of independence among women. Given that education increases autonomy through increased knowledge, skills, and self-confidence, as well as mental health and professional opportunities, it will soon provide revenue and mobility for those seeking healthcare (Batool et al., 2021).

Girls who want to be entrepreneurs are willing to take risks and follow these guidelines. Knowledge classification occurs when an organization stops teach (Noor et al., 2022). Significant social assets: Women from less developed countries generally labor in traditional home crafts and rely on these social interactions. Women in Pakistan use their unofficial connections, which are mostly made up of extended families, friends, and neighbors. These social interactions enable access to critical resources such as human capital, expertise, money, and so on. The success of women's entrepreneurship is considered to be the foundation of a successful society (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016)

### CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that girls in Pakistan have opportunities to empower themselves socioeconomically through different vocational training. Vocational training have a significant role in empowering girls and improving their psychological and mental health.

It also concluded that mostly girls are economically strong through earning from their small enterprises or businesses.

These girl are also the strong pillars of our nations that their mental health is as important as for others, when they are self-sufficient and self-confident, they make their own living through their own abilities and skills. Findings concludes that initiatives of vocational training and entrepreneurship

awareness skills for girls are important. Girls in Pakistan trained themselves to be strong economically and this self-confidence and empowerment improves their mental health, that they are not dependent on others. They are the empowered women who can achieve whatever they want to achieve through determination.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the findings of the study, it is highly recommended for educated girls in Pakistan to spread awareness regarding skills enhancements and achievements. Because of the socioeconomic or cultural background it is very hard for girls to step up for themselves. It is indicated in the study that mostly girls have bachelor's level education that means that in the current era, Pakistani societies are giving importance to the girl's education and their skills and economic growth. It is recommended that authorities in Pakistan might encourage girls to get free vocational training through scholarship and other platforms started by the government.

The study has some limitations, it focused on the demographic including age, education and employment but for further research might explore the factors related to their cultural background, geographical areas and their training and skills. Further research might be conducted on the entrepreneur girls to get better insights of their achievement regarding their economic achievements and psychological wellbeing.

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