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Analyzing the Impact of Income Inequality on Women Empowerment in Punjab, Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Present study investigates the impact of income inequality on women empowerment in the districts of Punjab, Pakistan. The data of income inequality, women empowerment and other variables of interest are taken from four waves of Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey for the period of 2008 to 2018. Three aspects including education, health and political participation of women have been considered in the measurement of women empowerment index. Fixed effect approach is applied for the empirical evaluation of data. The empirical outcomes show that a reduction in income inequality is significantly helpful to enhance women empowerment among all districts.

1 Introduction

Human development is a process to enlarge the choices of people. This process has certain dimensions such as equity, opportunity, equality and human empowerment. Human empowerment is most important in all these (Ul Haq, 1995). It covers expansion in knowledge, healthy life, self-respect, freedom of choice and decent standard of living. Equal reflection of men and women in the process of human empowerment is highly desired and emphasized in Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's-5) which focus on gender equality (Nation's, 2010). Globally, it is perceived that women can get economic independence, self-confidence and self-steams through empowerment which is directly related to their economic, social and political participation. Generally, two justification can be given for the importance of women empowerment in the policy framework. Firstly, equity among gender (Bertay et al., 2024; Stratigaki, 2005) while the second argument is that, women empowerment has central and significant role in development via improving women's capabilities by eliminating the fences to achieve economic advancement and human development (Cuberes & Teignier, 2014; Kabeer & Natali, 2013).

Moreover, improvement in women empowerment helps to increase education and health facilities affecting human capital and economic growth positively (Aghaei et al., 2023; Hsieh & Schwartz, 2018). Continuous enhance human development leads to economic well-being (Becker et al., 1990; Doepke & Tertilt, 2016) while lowering of women empowerment indicates unproductive usage of human capital that damages the process of economic development and human development. So, women participation in various aspects of life may increase human and societal development. In case of Pakistan, literature highlights different scenarios (Rasul, 2014). Women are struggling for their equal

rights particularly in developing economies of the world similar to Pakistan, where lower gender development can be observed. Pakistan ranked in last thirty countries having lower gender development (Undp, 2016). It is not the phenomenon of Pakistan only but also the other Islamic States which denoted peculiar because of lower indicator values for female participation in parliament and labor force (Carlsen, 2020). Unfortunately, female represent the half of the world population which means half of its potential but still they earn twenty-three percent of labor market globally and stagnates social prosperity. However, gender equality is not only a fundamental human right but it also provide basis for prosperous peaceful, and sustainable world. Ending discrimination against female has a trickledown effect across various areas of development that can help to achieve SDG's (UN, 2023).

Therefore, it is important to explore the implications, consequences and determinants of women empowerment particularly in developing countries like Pakistan. Present study is an attempt to investigate the impact of income inequality on women empowerment among the districts of Punjab (Akram). Inequality may affect women empowerment because it has some adverse consequences for human development outcomes such as poor health is associated with more unequal societies (Macinko et al., 2003; Subramanian & Kawachi, 2004; Wagstaff & Van Doorslaer, 2000; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2006). In highly unequal societies mental illness, obesity, lower life expectancy, and high prevalence of HIV infection are observed (Babones, 2008; Carlsen, 2020; Kondo et al., 2009; Pickett, Kelly, et al., 2005; Ram, 2009; Subramanian & Kawachi, 2004; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2006).

Consequently, to enhance the development process it's compulsory to redistribute the income from rich to poor to enhance development (Attari et al., 2017; Dasgupta & Ray, 1987; Preston & Green, 2005), increase in development may affect positively to women empowerment. Because, more equal societies have more social cohesion, better solidarity, less likelihood of conflict among different ethno-linguistic groups (Deaton, 2003; Tamang, 2024; Van Staveren & Pervaiz, 2017) better performance in terms of development (Easterly, 2001) and economic growth (Pervaiz & Chaudhary, 2015) enlarge their citizens' choices by offering more social capital, public goods and social support (Pickett & Wilkinson, 2009). However, the hypothesis "inequality is harmful for women empowerment" is rarely explored in literature. Present study has tried to investigate the harms of income inequality for women empowerment in Punjab (Akram) by utilizing panel data of thirty-four districts for the period of 2008-2018, a panel fixed effect model has been applied. The remaining part of the study is organized in following sections: Section 2 reviews the existing literature of inequality and human empowerment. Section 3 explains data and methodological procedure. Section 4 interprets empirical results. Section 5 discusses empirical findings and conclusion is stated in section 6.

2 Review of Literature

"Women perform 66% of the world's work, and produce 50% of the food, yet earn only 10% of the income and own 1% of the property. Whether the issue is improving education in the developing world or fighting global climate change, or addressing nearly any other challenge we face, empowering women is a critical part of the equation" (Clinton, 2009).

Literature relating the impact of income inequality on women empowerment in Pakistani context is scarce. However, discussion on socioeconomic and development implications of inequality has become one of the critical issues for researchers and policy makers. We broadened our research scope to bridge this research gap. It is a matter of fact that patriarchal societies like Pakistan, religious blinding, controlled marriages, and male dominated social system place women in disadvantaged positions (Kohtamäki et al., 2024).

Unfortunately, most of the researchers have been examined the impact of different forms of inequality on development outcomes containing Gross Domestic Product (GDP), GDP per capita, GDP growth rate, social capital, education, health, human well-being, criminality, living standard, unemployment, corruption, environmental degradation, capital formation and gender inequality. Literature on

inequality and development proposes the channels through which income inequality prevail within countries, among countries and regions, transformation of economy from agriculture to industrial sector (Kuznets, 1955; Thorbecke, 2013) higher rate of inflation (Walsh & Yu, 2012) fiscal policies (Atkinson et al., 2011) technical progress and globalization and productivity differences between developing and developed countries(Atolia et al., 2023; Atolia & Prasad, 2011). It is recognized that income inequality holds back growth in the developing countries (Barro, 2000) because of credit constraints of households, imperfect credit markets, political instability, extent of poverty, ethnic strife and social conflicts (Alesina & Rodrik, 1994; Easterly, 2007; Helpman, 2006; Murphy et al., 1989; Piketty, 2014; Sukiassyan, 2007; Venieris & Gupta, 1986). Reduction in the process of economic growth perpetually clogged other human development indicators (Alesina & Perotti, 1996). Alesina & Rodrik (Alesina & Rodrik) supported negative association between income inequality and economic growth, further they explained that tax policies and rate of inequality determined the level of growth (Alesina & Rodrik, 1994).

Higher rate of inequality can reduce investment due to the existence of socio-political instability and weak governance (OJO, 2021). It also controls the ability of low income households to spend on health, education, physical capital and stop income mobility (Corak, 2013; Galor & Zeira, 1993; Yang & Qiu, 2016) which may affect adversely to women empowerment (Alesina & Perotti, 1996; De La Croix & Doepke, 2003; Mariella, 2023; Perotti, 1996) conclude that inequality negatively affect access of education and human capital formation. Lower human capital development generates class differences which reduces women empowerment (Kabeer, 2020; McCall, 2001). It shows that in the presence of income inequality, there is poor economic growth which keeps the level of household income low and people are bound to spend little on education, health which can be reduced women empowerment.

In contrast, few studies conclude the positive impact of inequality on economic growth (Aghion et al., 1998; Benabou, 1996; Bourguignon, 1990; Forbes, 2000; Li & Zou, 1998; Ratnawati, 2020; Sutanto et al., 2024; Voitchovsky, 2005). However increasing impact of inequality determined from panel of countries in short run economic growth (Forbes, 2000) and it depends upon the initial distribution of income and form of inequality (Chen, 2003; Voitchovsky, 2005) along with investment pattern. Inequality can spur growth through empowering elite class to invest more for higher incentives, innovation and promoting entrepreneurship as a results people will get employment to improve health education and standard of living. And the differences in rate of returns to education can also help to encourage people to seek higher education. Some other studies, claim no association between income distribution and economic development like, (Lee & Roemer, 2001; Lopez, 2004; Panizza, 2002; I. Shin, 2012) and (K.-Y. Shin & Kong, 2014). But, generally it is assumed that economies with unequal distribution of income have class division (Benhabib & Rustichini, 1996), political disturbance (Santos & Souza, 2007), higher rate of crime and violence, high level of child and maternal mortality (Spencer, 2004), lower life expectancy (Wilkinson, 1992), low level of human capital (Gregorio & Lee, 2002) and higher gender gap (Sharma et al., 2021) which is detrimental for human and women empowerment.

Wilkinson & Pickett (Chiu) explained that inequality is harmful for social cohesion of society which means larger class differences and lower human capital formation. This notion is also forward by some other social scientists in literature (Perotti, 1996). Golar & Zeira (Galor & Zeira) hypothesize that higher inequality implies larger share of population is in liquidity constrained that's why society accumulate less human capital which further leads lower development. Women empowerment can be affected from lower level of human development (Galor & Zeira, 1993). In contrast, economies with lower level of income inequality have higher level of human capital formation (Deaton, 2007; Laaksonen et al., 2009) human development process empowers human to recognize their potential, improve self-confidence and lead lives of dignity. Improvement in human capital leads human empowerment including women empowerment. Nonetheless, the harms of inequality for women

empowerment is need to explore in literature. Present study has tried to fulfill this gap by investigating the impact of income inequality on women empowerment.

3 Methodological Framework

Present study has examined the effect of income inequality on women empowerment. Women empowerment is quantified through constructing a composite index with three basic dimensions including women education, women health and political participation of women. To measure income inequality, Gini coefficient is calculated. The data are taken from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MIC) (Acemoglu & Robinson) for the available period of 2008 to 2018. Thirty-four districts of Punjab are used in analysis and all these districts are different from each other by size, location, fertility, political backgrounds and natural resources. When sections have different sizes, regions and other indicators, the panel data is more appropriate and proficient technique then cross sectional or time series data due to concerned the behavior of each and every variable observed across time Gujarati & Porter, 2009). Generally, fixed effect model assumes that each section differs in its intercept term. Because, fixed effect approach is based on the assumption that slope coefficients are constant and intercept term varies across the districts and every district has specific intercept. Hausman test is an appropriate technique which has been used for the identification of appropriate model estimation method. It decided the suitability of fixed effect model for empirical analysis. It also discovers the association between predictor and outcome variables within a unit (Gujarati & Porter, 2009). Following (Acemoglu & Robinson), the succeeding econometric equation has been estimated:

$$Wempi = f\,(Inineq, Pci, Rem, Tfr, Uiw) \quad \ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots(1)$$

$$\log Wempi_{it} = \alpha + \beta_1 \log Inineq_{it} + \beta_2 \log Pci_{it} + \beta_3 \log Rem_{it} + \beta_4 \log Tfr_{it} + \beta_5 \log Uiw_{it} + \mu_{it} \quad \ldots\ldots(2)$$

Where,

Wempi = Women empowerment index, *Inineq* = Income inequality, *Pci* = Per-capita income

Rem = Remittances, *Tfr* = Total fertility rate, *Uiw*= Use of improved water source

µ = Error term, i = Cross sectional units, t = Time period

Measurement and description of the variables used in study is given below in detail:

3.1 Women Empowerment Index (WEMPI)

“Empowering” women has become most discussed and repeatedly cited agenda of development. It was firstly appealed by a feminist and women’s organizations belong to Third World countries; women empowerment unambiguously used to assist and frame the struggle for social justice and to admit women’s equality on both national and international levels through transformation of social, political and economic structure. Later on in the beginning of 90s, researchers and agencies used the term women empowerment for the variety of strategies relating to enlarging human choices and women productivity (Beneria & Bisnath, 2001). Despite of having the status of primary assistance development goal, World Bank nor any other institutional developed a rigorous methodology for measuring and tracking variations in the level of women empowerment (Malhotra et al., 2002). However, most of the studies used a multidimensional index for the measurement of women empowerment, comprising political, social and economic variables. In this study we have calculated a composite index by using women education, women health and political participation of women. Women empowerment index (WEMPI) has been constructed with the help of three sub-indices including women education index (WEDI), women health index (WHI) and women political participation index (WPPI). Equation 3 describes the mechanism women empowerment index and use equal weightage for index construction.

$$WEMPI_{it} = 1/3(WEDI_{it}) + 1/3(WHI_{it}) + 1/3(WPPI_{it}) \quad \ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots(3)$$

3.2 Women Education Index (WEDI)

Women education index (WEDI) is a combination of two basic variables used to measure the education level, first literacy rate of young women and women mean years of schooling for age 15-24 and 15-49 year respectively. Goals in the quantification of two sub-indices named as "women mean years of schooling index (WMYSI)" and "women literacy index (WLI)" are determined, "90 %" is taken as maximum and 27 as lowest in WLI calculations which is been achieved only by Chakwal and Rajanpur respectively in the series. While, for women mean years of schooling 7.7759 is considered as highest and 1.3592 as lowest which have been accomplished by Rawalpindi and Rajanpur correspondingly. Equation 4, 5 and 6 explain the procedure of WLI, WMYSI and WEDI following (Acemoglu & Robinson).

$$WLI_{it} = (WML_{it} - 27)/(90-27) \quad \text{......................} (4)$$

$$WMYSI_{it} = (WMYS_{it} - 1.3592)/(7.7759 - 1.3592) \quad \text{.....................} (5)$$

$$WEDI_{it} = 2/3(WMYS_{it}) + 1/3(WLI_{it}) \quad \text{.................................} (6)$$

3.3 Women Health index (WHI)

It is worth pointing that most of the women in developing countries died in their productive age groups. According to World Health Organization (WHO), almost half of the casualties are connected with the period of pregnancy and delivery in countries like India, Bangladesh or Pakistan while this ratio is quite near to nil in Sweden or Canada. In this respect, we have used antenatal care and postnatal care statistics as health indicators. Pre-natal care is linked with the period of pregnancy. Women get attention from doctors, nurse, and mid-wife or lady health workers during pregnancy. Care after delivery is also very effective for both mother and infant. Generally, to avoid maternal death and to detect post-natal problems it is recommended that mother should receive first post-natal check-up within two days of delivery. Postnatal coverage by paramedical staff, including doctors, nurse or certified midwife is only 41% in Punjab was 30% in 2008. In this empirical analysis, we have calculated women health index (WHI) by using percentage of women received postnatal and antenatal health care for each district through assigning equal weight for both variables. WHI is a composite index calculated with the help of two sub-indices including prenatal health care index (PRNHCI) and postnatal health care index (PNHCI). 89.6578 % set as maximum and 45.4563 % set as minimum goalposts in the PRNHCI calculations, which have been attained by Rawalpindi and Rahim Yar Khan in the sequence. Whereas, PNCHI is computed by setting 97.5 (Hafizabad) and 47.7 (D.G Khan) as maximum and minimum values. Equation 7, 8 and 9 indicate the procedure of the calculation of PRNHCI, PNHCI and WHI.

$$PRNHCI_{it} = (PRNHC_{it} - 45.4563)/(89.6578 - 45.4563) \quad \text{..} (7)$$

$$PNHCI_{it} = (PNHC_{it} - 47.7)/(97.5 - 47.7) \quad \text{..} (8)$$

$$WHI_{it} = 1/2(PRNHCI_{it}) + 1/2(PNHCI_{it}) \quad \text{...} (9)$$

3.4 Women Political Participation Index (WPPI)

The United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) firstly the term political participation which is closer to political empowerment. Political empowerment is categorized by a groups of producers to enhance women's negotiation power and expand their influence on the process of policy making. Representation in parliament is a strength of women (Reynolds, 1999; Vijayalakshmi, 2002; Weldon, 2002). Women political participation index (WPPI) is constructed in this study by considering female representative in both provincial and national assembly. Equation 10 describes the procedure used in the calculation of women political participation index (WPPI). 49 reserved seats in both provincial and national assembly set as maximum goalpost which has been

attained by Lahore in the whole series. While, 0 (Lodhran) is considered as minimum goalpost which indicated no political participation in both provincial and national assembly.

$$WPPI_{it} = (WPP_{it} - 0) / (49 - 0) \quad \text{..... (10)}$$

3.4 Independent Factors

Inequality of income can be considered as an important inequality dimensions (Babones, 2008; Coburn, 2015; Pickett & Wilkinson, 2015). Gini coefficient is used for measuring income inequality, a most common measure developed by a statistician Corrado Gini (1912) in his paper "Variabilita e mutabilita" which means "Variability and mobility". For this calculation data of income of individuals from each district have used from MICS (2008-2018). Gini coefficient ranges from 0 to 1, which indicates perfect equality and perfect inequality, respectively (Goldthorpe, 2010; Leigh & Van der Eng, 2009). Gini coefficient is an appropriate measure to estimate the correlates of inequality (Babones, 2008).

The second important independent factor is per capita income of each district.. At initial stage, per-capita income of all households of a district is calculated then we prefer to calculate per-capita income of specific district through households' per-capita income. Total fertility rate is calculated by MICS for the period of 2008-2018 has been considered as proxy for fertility. Another important explanatory variable is remittances and for the quantification we selected percentage of population that receives remittances from abroad and other district. The percentage of women using improved source of water is another explanatory variable. The data for the variables of interest have been taken from various waves of household data of MICS for the period of 2008-2018.

Data of variables used in the construction of women empowerment index (WEMPI), income inequality and per capita income excluding political participation have been collected from different waves of MICS for the period of 2008-2018. Data of our control variables containing total fertility rate, remittances and use of improved water source have also been arranged from MICS. However, data of political participation index have been collected from list of members issued by National & Provincial Assembly. Table 1 describes correlations and respective t-statistics of variables considered in this analysis. Correlations postulate that per capita income, remittances and use of improved water source are positively and significantly correlated with women empowerment whereas income inequality and total fertility rate have negative correlation with women empowerment.

Table 1
Correlations

Correlation **t-Statistic** **Probability**	**WEMP**	**TFR**	**REM**	**PCIR**	**UIW**	**INE**
WEMP	1.000000 ----- -----					
TFR	-0.625143 -9.271561 0.0000	1.000000 ----- -----				
REM	0.432339 5.550212 0.0000	-0.290319 -3.511947 0.0006	1.000000 ----- -----			
PCI	0.658455	-0.643305	0.222876	1.000000		

	10.12750	-9.726604	2.646546	-----		
	0.0000	0.0000	0.0091	-----		
UIW	0.015944	0.057725	-0.106575	-0.012839	1.000000	
	0.184586	0.669327	-1.240763	-0.148635	-----	
	0.8538	0.5044	0.2169	0.8821	-----	
ININQ	-0.662941	-0.076263	0.143970	0.191357	-0.057985	1.000000
	10.830037	-0.885382	1.684115	2.256827	-0.672353	-----
	0.0000	0.3775	0.0945	0.0256	0.5025	-----

Source: Authors' Calculation

4 Empirical Results

This study has evaluated the impact of income inequality on women empowerment in Punjab, Pakistan. Data used in the estimation of econometric model is taken from MICS for thirty four districts over the period of 2008 to 2018. Through the application of Hausman (1978) test we have confirmed that fixed effects model is appropriate in our analysis. Table 2 reports the estimates of panel fixed effect model.

Table 2
Estimates of Panel Fixed Effect Approach

Dependent Variable: log of Women Empowerment Index (logWEMPI)			
Independent Variable	**Coefficient**	**t. statistics**	**Prob.**
C	-0.5786***	-4.1802	0.0000
logInineq	-0.6159***	-3.9516	0.0002
logPci	0.4885***	6.9397	0.0000
logRem	0.323122*	1.7767	0.0793
logTfr	-0.38112413	-1.1234	0.2824
logUiw	0.32621**	2.2915	0.0300
R-squared= 0.9045			
Adjusted-R-squared= 0.8657			
F-statistics=23.25102			
Prob. (F-statistics)=0.000000			
Hausman Test: Chi-Sq. Statistics=14.608852			
Prob.=0.0235			
N=136			

Note: *, **, *** indicate significance at 10, 5 and 1 percent level of significance respectively.

Results of above mentioned Table 2 postulate that income inequality has a greatly significant and negative nexus with women empowerment. Negative relationship confirms the authenticity of previous studies that inequality has inverse association with human development (Attari et al., 2017; Engerman & Sokoloff, 2012; Persson & Tabellini, 1991; Schleussner et al., 2004). Inequality divide the economies into different income groups and people belong to low income groups are deprived. Deprivation keeps these people away from consuming goods and services like, nutritious food, safe shelter, education facilities and health maintenance which reduces human capital formation. Low human capital pushes societies towards higher gender gaps. Reduction in income inequality may improve women empowerment in Punjab (Pakistan) which can help to achieve sustainable development goal related to women empowerment. Per-capita income and remittances have positive and significant association with women empowerment. Increase in per-capita income and remittances facilitates for availing education and health facilities to reduce women deprivation. Total fertility rate is negatively and insignificantly associated with women empowerment. Use of improved

water source has positive and significant affiliation with women empowerment. Water is a life line of human health, it keeps the body hydrate and flush out all impurities from human body.

5 Discussion

The empirical nexus of income inequality with women empowerment has been estimated in case of Punjab region of Pakistan. A negative association of income inequality with women empowerment in Punjab (Pakistan) shows that inequality can destruct women empowerment through different channels, including growth, human capital formation, human development, investment, poverty and gender inequality. Because, social researchers believe that quality of life and development of the people are linked with economic resources distribution. In comparison of poor women; women living in rich countries and women of rich families enjoy higher standard of living and they also have better education and health (Kawachi et al., 1997; Kennedy et al., 1996; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2008). Long run economic growth is reduced by inequality (Alesina & Rodrik, 1994; Clarke, 1995; Easterly, 2007). It can hamper development outcomes including women empowerment by reducing growth potential of the economies (Alesina & Perotti, 1996; Alesina & Rodrik, 1994; Perotti, 1996) through different channels. These channels include liquidity constraint of the poor (Galor & Zeira, 1993), a rising distribution deman (Alesina & Rodrik, 1994), increasing social conflict (Alesina & Perotti, 1996), worsening in human capital acceleration (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2000; Bourguignon & Verdier, 2000; Easterly, 2001) deterioration of institutional quality (Easterly et al., 2006) and corrosion of social cohesion (Kawachi et al., 1997). Inequality leads to political instability which further damages institutional arrangements. Bad quality of institutions and political instability retards the economic growth and development. and (Gregorio & Lee, 2002) estimate a negative association with human capital and income inequality. Reduction in human capital can affect empowerment of women particularly in under developed countries like Pakistan where mostly women have lower education and poor health due to limited resources. As, inequality of income at national and regional level link to poor self-rated health (Rözer & Volker, 2016), misuse of alcohol (Elgar et al., 2005), school bullying (Elgar et al., 2009), physical assaults (Pabayo et al., 2016), teenage pregnancy (Pickett, Mookherjee, et al., 2005), and child maltreatment (Eckenrode et al., 2014). On the other hand, inequality cause macroeconomic volatility which have adverse consequences for human wellbeing (Stiglitz, 2015). Macroeconomic instability can affect women empowerment among the different regions of a country like Pakistan by damaging public provision of social services. Our empirical findings related to inequality and women empowerment reveal that inequality has some adverse consequences for women empowerment among the districts of Punjab through above discussed channels. Women empowerment can be improved by reducing income inequality in different regions of Punjab (Pakistan).

Empirical findings of control variables depict positive and significant connections of remittances, per-capita income and use of improved water source with women empowerment which show that improvement in socioeconomic status among the districts can enhance women empowerment. Because public provision of social services can be helpful to improve human development (Akram, 2012; Siddique, 2021). Similarly, improvement in socioeconomic status by increasing per capita income and remittances can affect positively to women empowerment in Punjab because poor socioeconomic status is associated with many diseases, containing respirational illnesses (Haan et al., 2017; Meyers et al., 2004), with an enlarged likelihood of dental caries and deficiency of iron (Dickman et al., 2017), higher blood lead levels (Brady, 2004; Chiu, 2010; Macinko et al., 2003), stunting and sensory impairment. Negative but insignificant association of fertility rate can affect women empowerment in Punjab through growth of population and hence can be a crucial predictor for shaping economic and human development outcomes in the society (Barro, 1991; Hondroyiannis & Papapetrou, 2005; Mankiw et al., 1992; Solow, 1956).

6 Concluding Remarks

Presented reading inspects the influence of income inequality on women empowerment among the districts of Punjab (Pakistan). By utilizing panel data for the period of 2008-2018, fixed effect model is applied which indicates negative association of income inequality with women empowerment. It shows that income inequality is detrimental for women empowerment in Punjab (Pakistan). Therefore, reduction in income inequality will improve women empowerment through equal participation of families in the process of enlargement of human choices. Because, equality promotes human wellbeing through its contribution in the poor section of society. It implies that, if women related issues are considered prominently at social and administrative level to empower women and to give them appropriate facilities related to education, health and job. Government of Punjab can enhance women empowerment among the districts of Punjab by reducing income inequality with the help of public provision of social services particularly in districts having lower women empowerment. Inequality of income has retarding effects on women empowerment in Pakistan where income distribution is not just about the distribution of income but also a political power distribution. A skewed distribution of income in Pakistan has strengthened dominance of elite class. The powerful country elite has developed a predatory cycle to support each other (Hussain et al., 2009; Pervaiz & Akram, 2018). They have been pursuing the policies to benefit elites which have further strengthened their control over public policies and have caused lower women empowerment in the society by restricting the equal opportunities of education, job, political participation and health for women. So, reduction in income inequality is helpful for the improvement of women empowerment in different districts of Punjab (Pakistan).

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