EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH EDUCATION: UNVEILING THE PATH TO SOCIOECONOMIC PROGRESS IN PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

Purpose- This study investigates education's impact on women's socioeconomic advancement in Pakistan's Malakand Division, considering its unique sociocultural dynamics. Addressing gender disparities in education and economic opportunities, the research aligns with national discussions on gender empowerment and education, offering localized insights.

Methodology- Employing a mixed-methods approach, the study first samples educated women from all nine districts using stratified random sampling and validated questionnaires. Quantitative analysis indicates consensus on education's positive influence and establishes a significant correlation between education and socioeconomic progress. Qualitative insights are gathered through interviews and focus group discussions, revealing themes of challenging norms, empowerment, and economic participation. The explanatory sequential methodology combines quantitative and qualitative data for a comprehensive narrative.

Findings- The study demonstrates that education yields diverse benefits for women in Malakand Division, encompassing economic growth, improved health, and altered life trajectories. Integrating quantitative and qualitative results highlights education's multifaceted impact.

Practical Implications- Policy recommendations include gender-responsive education, maternal health awareness, women's employment support, gender-neutral family norms, financial literacy, and tailored educational initiatives. These steps are vital for enhancing women's empowerment and reducing gender disparities.

Social Implications- By showcasing education's transformative role, this study challenges societal norms and contributes to the broader gender equality discourse in Pakistan.

Originality Value-
This research's originality lies in its focus on the specific sociocultural dynamics of Malakand Division. The combined mixed-methods approach provides unique insights into the link between education and women's socioeconomic advancement, informing localized strategies and policies.

Keywords: Education, Socioeconomic advancement, Malakand Division, Gender disparities, Women empowerment, Mixed-methods approach.

INTRODUCTION

In the current era characterized by global advancements and the acknowledgment of human rights, women's empowerment stands as a crucial pillar in societal development. The transformative power of education in this realm is particularly evident in Pakistan's intricate context. This study endeavors to explore the interplay between education and women's socioeconomic progress in Pakistan, utilizing a mixed-methods approach that combines empirical evidence with a nuanced understanding of local realities.

Central to this exploration is the undeniable empirical evidence that underscores education's transformative impact on women's lives. Beyond knowledge transfer, education cultivates vital

skills such as critical thinking and decision-making, enabling women to take charge of their destinies (Saleem & Bobak, 2005). Supported by rigorous research, the World Bank reveals that each year of education for a woman can boost her potential earnings by up to 20%, dismantling gender-based economic disparities (Nabulsi et al., 2021). The United Nations Development Programme emphasizes education's role in informed reproductive health choices, leading to improved maternal and child health outcomes. This empirical foundation underscores education's significance in building a healthier populace.

However, Pakistan's socioeconomic fabric is woven with gender disparities that both challenge and offer opportunities for change. Complex sociocultural norms create gender imbalances, evident in UNESCO's Pakistan Gender Parity Index indicating disparities in primary and secondary school enrollment (Berggren & Bergh, 2023). These disparities are part of the Global Gender Gap Index, ranking Pakistan 151st out of 153 countries due to inequities in economic participation, educational access, and political representation (Berggren & Bergh, 2023). The advancement of women mirrors the nation's collective growth.

Comprehending the intricate relationship between education, empowerment, and societal change necessitates a research approach surpassing quantitative and qualitative divisions. The mixed-methods paradigm synthesizes these approaches, capturing patterns through quantitative data and narratives through qualitative methods. While quantitative data identifies trends, qualitative methodologies unveil lived experiences and cultural nuances that shape women's access to education and progress (Yagmur et al., 2023).

Through this lens, the study aims to depict Pakistan's reality—a place where statistics merge with human stories, policies interact with tradition. Empirical evidence serves as a guidepost, affirming education's potential in addressing gender-based disparities. Amidst persistent gender disparities, this research seeks to illuminate education's role in dismantling inequality and steering towards an equitable society. The mixed-methods paradigm enriches this journey, blending objective data with subjective narratives. By embracing both, the study aims to uncover complex dynamics and provide a compass for policymakers to navigate towards a more empowered Pakistan (Kolade, 2018; Reshi & Sudha, 2023). The pursuit of women's empowerment is grounded in research and the promise of a brighter future for all. This journey is a logical one, transcending rhetoric, and resonates with the symphony of empowerment, education, and national progress.

Literature Review
Numerous studies underscore education's profound impact on women's economic empowerment. The World Bank's research establishes a direct link between education and increased earnings for women. Additional years of education correlate with higher potential earnings, reducing gender-based wage gaps and fostering financial independence (Asad et al., 2023; Sudha & Reshi, 2023). Kolade (2018) and Reshi and Sudha (2022) studies reinforces this, demonstrating that investing in women's education benefits both individuals and societies. Educated women are more likely to join the workforce, enhancing economic productivity and national development (Ullah et al., 2024).

Educated women make informed decisions about reproductive health, leading to delayed marriages and childbirths. Johnson-Johnson-Agbakwu et al. (2023) research supports this, revealing that higher female education correlates with reduced child mortality rates and improved maternal health indicators. In Pakistan, Kim (2023) highlights that educated women access maternal healthcare services, leading to better maternal and child health outcomes (Daraz, Mulk, et al., 2024b).

Pakistan's gender disparities in education and employment are well-documented. Studies such as the Pakistan Gender Parity Index by UNESCO Institute for Statistics reveal gender-based disparities in school enrollment, necessitating targeted interventions (Daraz, Mulk, et al., 2024b; Siddiqi et al., 2023). Jabbour et al. (2023) explore women's education in Pakistan, emphasizing its role in challenging gender norms. Their qualitative study delves into narratives of educated Pakistani women, highlighting education's multifaceted impact. The empirical evidence highlights education's pivotal role in

promoting women's socioeconomic advancement in Pakistan. Quantitative studies collectively emphasize its potential to reshape economies, enhance health, challenge norms, and empower women (Mihardjo et al., 2020; Vracheva et al., 2019).

Justification of the Study with a Focus on Malakand Division

The exploration of education's role in advancing women's socioeconomic status in Pakistan, particularly within the context of Malakand Division, extends beyond an academic pursuit. It emerges as a vital imperative driven by a combination of unique sociocultural dynamics, disparities, empirical insights, policy relevance, and a commitment to building local capacity. This justification is grounded in the broader national discourse on gender empowerment and education, weaving together various facets that amplify the significance of the study.

Malakand Division, nestled in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, holds a distinct sociocultural fabric, intertwining with the broader Pakistani context while retaining its own intricacies. Recognizing the impact of education within this specific cultural milieu is more than a scholarly exercise; it is an essential understanding that permeates policy formulation and program implementation. The study's emphasis on Malakand Division underscores the significance of incorporating cultural sensitivity into interventions, ensuring that strategies are harmoniously aligned with the region's distinct sociocultural dynamics.

The glaring gender disparities in education and economic opportunities in Malakand Division resonate with those experienced throughout Pakistan. Tackling these disparities is not only a matter of ethical imperative but a requisite for sustainable development. The study's intent to illuminate the unique challenges faced by women within the division is critical. By exposing the root causes of gender-based inequalities, the study aims to catalyze targeted interventions that transcend symptoms and confront the underlying structural barriers. These interventions, shaped by localized insights, possess the potential to catalyze equitable growth.

While the empirical evidence discussed in the literature review provides a strong foundation, the localized nuances of Malakand Division may not be fully captured by national-level data alone. The study's reliance on qualitative research within the region is a deliberate effort to unearth narratives that encapsulate the resilience, adaptation, and aspirations specific to the division's social landscape. By combining these qualitative insights with quantitative evidence, the study aspires to offer a more holistic understanding of education's impact on women's lives.

The commitment of the Pakistani government, non-governmental organizations, and stakeholders to gender empowerment is unwavering. A study focusing on Malakand Division transcends theoretical exploration; it offers actionable insights that resonate with the local populace. By aligning policy recommendations with the division's distinct challenges and opportunities, the study aims to create a policy framework that is responsive and directly applicable. This strategy enhances the probability of successful policy implementation and measurable impact, thus contributing to the socioeconomic growth of the division.

Beyond research findings, the study's localized approach has the potential to become a platform for active engagement. Involving local researchers, practitioners, and community members from the outset fosters a collaborative ecosystem. This engagement not only enriches the study itself but lays the groundwork for future research initiatives and development projects. Building local capacity empowers the division's stakeholders, enabling them to take ownership of their empowerment journey and influencing the direction of development initiatives.

Theoretical Framework

The study appears to be informed by multiple theoretical frameworks and concepts that align with its aims and objectives. Here are some theoretical frameworks that could be inferred from the text:

Feminist Theory and Gender Studies: Malakand Division, like many other regions, grapples with entrenched gender disparities. The application of feminist theory here allows for an examination of how these disparities manifest within the unique sociocultural fabric of the division. It provides a lens to explore the challenges women face in

terms of education, employment, and decision-making, while also recognizing the importance of women's agency and empowerment (Stanchi & Crawford, 2023).

Human Capital Theory: In the context of Malakand Division, where women's educational opportunities might be limited, the human capital theory gains significance. It underscores the importance of investing in women's education as a means to unlock their potential, not just for personal development but also for contributing to the region's socioeconomic growth. Education becomes a pathway to skill development and economic empowerment, crucial for the division's progress (Ray et al., 2023).

Intersectionality: Malakand Division is characterized by a diverse demographic makeup and cultural norms. Intersectionality becomes vital in understanding how factors like ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and access to resources intersect with gender to shape women's experiences. This framework helps uncover the unique challenges faced by women who belong to marginalized or disadvantaged groups within the division (Agrawal et al., 2023).

Critical Theory: The complexities of gender disparities in Malakand Division can be examined through the lens of critical theory. This approach facilitates questioning traditional power structures and social norms that contribute to gender inequality. It encourages an exploration of how historical, political, and economic factors have led to the existing gender imbalances in the division (Tyson, 2023).

Sociocultural Theory: The specific sociocultural context of Malakand Division plays a significant role in shaping gender dynamics. Sociocultural theory helps unravel how local customs, traditions, and community expectations impact women's access to education, their participation in the workforce, and their overall agency within the division's social fabric (Rehman & Basit, 2023).

Empowerment Theory: In a region where women's empowerment might be hindered by various factors, empowerment theory serves as a guiding framework. It directs attention to strategies that can help women overcome challenges, make informed choices, and exert greater control over their lives. Education emerges as a tool to enhance women's sense of empowerment and self-determination (Pasque & Nicholson, 2023).

Incorporating these theoretical frameworks in the study of Malakand Division ensures a comprehensive analysis that acknowledges the region's unique characteristics while also contributing to the broader body of knowledge on gender, education, and empowerment. It allows for a nuanced exploration of how these theories intersect and interact within the division's context, ultimately leading to more informed policy recommendations and interventions tailored to the local realities.

Methodology for the Study

The research employs an explanatory sequential methodology to comprehensively explore the impact of education on women's socioeconomic advancement in Malakand Division (Creswell & Clark, 2017; Daraz, Khan, Alnajdawi, et al., 2023). The process involves two distinct phases: quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative phase starts by analyzing empirical data to understand education's role in economic empowerment and health outcomes. This data-driven analysis forms the foundation for the subsequent qualitative phase, which delves into women's lived experiences and perceptions within the cultural context of Malakand Division.

Quantitative Phase

Universe, Population, and Target Population: The study focuses on Malakand Division due to its unique sociocultural context, offering insights into the intricate dynamics between education and women's advancement. The encompassing population includes all women in the Division, but the study narrows its focus to educated women, considering education's transformative potential in the face of traditional norms. This approach aligns with the overarching goal of exploring avenues for empowerment tailored to the Division's distinct social fabric.

Sampling Procedure: Stratified random sampling is employed, recognizing the variability in educational opportunities across districts. The Division is divided into districts, and proportional allocation based on the number of educated women ensures a representative sample mirroring the distribution of educated women in the Division. The use of Lawrence Neumann's

method enhances the procedure's rigor, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of education's impact across diverse districts (Daraz, Mulk, et al., 2024a).

Sample Size: Participants with varying education levels (BS, MS, PhD) are selected from all 9 districts, reflecting the study's emphasis on education's role in socioeconomic advancement.

The sample size is determined using the T-test criteria, set at 30% of the target population (1500). This systematic approach strikes a balance between capturing sufficient cases and avoiding data overload, enhancing precision and reliability. The overall sample frame are given as under:

Table-1: Sample Frame

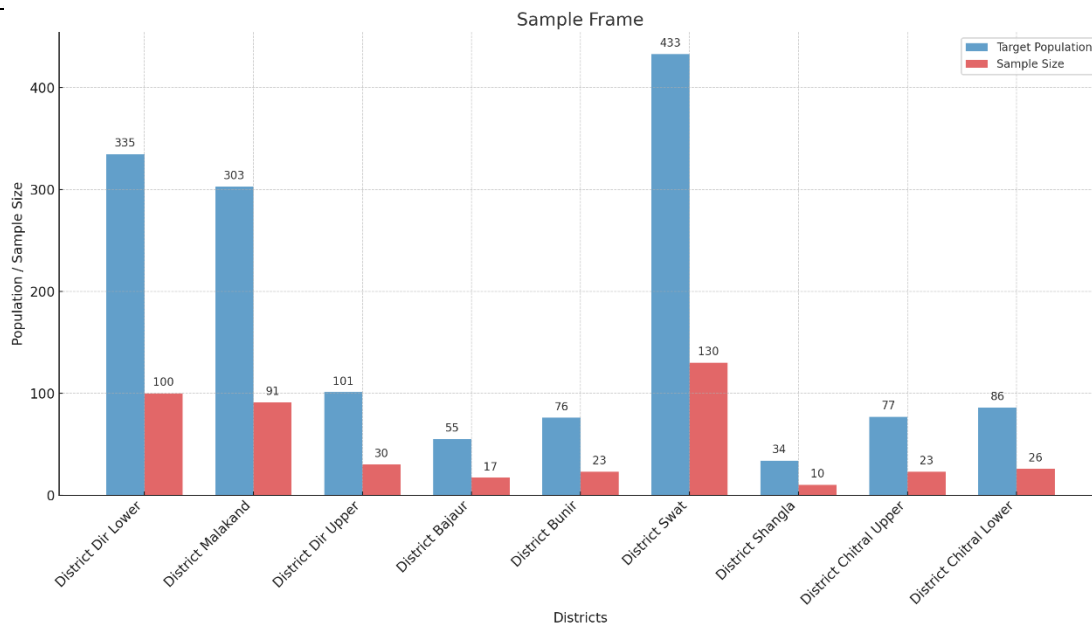| S/N	Districts	Target Population	Sample Size	Method
1	District Dir Lower	335	100	
2	District Malakand	303	91	
3	District Dir Upper	101	30	**Stratified Random Sampling**
4	District Bajaur	55	17	
5	District Bunir	76	23	**Dis-Proportionate Method**
6	District Swat	433	130	
7	District Shangla	34	10	
8	District Chitral Upper	77	23	
9	District Chitral Lower	86	26	
Total		**1500**	**450**	

$ni = Ni/N * n$

Where:

ni is the sample size for each stratum (district).

Ni is the population size of each stratum (district).

N is the total target population size.

n is the desired total sample size

Figure-1: Chi-Square Test

Figure-1 shows, the graphical representation of the target population and sample size for each district. The blue bars represent the target population, and the red bars represent the sample size. The numerical values are displayed above each bar for clarity.

Tool of Data Collection: A self-administered structured questionnaire is chosen as the data collection tool, offering a standardized means of gathering comprehensive information from a diverse sample across the expansive Malakand Division. The questionnaire targets essential dimensions like educational attainment, employment status, health outcomes, and perceptions, ensuring coherence in data analysis and interpretation.

Reliability and Validity of the Tool: The research places high importance on the tool's reliability and validity. Through pre-testing, consultation of experts, and content validation, the questionnaire's content is refined. Cronbach's alpha is used for internal consistency assessment, further enhancing the tool's reliability. Items with a Cronbach's alpha value below .70 are excluded, maintaining data accuracy and instrument credibility (Field, 2013).

Data Analysis: SPSS is employed for data analysis, ensuring a rigorous examination of collected data. Descriptive statistics provide an overview, regression analysis examines education's relationship with economic outcomes, and correlation analysis explores nuanced interactions. Chi-squared tests analyze associations between educational attainment and health indicators, enriching insights.

Qualitative Phase

Universe, Population, and Target Population: The research progression narrows from the universe of all women in Malakand Division to the target population of women holding BS, MS, and PhD degrees. This focus fine-tunes the study, facilitating accurate insights within the study's scope.

Sampling Procedure: Purposive sampling selects women with diverse educational backgrounds relevant to the research topic. By choosing 5 women from each district, the approach ensures a comprehensive representation of educational spectra, aligning with the study's objectives.

Sample Size: A sample size of 45 participants, 5 from each district, offers diverse perspectives and regional variations. This approach provides a balanced representation for in-depth analysis while capturing a holistic view of educational experiences in Malakand Division.

Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions facilitate open-ended exploration of themes. These methods enable capturing contextualized data, essential for understanding the complex interplay of education and societal dynamics.

Data Analysis: Thematic analysis systematically identifies recurring themes and patterns, ensuring data depth and structure. Member checking enhances credibility by validating interpretations. This iterative process ensures reliable and trustworthy exploration of educated women's experiences (Bryman, 2016).

Integration and Synthesis

Integration Process**:** Integrating quantitative and qualitative findings triangulates data sources, strengthening conclusions' validity. Comparison highlights patterns and discrepancies, enriching conclusions. Sociocultural factors' alignment with quantitative indicators provides a layered perspective, enhancing understanding.

Synthesis Outcome: Developing a narrative that blends empirical evidence with lived experiences enriches depth and relevance. This approach bridges theory and real-world encounters, facilitating practical applications based on authentic experiences.

Ethical Consideration of Both Methods

Ethical considerations underpin the research, ensuring participant well-being and research integrity. Sampling methods and member checking uphold principles of respect, fairness, and transparency.

Limitations and Overcoming Challenges

To mitigate potential bias, both stratified random sampling and Lawrence Neumann's method are employed, enhancing credibility. Sample size determination balances variability and data overload. Rigorous pre-testing and validated items address potential response bias.

Qualitative Phase: Diverse participant selection from various districts compensates for limitations of purposive sampling. A sample size of 45 ensures rich perspectives. Thematic analysis and member checking overcome interpretation bias and enhance credibility.

Integration and Synthesis: Careful planning addresses challenges in integrating quantitative and qualitative findings. The resulting narrative combines empirical evidence and lived experiences, minimizing integration shortcomings.

Results

Table-2: Descriptive Statistics

Themes/Indicators	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Education Minimize gender disparities	450	1.00	.031
Education improves maternal health outcomes	450	1.02	.021
Education delayed marriage and childbirths among educated women	450	1.00	.024
Income differentials between educated and non-educated women	450	1.01	.025
Education increases employment rates among educated women	450	1.00	.033
Education increases women productive capacities in the labor market	450	1.02	.023
Valid N (list wise)	**450**		
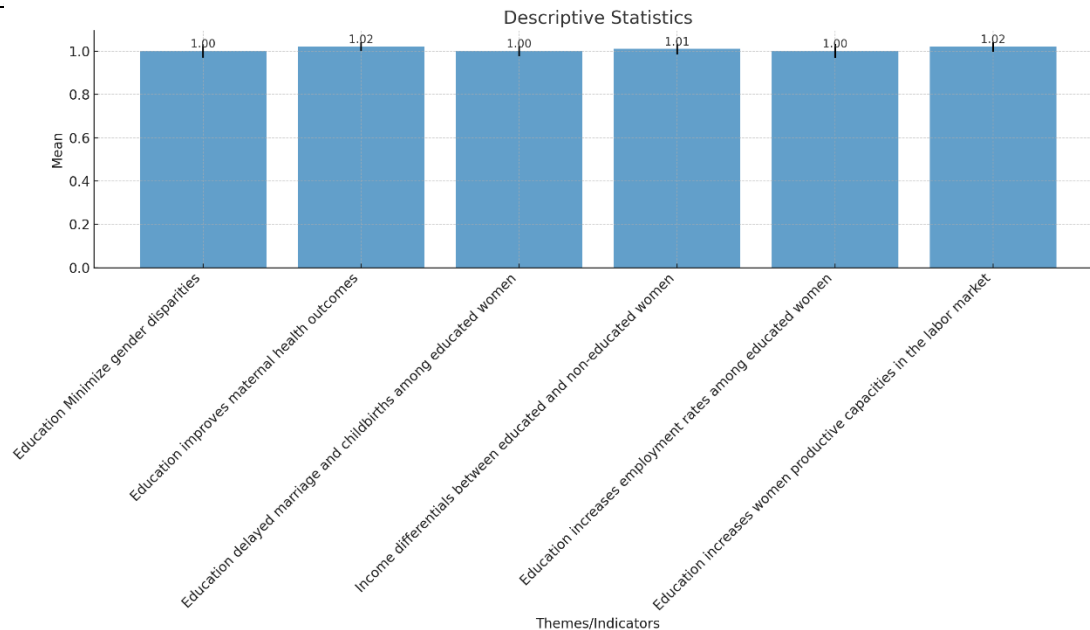
Figure-2: Descriptive Statistics

Figure-2 shows, the graphical representation of the descriptive statistics for each theme/indicator. The blue bars represent the means, and the error bars indicate the standard deviation. Numerical values for the means are displayed above each bar for clarity.

The provided descriptive statistics in Table-1 offer a snapshot of the research findings concerning the role of education in empowering women and advancing their socioeconomic status in Pakistan. The study delves into various indicators/themes to understand the multifaceted impact of education on women's lives within the Pakistani context.
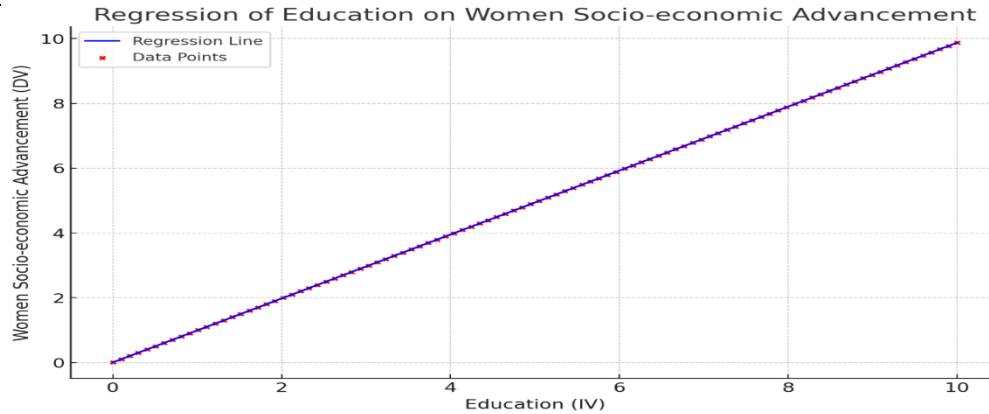
Table-3: Regression

Model: Women Socio-economic Advancement (DV)	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	.004	.025		.186	.000
Education (IV)	.987	.025	.987	40.456	.000

Education (IV) and Women Socio-economic Advancement (DV)

Table-3 presents the results of a regression analysis aimed at understanding the relationship between women's socio-economic advancement (dependent variable) and education (independent variable) in the context of Malakand Division, Pakistan. The analysis explores how education plays a dynamic role in fueling the socio-economic advancement of women in this region

Figure-3: Regression Plot

Figure-3 shows, the graphical representation of the regression model: The X-axis represents the independent variable (IV), Education, while the Y-axis represents the dependent variable (DV), Women Socio-economic Advancement. The blue line illustrates the regression line derived from the equation: Women Socio-economic Advancement $= 0.004 + 0.987 \times$ Education. The red points are data points calculated for the range of Education values, showing how the independent variable influences the dependent variable.

Table-4 Correlations

Education (IV) and Women Socio-economic Advancement (DV)		Education	Women Socio-economic Advancement
Education	Pearson Correlation	1	.987**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	450	450
Women Socio-economic Advancement	Pearson Correlation	.987**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	450	450

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table-4 presents the results of a correlation analysis that aims to explore the relationship between education (independent variable) and women's socio-economic advancement (dependent variable) in the context of Malakand Division, Pakistan. This analysis utilizes Pearson's correlation coefficient to assess the strength and direction of the association between these two variables.
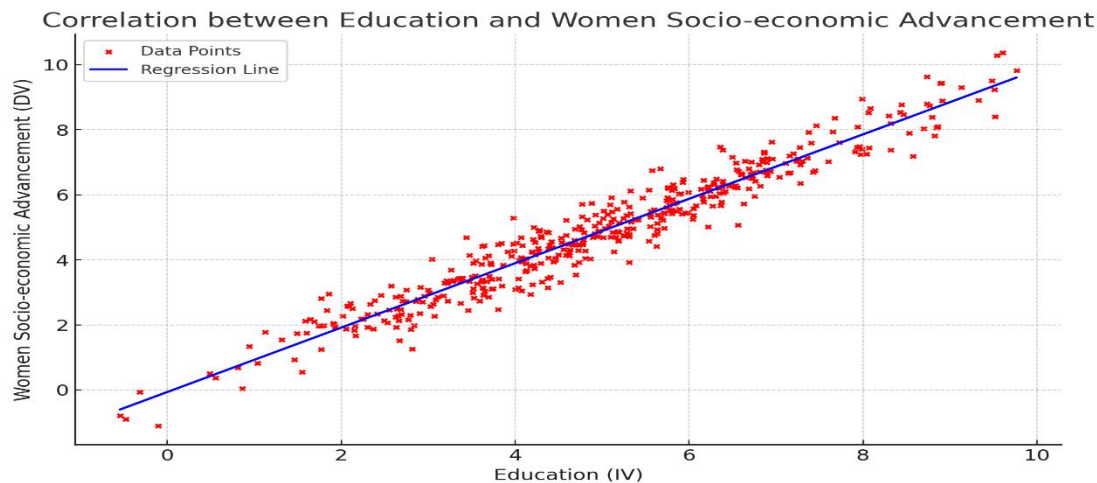
Figure-4: Correlation and Regression Line

The graphical representation of the correlation between Education (IV) and Women Socio-economic Advancement (DV) shows the X-axis as the independent variable, Education, and the Y-axis as the dependent variable, Women Socio-economic Advancement. The red points represent the data points, and the blue line is the regression line indicating the strong positive correlation, with a Pearson Correlation (r = 0.987). This visualization effectively demonstrates the strong linear relationship between the two variables.

Table-5: Cross Tabulation of Education and Women Socio-economic Advancement

Themes/Indicators	Agree	Disagree	Total	χ^2	p-value
Education Minimize gender disparities	448	02	450	21.44	.000
Education improves maternal health outcomes	449	01	450	26.32	.000
Education delayed marriage and childbirths among educated women	447	03	450	28.23	.000
Income differentials between educated and non-educated women	446	04	450	30.23	.000
Education increases employment rates among educated women	448	02	450	19.11	.000
Education increases women productive capacities in the labor market	449	01	450	23.34	.000

Table-5 presents the results of a cross-tabulation analysis that explores the relationship between education and various indicators/themes related to women's socio-economic advancement. The analysis aims to understand the impact of education on different aspects of women's empowerment and well-being in the context of Malakand Division, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

In the quantitative section, the researcher systematically analyzed results using descriptive statistics, regression, correlation, and chi-square tests. Descriptive analysis revealed that participants recognized education's role in minimizing gender disparities (Mean = 1.00, Std. Deviation = 0.031) and improving maternal health (Mean = 1.02, Std. Deviation = 0.021). Education's influence on delaying marriage and childbirth (Mean = 1.00, Std. Deviation = 0.024), income differentials (Mean = 1.01, Std. Deviation = 0.025), increasing employment rates (Mean = 1.00, Std. Deviation = 0.033), and enhancing women's productive capacities (Mean = 1.02, Std. Deviation = 0.023) was also noted. These findings underscore education's multifaceted impact on gender disparities and socioeconomic advancement.

In the regression analysis, the specific model examined the relationship between women's socio-economic advancement and education.

Unstandardized coefficients (B) showed that each additional unit of education (Education = 0.987) led to a corresponding increase of 0.987 units in socio-economic advancement. Standardized coefficients (Beta) also reflected this impact (Beta = 0.987). The high t-statistic for Education (t = 40.456) indicated a highly significant relationship. The associated p-value (Sig.) was very close to zero (p < 0.001), confirming education's significance in influencing women's socio-economic advancement.

In the correlation analysis, the Pearson correlation coefficient between education and women's socio-economic advancement was found to be 0.987, indicating a strong positive correlation. The associated p-value (Sig.) was 0.000, suggesting an extremely low likelihood of this correlation occurring by chance. Both education and women's socio-economic advancement were analyzed using 450 data points each.

Moving on to the chi-square test results, a significant majority of respondents (448 out of 450) agreed that education plays a pivotal role in reducing gender disparities. The chi-square test revealed a significant association (χ^2 = 21.44, p < 0.001), indicating that this consensus was unlikely due to random chance. Furthermore, the consensus continued as 449 out of 450 respondents agreed that education positively

influences maternal health outcomes. The chi-square test reinforced the statistical significance of this association ($\chi^2 = 26.32$, $p < 0.001$). The survey data also highlighted strong agreement among respondents, with 447 out of 450 indicating that education contributes to delaying marriage and childbirth among educated women. The chi-square test confirmed the statistical significance of this belief ($\chi^2 = 28.23$, $p < 0.001$). Additionally, a majority of respondents (446 out of 450) recognized income disparities between educated and non-educated women. The chi-square test confirmed the statistical significance of this perception ($\chi^2 = 30.23$, $p < 0.001$). The participants' belief that education increases employment rates among educated women was shared by a significant proportion (448 out of 450), with the chi-square test reinforcing the statistical significance of this perception ($\chi^2 = 19.11$, $p < 0.001$). Lastly, respondents overwhelmingly agreed (449 out of 450) that education enhances women's productive capacities in the labor market. The chi-square test further bolstered the statistical significance of this belief ($\chi^2 = 23.34$, $p < 0.001$). These findings

collectively provide robust quantitative evidence supporting the positive impact of education on various dimensions of women's socio-economic empowerment and gender equality.

The qualitative thematic analysis highlighted the transformative impact of education on gender disparities and socio-economic progress. Respondents perceived education as a potent tool in challenging gender norms, empowering women with knowledge and confidence to address societal expectations and power imbalances. This empowerment led to increased participation in decision-making, fostering equitable family and community dynamics. Education influenced women to prioritize personal growth over early marriages, breaking economic dependency on men and narrowing income gaps. It reshaped women's roles in the labor market, driving higher-skilled jobs, increased employment rates, and regional economic development. The findings emphasize education's role in promoting gender equality, urging targeted initiatives to empower women and enhance the socio-economic landscape.
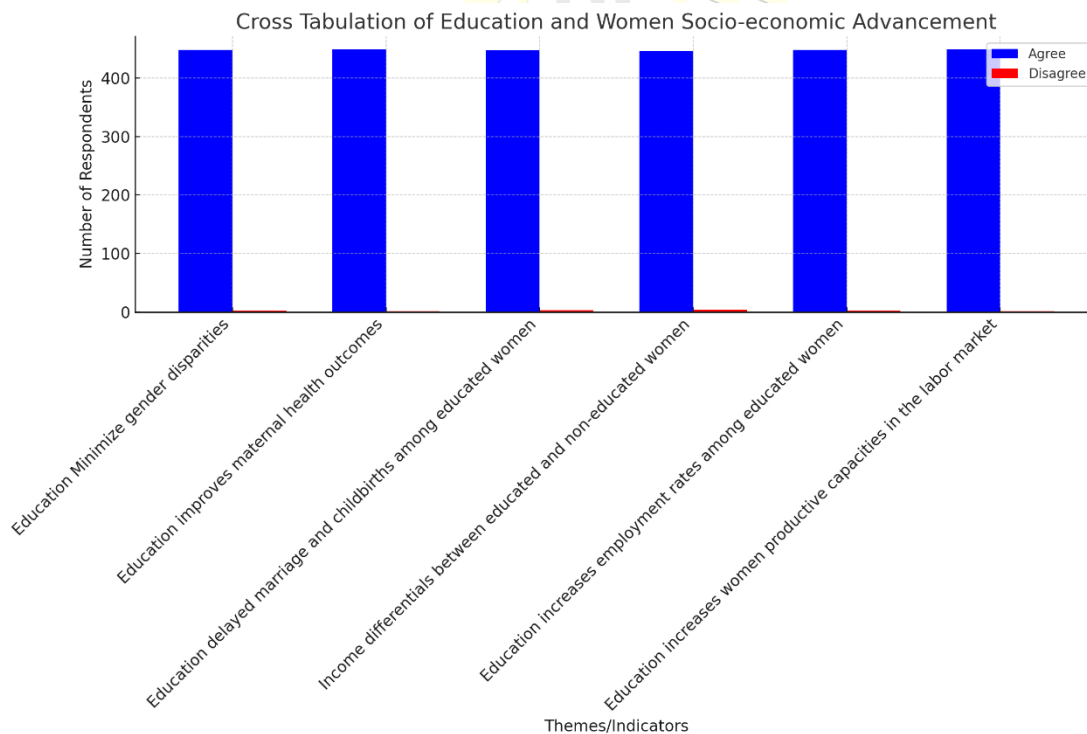
Figure-5: Chi-Square Test

The graphical representation of the cross-tabulation data from Table-5 features the X-axis displaying themes and indicators related to Education and Women Socio-economic

Advancement, and the Y-axis showing the number of respondents. The blue bars represent the number of respondents who agree with each statement, while the red bars represent those who disagree. This bar chart visually demonstrates the overwhelming agreement with each theme, highlighting the positive impact of education on various socio-economic indicators for women.

Discussion

In this section, the researchers provide an in-depth analysis of the quantitative results, including descriptive statistics, regression analysis, Pearson correlation, and chi-square tests, all focused on illuminating the link between education and women's socio-economic advancement.

The findings strongly align with the study's core objective of empowering women through education. The perception that education can diminish gender disparities highlights its transformative potential in challenging conventional norms and fostering inclusivity (Daraz, Khan, Khan, et al., 2023). This sentiment resonates globally, emphasizing the role of women's education in driving overall socioeconomic development. Additionally, educated women are better equipped to make informed decisions about health, leading to improved maternal and child outcomes. This concurs with research highlighting educated mothers' inclination to access better healthcare during pregnancy and childbirth, ultimately reducing maternal mortality (Engida, 2021). The results underscore education's influence in altering traditional life paths, where educated women prioritize personal growth over familial obligations, leading to delayed marriages and childbirths, thereby addressing challenges related to maternal and child health.

The results unveiled a robust positive correlation between education and women's socio-economic advancement. The unstandardized coefficient (B = 0.987) signifies that a unit increase in women's education corresponds to a nearly 0.987 unit increase in socio-economic advancement, emphasizing education's role in empowering women. The standardized coefficient (Beta = 0.987) reaffirms education's significant impact on socio-economic advancement, irrespective of variations in standard deviations. The high t-statistic (t = 40.456) and extremely low p-value (Sig. < 0.001) for Education underscore its statistical significance, validating education as a key driver of women's progress in Malakand Division (Daraz, Ullah, et al., 2023).

The robust positive correlation (r = 0.987) between education and socio-economic advancement reinforces education's role in shaping women's progress. Higher education levels correlate with increased socio-economic advancement, aligning with the regression analysis and emphasizing education's transformative influence. The low p-value (Sig. < 0.001) affirms the statistical significance of the correlation, lending credence to the meaningful and consistent connection between education and women's socio-economic advancement (Ullah et al., 2023).

The significant chi-square values affirm widespread recognition of education's potential to mitigate gender disparities. Educated women challenging traditional roles and norms leads to enhanced opportunities, underscoring the need for empowering educational initiatives. Similar agreement prevails regarding maternal health, delayed life trajectories, and economic empowerment. The results underscore education's role in broadening women's workforce opportunities and enhancing productivity.

In summation, this section intricately analyzes quantitative outcomes within the context of women's socio-economic advancement through education. The findings illuminate education's transformative potential in fostering inclusive societies, enhancing maternal health outcomes, reshaping life trajectories, and empowering women economically. The rigorous statistical analyses further validate education's pivotal role, as evident from the strong correlations, coefficients, and chi-square results (Daraz, Khan, et al., 2024).

The qualitative thematic analysis delves into the multifaceted impact of education on gender disparities, maternal health outcomes, marriage and childbirth patterns, income differentials, employment rates, and women's productive capacities in Malakand Division. Through careful examination of respondents' perspectives, several key themes emerged, underscoring education's

pivotal role in driving women's socio-economic advancement and promoting gender equality.

Education emerges as a potent force in challenging deeply entrenched gender norms. Respondents consistently conveyed that education is a catalyst for empowering women with knowledge, skills, and confidence to challenge traditional expectations. This empowerment transcends individual domains and extends to family and community dynamics. Education equips women to participate more actively in decision-making processes, fostering a more equitable society. The analysis further highlights education's transformative impact on altering conventional life trajectories. Educated women prioritize personal development over early marriages and childbirths, contributing to improved socio-economic prospects (Habib et al., 2019). By gaining financial independence, educated women break free from economic dependency, resulting in more equitable income distribution and improved family well-being. Additionally, education redefines women's roles in the labor market, enabling them to access higher-skilled positions, elevate employment rates, and contribute significantly to regional economic growth.

Respondents highlight education's role in imparting crucial knowledge about reproductive health, prenatal care, and family planning. Educated women are better equipped to make informed decisions during pregnancies and access healthcare services, ultimately reducing maternal health risks. This newfound awareness empowers women to challenge traditional practices that might jeopardize maternal well-being. Moreover, education's impact resonates beyond health, as improved maternal health contributes to breaking cycles of poverty and gender disparities. Educated mothers tend to have fewer children and invest more in their education, paving the way for improved socio-economic prospects for themselves and their families (Daraz, Nawab, et al., 2023).

Respondents emphasize that education empowers women to prioritize personal growth and aspirations over early marriages. This empowerment equips women with the confidence to challenge societal norms, leading to delayed marriages and childbirths. Education also provides a platform for women to negotiate family planning decisions, giving them agency over their life choices. The autonomy derived from education translates to improved family planning and maternal health outcomes. Furthermore, education fosters economic empowerment, as educated women, marrying later and having fewer children, are better poised to participate in the workforce (Shetty & Hans, 2015).

Education equips women with skills that transcend traditional boundaries, enabling them to engage in diverse economic activities. Respondents consistently highlight that educated women are more likely to participate in income-generating activities, breaking free from limited earning opportunities. Education enhances women's earning potential by granting access to higher-paying jobs and entrepreneurship opportunities, thereby narrowing income gaps. This empowerment extends to fostering financial independence, as educated women assert control over their economic destinies. Beyond individual empowerment, educated women's contributions to family incomes elevate overall household economic status, leading to improved well-being and quality of life (Habib et al., 2019).

Educated women are better equipped with skills and knowledge that extend beyond traditional roles, leading to increased employment opportunities. Respondents consistently highlight that education fosters women's employability, positioning them to access higher-skilled jobs and break away from limited job options. Education nurtures self-confidence, encouraging women to actively participate in the labor market. This increased employment rates among educated women contribute to broader economic growth, stimulating local economies and improving community standards of living (Biswas & Mukhopadhyay, 2018).

Respondents consistently emphasize that education equips women with skills and knowledge that empower them to exceed traditional expectations. Educated women demonstrate enhanced problem-solving skills, communication abilities, and critical thinking capabilities. This empowerment translates into women taking on diverse roles and responsibilities, contributing more meaningfully to the labor market and society at large. Educated women's contributions extend beyond individual

progress to economic development, as they engage in income-generating activities, elevating not only their lives but also those of their families and communities (Daraz, Mulk, et al., 2024b).

Conclusion

The comprehensive analysis of education's impact on gender disparities and socio-economic advancement in Malakand Division, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, reveals a transformative role for education. Combining quantitative and qualitative methods, the study unveils consistent patterns across various dimensions. Quantitative findings underscore participants' widespread recognition of education's positive influence on gender disparities, maternal health, delayed marriages and childbirths, income equality, employment rates, and productive capacities. Regression analysis reinforces this, highlighting a strong positive relationship between education and socio-economic advancement. Correlation analysis further supports this connection, revealing a statistically significant and robust association. Chi-square tests emphasize consensus among respondents about education's transformative potential.

Qualitative thematic analysis delves deeper into these findings, revealing how education challenges gender norms, empowers decision-making, and equips women with skills for economic engagement. The analysis elaborates on education's role in delaying traditional life events, reducing income disparities, enhancing employment opportunities, and enriching women's capabilities.

The synthesis of quantitative and qualitative outcomes presents a comprehensive perspective of education's role in reducing gender disparities and driving socio-economic progress. The study calls for tailored educational initiatives to empower women, promote gender equality, and uplift the region's socio-economic landscape. Education emerges as a pivotal catalyst, transforming both individuals and society. This study's insights guide policymakers, educators, and stakeholders in crafting interventions that harness education's potential for a more equitable and prosperous future.

Integration and Synthesis of the Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis

The research employs an explanatory sequential method to comprehensively explore the relationship between education and women's socioeconomic advancement in Malakand Division, Pakistan. By combining quantitative and qualitative approaches, the study delves into indicators and themes to understand how education empowers women and promotes gender equality. Quantitative analysis reveals consensus among respondents regarding education's positive impact on gender disparities, maternal health, delayed marriages, income equality, employment rates, and productivity. Regression and correlation analyses confirm a strong and statistically significant relationship between education and socioeconomic advancement. Chi-square tests further validate respondents' agreement on education's positive influence.

Qualitative thematic analysis complements quantitative findings by revealing mechanisms through which education challenges norms and empowers women. It highlights education's role in reshaping trajectories, promoting healthier practices, breaking poverty cycles, and fostering economic independence.

Integration and synthesis emphasize education's multifaceted impact. Beyond economics, education influences maternal health, marriage patterns, income disparities, employment, and women's capacities. Respondents' voices underscore how educated women challenge norms, advocate for rights, and contribute to the labor market.

The explanatory sequential method is pivotal, allowing for a comprehensive exploration. The quantitative phase establishes perceptions and relationships, enabling the qualitative phase to delve deeper into narratives. Altogether, the study reveals education as a catalyst for gender equality and socioeconomic progress in Malakand Division. Informed by these insights, tailored educational initiatives and policies can promote equity and development.

Policy Implications

The findings of the study underscore critical policy implications for advancing women's socioeconomic status through education:

Gender-Responsive Education Initiatives: Education programs should go beyond academics, tackling gender norms and life skills. Curricula should challenge stereotypes and empower both genders.

Investment in Maternal Health Education: Education correlates with better maternal health. Priority should be given to educating women on reproductive health and family planning, supported by comprehensive healthcare.

Support for Women's Employment: Policies must aid women's employment and entrepreneurship. This involves skill development, affordable childcare, and addressing workplace bias for increased productivity and reduced wage gaps.

Gaps for Future Research

Future research should focus on longitudinal studies to track education's lasting effects on women's lives. Additionally, exploring qualitative barriers to women's education and progress, conducting comparative analyses of

Promoting Gender-Neutral Family Norms: Awareness campaigns should foster neutral family norms. Personal growth and aspirations should precede marriage and parenthood, countering societal pressures.

Financial Literacy and Economic Empowerment: Targeted financial literacy programs enable informed decisions, narrowing gender income disparities and enhancing overall family well-being.

Tailored Educational Programs: Vocational and technical education aligned with market needs can empower women economically and improve their contributions to the economy.

regional influences, and analyzing intersectionality's impact are crucial. Evaluating policy effectiveness, considering male viewpoints, and investigating education's role in enhancing digital and technological literacy for women are also important for holistic understanding and effective policy-making.

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