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THE IMPACT OF ECONOMIC AND PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: EVIDENCE FROM RAHIM YAR KHAN DIST., PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

This study looks at the relationship between the economic and psychological empowerment of women and domestic violence in Rahim Yar Khan Dist., Pakistan. It uses Social Cognitive Theory as a framework to examine the role of personal empowerment and social support in either reducing or increasing the incidence of domestic violence against married women. The study involved 498 randomly selected married women who completed a structured questionnaire. Regression and mediation analyses were employed to assess the relationships between the various variables. The findings indicate that economic empowerment (particularly financial independence, employment and access to resources) is a major factor in reducing the risk of domestic violence as it provides women with greater control and reduces their dependence on their abusers. Psychological empowerment is also found to be a factor, although it can in some cases lead to an increase in tension in the household, particularly in the context of very traditional gender roles. Social support from the family, the community and institutions is also found to be a significant factor in reinforcing the protective effects of both forms of empowerment. The study concludes that empowerment of women must be part of a wider social change process and must be supported by appropriate social networks to be effective. It adds to the academic literature on the subject by providing a data driven model of the relationship between empowerment and domestic violence and provides practical implications for policy makers, NGOs and practitioners working in the field of gender-based violence.

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Introduction:

Domestic violence is a serious issue for many women in Pakistan, with nearly half reporting some form of abuse from their partners. This study explores how women's economic and psychological empowerment affects their risk of facing domestic violence. It also considers whether support from family, friends, and the community can help reduce that risk. The research focuses on married women in Rahim Yar Khan Dist., and uses Social Cognitive Theory to understand how women's confidence, financial independence, and support networks might protect them or sometimes lead to more conflict at home. The goal is to help create better programs and policies that support women and reduce violence.

Studies of primary data revealed that over the past decade, between 44% and 57% of women in Pakistan have experienced spousal violence or intimate partner violence (IPV) (Madhani et al., 2014). At the same time, a vast majority of these studies recruit only small cross-sections of women from cities who have low and moderate incomes (Madhani et al., 2014). The number of VAW cases that have been registered can also be used to study this data. Nevertheless, registered cases include only those for which a complaint has been forwarded to the police under a First Investigation Report, so this number might be much lower than the real figure. Out of the total population, there were more than 7,000 cases of VAW recorded in Punjab.

We feel that to determine what practitioners can do to address the relationship, we should first know why WEE can increase or decrease DV risk. We created three economic hypotheses that explain how financial resources affect economic choices. The first belief makes home or marriage a place of negotiation for gaining resources. People often think that women rely on their partner's income and put up with abuse in return. As a woman's earnings rise, she is less likely to face violence because she does not have to rely on anyone else for financial help. The second economic theory argues that violence is a means by which individuals or groups shape the behaviors or resource distribution of others this is supported by Hughes et al. in (2014). The risk of domestic violence might go up for women when men use their financial strength to stop women from earning money or managing it their way. The third economic theory states that domestic violence may show frustration or low self-esteem on the part of the abuser (Eggers et al., 2022). If a woman's home is thriving, the man is likely to feel less pressure, helping him avoid expressing anger through DV (Ranganathan et al., 2021).

Since women's mental health is a vital component of their overall wellbeing, psychological empowerment (PE) is a prerequisite for women's empowerment. Programs that address mental health issues in order to secure physical education for women are scarce (Grose et al., 2019). It is widely acknowledged that empowerment is not a top-down approach, but rather a process that is created from the bottom up. According to Choudhry et al. (2019), every empowerment plan must now assist women in critically assessing their individual circumstances and outlining the social changes that are required. Above all, from a psychological standpoint, tactics need to capitalize on women's "psychological capital." These methods acknowledge that women's resilience and vitality are "protective factors" that ought to be fostered. (Kapiga et al., 2019).

Kapiga et al (2019) emphasizes the value of physical education, researcher also demonstrated that despite the implementation of numerous economic and community empowerment initiatives, they have not been successful. This might be because the people the programs were designed for lacked the requisite psychological composition. Women may not feel empowered even when the state, non-governmental organizations, and feminist groups' empowerment programs may foster an environment that supports empowerment. Consequently, there is a difference between establishing circumstances that support empowerment and really achieving empowerment (Wessells & Kostelny, 2022). "A person's cognitive state which is characterized by their sense of perceived control, competence, and personal aspirations" is how PE is defined. (Mehra et al., 2023).

Because of physical education, women experience higher self-esteem, can negotiate better, have more opportunities and handle the pressures of home life better (Sauber et al., 2020). When defining PE, a few assumptions include impact, relevance, competence and self-determination as measures of women's PE. It's important to note that empowerment does not work the same in every situation. Second, individuals might believe they have different amounts of power, although it is actually something that can vary continually for them. Third, empowerment refers to particular actions rather than acting universally in all life situations.

In different circumstances, empowerment may be understood differently by various individuals or by the same person as they age. The different PE's can vary from one person to another and these traits are not acquired in any particular sequence, nor does one guarantee the next (Laszlo et al., 2020). The authors emphasize that giving participants resources and encouraging self-confidence helps transform official changes into PE. Learning self-determination and believing in their own skills, reducing isolation and taking part in both social and economic decisions at any level are the three main areas of increasing women's PE (Gautam, & Jeong, 2019).

Psychological empowerment is a good example of a formative latent construct. Hamadani et al., (2020) provided evidence for the formative measurement approach in physical education. The study of psychology has found that PE is built from these four mental components. Byrt et al (2025) later explained that PE consists of four cognitive assessments: impact, meaningfulness, competence/self-efficacy and choice/self-determination.

Support from social networks and domestic violence.

Women facing violence find the networks vital for supporting them. Because violence is complicated, a network of services is needed to help people. In certain regions, the network can be broad, covering health care, legal, police and mental health services. In addition, these facilities use interdisciplinary methods, exchanging knowledge so that everyone plays a role and discussions among healthcare workers help solve this issue (Iman'ishimwe Mukamana et al., 2020).

By joining and behaving in networks, people lead to shifts in power that bring attention to hierarchies. Even though they understand the issue, many social agents working with women do not fully use network thinking. Customarily, how the service is organized rests on the principle of

separated care for women's situations. When the issue is about police, law, social or medical matters, services exist to help, but little action takes place in making sure partnerships are strong (El-Nimr et al., 2021).

The way a person's habits, customs, beliefs and values form is due to their social network which encompasses all their personal contacts. During illness or hard times, family, community and groups—like churches and neighborhood associations—offer much-needed help to the person. People often get assistance, support with problems and care for health and social needs that the state cannot manage, thanks to social support networks (Coll et al., 2020).

Such networks are seen as a network of relationships that give each person a feeling of belonging and who they are. Structure refers to the visible links between individuals, groups or institutions that share some kind of connection. Activation of these loops results in the formation of connections in the network (Murshid, & Critelli, 2020). This refers to many social and personal links that people use to obtain information, services, materials or comfort when needed. People in primary and secondary networks have different types of interactions which include reciprocity, rights, use of money or various mixtures of these (Kadir Shahar et al., 2020).

Trust and reciprocity are the main features that hold together the bonds in our primary networks of kinship, friendship or neighborhood. Third sectors can either operate like markets or mixed systems, while secondary networks may either be formal or informal (Khan et al., 2023). They stand out by the form of exchange: using money, rights, mutual benefits or combining them. The official parts of the formal secondary network provide services based on requests and practice mutual support. Third sector organizations in social networks are those that operate based on unity and enforce the law. Kumar and Casey (2020) define the social market network as economic activities influenced by money and profit.

Domestic violence remains a serious problem in Pakistan. Research shows that 44% to 57% of women have experienced violence from their husbands or intimate partners. Many cases go unreported, and those that are reported often represent only a small part of the issue. This study focuses on married women in Rahim Yar Khan Dist, and explores how economic and psychological empowerment influence their risk of experiencing domestic violence. Economic empowerment means a woman can earn an income, own property, and make financial decisions. When women have more control over their finances, they may depend less on their partners and be better able to avoid abuse. However, shifts in financial power can sometimes lead to conflict in families with strong traditional gender roles. Psychological empowerment involves confidence, self-esteem, and mental health. Women who feel confident and capable are more likely to stand up for themselves, but this can also create tension if their partners feel threatened by these changes.

The study also looks at how social support from family, the community, and institutions can help protect women. Supportive networks can reduce the effects of abuse and help women make safer, more independent choices. Using Social Cognitive Theory, the research explains how empowerment

and support systems together influence domestic violence. These results can guide better policies and programs to support women and reduce violence in society.

Literature Review

Economic Empowerment and Domestic Violence:

In addition to traditional material resources, resources also involve access to and control over human and social elements that support the ability to choose (Winter et al., 2020). Experts like Haque et al. (2022) believe that helping women control their economic resources is the key to achieving gender equality, growth, development and empowerment. It has the power to help reduce inequality, increase a woman's self-confidence, provide her with more voice at home, allow her to control her life and make her more important in society.

If a woman earns money but is not involved in managing household finances, she probably will not gain meaningful authority or control (Ogbe et al., 2020). While household productivity and child well-being can increase when women use resources, they are limited because they lack equal access to land, property, housing and technical services. "Women need access to all kinds of resources and services—human capital, social, economic and financial—to use all the economic opportunities at their disposal, for instance as entrepreneurs" (Hayes, & Franklin, 2019).

Empowering women and promoting equality between genders is important and so is ensuring that economic and development growth is fair and will last (Song et al., 2021). Many women working in the sector recommend it, as they see a link between women's empowerment and having resources. The researchers Wei et al. (2021) discovered that women in this embassy use most of their money on their families, but men do not (Sardinha et al. 2022). Therefore, she stressed the need to break down the obstacles that stop women from having work, managerial authority and increasing national productivity.

Women gain greater bargaining power in all aspects of life when they manage and use resources. This connection exists because it relates to the way much women spend their husband's earnings and can lead to improved results (Nieuwenhuijze, & Leahy-Warren, 2019).

Abramsky et al., (2019) argue that women's employment is an important way for them to gain independence. Getting a job outside the house can help women develop skills and a status that strengthens their position within their family and in society (Sediri et al., 2020). Willie and Kershaw found that having employment and other ways to generate income leads to women being treated better by their families. Participating in all types of income activities empowers women to decide about their homes, support the family financially, manage their finances and contribute to community tasks (Amir-ud-Din et al., 2021).

She would manage emergencies at home better and recognize the benefits she is entitled to (Potter et al., 2021). Apart from giving women training and funding for starting their own businesses, proper

economic empowerment programs offer support networks, awareness education and help with self-esteem, negotiations and deciding what is most important in life. Women going to work impacts many areas of life.

Women are valuable employees because they ensure that children grow and develop properly and always have good food, health and comfort. Ensuring she is empowered matters for the whole family's peace of mind, not just for her. Besides aiding development, empowering women makes the resources available for development more valuable, important and of better quality (Keith et al., 2023). Batool et al. (2020) say that "being involved in self-earning gives women more authority, as they are active in decision making, involved with assets and they manage their earnings themselves in Southern Punjab."

In Bangladesh, business-minded women with entrepreneurial involvement gain more social and economic advantages, according to the research (Ahmad et al., 2021).Thus, participation in the labor force is necessary for gaining more negotiating power at home (Jones et al., 2019).

Current research that explores the way women's status influences socioeconomic determinants shows that we can expect to see differences in women's lives as a result. Some researchers believe that domestic violence is often linked to poverty, whereas others suggest that poverty does not significantly predict domestic violence (Davila et al., 2021). Higher educational achievement and jobs for women are usually associated with them taking a bigger role in household decisions (Wado et al., 2021).

Better-off women in Ghana tended to take part in health care matters, while education and having a job increased women's participation in household matters (Elghossain et al. 2019).

Psychological Empowerment and Domestic Violence:

Following Nabaggala et al. (2021), calling for improved explanations of empowerment, Kurm et al. (2024) went over previous explanations and their limitations to give organizations advice. In her perspective which includes community psychology, empowerment happens throughout lobbying efforts, not only as an outcome. Ever since its earliest descriptions, empowerment has been seen as a process, according to Bhalotra et al. (2021).

Within this conversation, empowerment relates to having effective or perceived control over resources and the capacity to move toward your own goals. Making choices is part of what victims experience during empowerment; it is not limited to one action. As Stiller et al. (2022) explained, advocacy alone is not to blame for the lack of empowerment in women and supports offered by advocates do not empower the victims. No matter how good their intentions are, advocates, who are usually more privileged than their clients, cannot just let others be independent, access opportunities and join social progress. Self-empowerment initiatives are available to victims who are women.

In spite of using different terms, Einstein (2009) and Nabaggala et al. (2021) agree that choice is a result of being able to control your course. Adams et al. (2021) clearly show this distinction between criminal justice interventions and advocacy, noting that advocacy leaves little choice to victims about how they wish to participate, regardless of an advocate's judgment.

Self-determination is rarely an option for them or those working on their behalf in court cases. The fact that the social conditions women face are hidden behind the idea of self-determination (Alves et al. 2019).

Social Support relates the link between Economic Empowerment and Domestic Violence

There are now various sociological and economic theories that try to understand how the amount of resources in a household compared to women's economic status affect their risk of IPV. According to resource theory, when social exchange theory applied to sociology argues that an interaction is regulated when the pros surpass the cons, it is believed that the family is a zone of power and limited financial resources may cause men to use violence as a means of controlling their significant other (Ranganathan et al. 2021).

Based on this hypothesis, there should be a connection between poverty and IPV, with violence used by men to keep their control over the family (Dias et al. 2019). Relative resource theory now considers the way resources are distributed and unequal between communities more explicitly (Eggers del Campo & Steinert, 2022). According to what experts believe, when a woman has a higher status than her partner, it can lead to more abuse since she might challenge his status as the main authority. Even so, gendered resource theorists have raised concerns about these initial judgments.

They explain that relative resource theory supposes that all males want to dominate as the main decision-makers and providers which is far from true with respect to gender and culture. They also point out that if the partner supports egalitarian beliefs about gender, having a higher place in the partnership should not lead to women facing greater violence (Leite et al. 2019).

Family support and domestic violence

Building networks is a useful method to help women facing violence. The social network consists of the relationships people have and from these, the person gets their habits, customs, beliefs and values and can also get support. The assistance, recognition of concerns and support for social and health matters left unmet by the State can be provided by social support networks.

No woman is truly empowered until their mental health is given the same importance as other elements of empowerment. Intervention strategies for mental health in public exercise initiatives for women are still lacking (Adams et al. 2021). Most people believe that empowerment is built from the ground up and is not the result of a strategy designed by leaders. So, any empowerment-focused strategy should allow women to examine their situation and decide what to change in society (Potter

et al., 2021). From a psychological point of view, the approach should enhance the assets of women. Experts believe that women's inner strength and wellbeing should be fostered.

The literature examined in this research points out that the growth or decrease in domestic violence occurs together with women's increased or decreased empowerment such as through social and psychological means. It was explained that when women gain socioeconomic strength, their position increases at home and in their community and they have greater say in their lives. Factors in women's empowerment are having more chances to contribute to the community, making decisions and handling income. Psychologists see empowerment as something that happens continuously, as people decide on important matters and become more confident in themselves. It calls for changes in the things around us and in our own abilities. Having psychological empowerment offers women the strength to step up against cruel things and to regard abuse differently. Setting up supportive and friendly networks is important for protecting women from domestic violence. Such networks give people support, assistance and repeat positive social standards that fight gender-based violence. When women have equal beliefs and a solid support system, relative resource theories show that the chances of difficulties related to having a higher status than their partners are reduced. All in all, empowerment needs to be dealt with through tangible elements (opportunities, rights) and intangible resources (confidence, relationships, self-determination). To fight domestic violence successfully, encourage both economic and psychological progress while including strong social support. Following these actions, women are better supported and find security at home and in their communities. Research on domestic violence against women shows a close link between empowerment and vulnerability. Many studies have explored how women's economic status and mental health influence their risk of intimate partner violence (IPV). In this review, we highlight key findings on how economic and psychological empowerment, as well as social support networks, affect domestic violence, especially in patriarchal societies like Pakistan.

Economic empowerment, such as earning an income, having a job, or owning property, often means women are less dependent on abusive partners. However, it can also challenge traditional power structures and sometimes leads to backlash from men. Psychological empowerment, which involves confidence, self-efficacy, and autonomy, is important too. It can help women assert themselves and resist control, but in households with strict gender roles, it may lead to more conflict. Social support systems, including family, friends, and community services, also play a key role. These networks provide emotional, material, and psychological support that can protect women from abuse and help them during difficult times.

Overall, the studies discussed here show how different forms of empowerment and social or cultural factors influence domestic violence. This review sets the stage for the current study, which will examine these issues among married women in Rahim Yar Khan Dist., Pakistan.

Theoretical Background and Development of Hypotheses

The Conceptual Framework:

This study applies Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) to examine how economic and psychological empowerment, along with social support networks, influence domestic violence against women. SCT, created by Albert Bandura, focuses on how personal factors, behaviors, and environmental influences interact (Schunk 2012). Here, economic empowerment is both a behavior and an environmental factor, helping women become more independent and assertive. When women observe peers who are financially independent and take part in household decisions, they see these actions as possible and beneficial, which reflects SCT's concept of observational learning (Luszczynska & Schwarzer, 2015). Psychological empowerment relates to SCT's idea of self-efficacy, where women's belief in their abilities and control over their lives helps them resist coercion or violence. Social support networks also act as environmental factors, providing emotional support, practical help, and role models who encourage positive change (Bandura 2001). These networks build women's confidence, show examples of resilience, and reduce isolation, making it easier for them to challenge abusive situations. Overall, SCT provides a comprehensive lens through which the interconnected effects of empowerment and support structures on domestic violence can be analyzed, making it an appropriate and effective theoretical foundation for this research (Bussey & Bandura 1999).

The conceptual model that guides the study is presented in Figure 1. A change in women's social and economic well-being that builds support networks and decreases domestic violence is the main factor in this analysis. The research is based on Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) which states that women in Saudi Arabia will improve their financial behaviors by learning from formal financial training and by engaging with financial actors in their environment. So, this makes it easier for them to manage their money.

Research questions of the study:

1. What is the relationship between economic empowerment and domestic violence?
2. In what ways does psychological empowerment positively impact on domestic violence?
3. How effectively social support (family and community) arbitrates the connection between economic empowerment and domestic violence?
4. How effectively social support (family and community) arbitrates the connection between psychological empowerment and domestic violence?

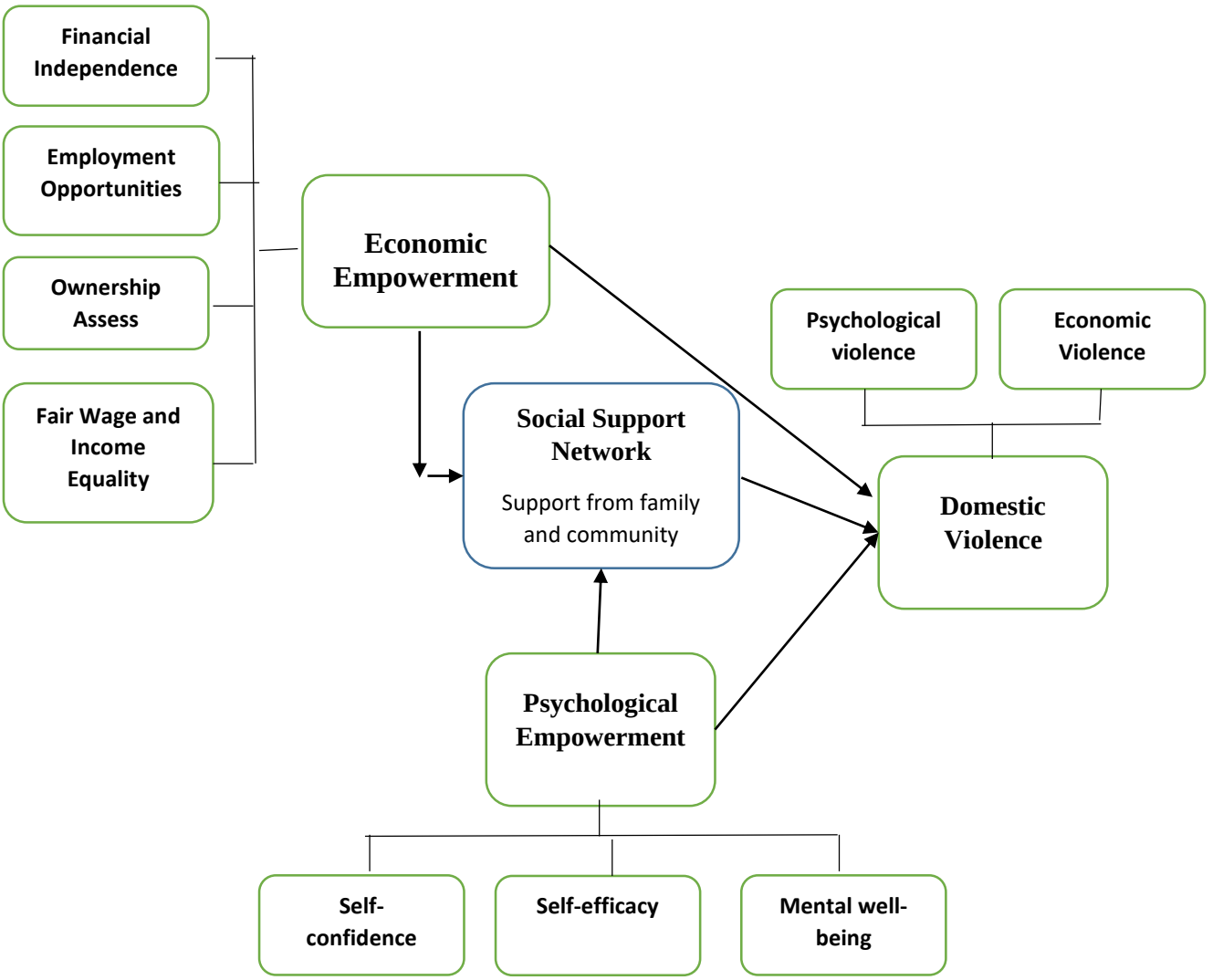


Fig. 1 Conceptual Framework

Hypothesis of the study:

H1: Economic empowerment positively impact on domestic violence.

H2: Psychological empowerment positively impact on domestic violence.

H3: Social support (family and community) is positively mediating the link between economic empowerment and domestic violence.

H4: Social support (family and community) is positively mediating the link between psychological empowerment and domestic violence.

Data and Methods:

Population:

The complete group of units included in a hypothesis which research findings might be applied (Neumann, 2007). For this study, married women currently living in District Rahim Yar Khan were included.

The target group for this research consisted of people in Rahim Yar Khan Dist. Union council Rahim Yar Khan Dist's list of registered marriages was used to choose the target population for data collection. The researcher obtained data for registered marriages from 2010 up to 2023. The group included in the study are working and nonworking, educated and uneducated married females.

What is Under Investigation: The unit of analysis is the basic unit under examination and the basis of analysis. The current study includes married ladies from the union council of Rahim Yar Khan Dist and both working and non-working and both educated and uneducated people are taken into account for the study.

A list of married females was obtained from the Union Council of Rahim Yar Khan Dist., including five colonies and involving a total of 151 respondents. Information about all registered marriages was included in the survey.

We collected the statistics from the target population using a simple random sampling method. A process where the people in the study are chosen so that anything found about them will also be true of the entire original group (Neumann, 2007).

The researcher collected a sample of 151 by applying the Taro Yamane (1967) formula that you see below.

$n=N/1+N(e)2$

$n=245/1+245(0.05)151$

The sample size was taken 151 respondents

Techniques of Data Collection:

A method called survey was applied to gather information. Surveys help describe key features of a very large population. The ability to observe this many factors at once is unique to astronomy. This approach was helpful for gathering information in the present study.

We used a survey questionnaire to collect important information from the participants.

Results and Discussion:

Reliability Statistics

Table: 1 Reliability Statistics

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
.861	57

Cronbach's Alpha at 0.861 tells us that the 57 questions or items are internally consistent. They all assess the same key concept or idea. The feedback to each item is always the same and reliable. The research instrument selected (questionnaire or test) can be used for research or evaluation.

Regression Analysis for mediation of Social Support Network between Economic Empowerment, Psychological empowerment and Domestic Violence

Table: 2: Regression Analysis for mediation of Social Support Network between Economic Empowerment, Psychological empowerment and Domestic Violence

Variables	β	95%CI	SE β	β	R^2	ΔR^2
Step1					.20	.21***
Constant	1.604***	{3.147, .003}	.51			
EE	.293***	{3.158, .003}	.10	.428***		
PE	.079***	{.304, .762}	.26	.041***		
Step 11					.21	.01***
Constant	1.633***	{2.792, .008}	.59			
EE	.292***	{3.101, .003}	.10	.426***		
PE	.082***	{.312, .757}	.27	.043***		
SSN	.016***	{.104, .918}	.16	.014***		

Note CI= confidence interval* p <.001**

Table shows the impact of EE, PE and SSN on DV. In step 1 the R^2 value of .21 revealed that the EE and PE explained 21% variance in DV with $F(2, .193) = 37.157$, $p < .001$. The findings revealed that EE, PE and SSN predicted DV.

Regression analysis

Regression analysis establishes that a relationship between two variables exists where one affects the other, while correlation analysis shows the way both variables are related. The research applied

regression analysis to check if there is a significant link between EE and DV and to examine the relationship between them. Read on to learn the exact results of the regression analysis.

Table: 3. Regression analysis

Model Summary Psychological empowerment and Domestic Violence									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.948[a]	.898	.898	.10575	.898	4404.766	1	498	.000
Model Summary Economic Empowerment and Domestic Violence									
1	.881[a]	.776	.776	.15704	.776	1725.103	1	498	.000

Adjusted R square demonstrated that 89.8 percent of the variance in domestic violence was due to psychological empowerment and domestic violence was explained by economic empowerment with a value of 77.6. Greater changes have been achieved in psychological empowerment for women, compared to economic empowerment. All of the variables are significant at the 0.001 level as seen in the table above.

Regression coefficients

Table 4. Respective Regression coefficient of Economic Social, Psychological empowerment

Coefficients[a]								
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	.160	.024		6.526	.000	.112	.208
	PE	.920	.014	.948	66.368	.000	.893	.947
a. Dependent Variable: Domestic Violence								
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	.324	.035		9.244	.000	.255	.393
	EE	.838	.020	.881	41.534	.000	.798	.878
a. Dependent Variable: Domestic Violence								

How well the predictor variable predicts the criterion variable is represented by the regression beta value. With t-value and significance level, we determine if the observed change in the dependent variable is significant. A regression coefficient describes the average shift in the response variable caused by a change of one unit in the predictor variable when all other variables are not changing.

It is discovered that psychological empowerment has a stronger impact, explaining the dependent variable of Domestic violence ($\beta = 0.948$, $t = 66.368$), than economic empowerment ($\beta = 0.881$, $t = 41.534$). Psychological empowerment offers a 94.8 percent improvement, but economic empowerment is better, with 88.1 percent improvement. The results are considered to be significant by a P value of 0.001 which indicates the chance discovery is less than 1 in 1,000.

Three of the responses we received focused on how economic factors shape CSV. In this work, the household or married couple acts as the setting for bargaining over different resources (Eggers del Campo & Steinert, 2022; Ranganathan et al., 2021). It is often thought that women depend financially on men and usually tolerate them abusing them. An increase in a woman's income might decrease violence risk since she has less need to stay with her abuser. This economic viewpoint considers violence as a way to guide or restrict someone's behavior as well as how resources are managed (Eze-Ajoku et al., 2022). With women having more economic power, men may use violence to get involved in their job, take over their earnings or dictate its use. Another way to understand domestic violence economically is to see it as a result of frustration, unhappiness or a husband's desire to feel better about himself (Castro Lopes et al., 2022). If women earn more, they are more likely to avoid DV since, financially, their households are better off, thus lowering stress for men who may otherwise be violent.

Three explanations are focused on understanding the influence of economic resources

1st Households are understood as locations where people negotiate resources and support. Many cultures expect that women get financial support from their partners and allow some violence in exchange.

2nd type of violence: It allows some people to control others' actions or how resources are shared. Women's economic independence may lead to more incidents of DV as men may apply violence to disturb the work life of women, seize their earnings or try to control women's finances.

A further explanation is that domestic violence can come from a frustrating or unsatisfactory situation or be a boost for someone's self-esteem. When women have higher earnings, their households may be more financially stable. This financial stability can help reduce stress, which is sometimes linked to a lower risk of domestic violence.

Overview of Theoretical Framework

This study is based on Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), which highlights how human behavior is shaped by the interaction of:

- **Personal factors** (e.g., self-efficacy, confidence → Psychological Empowerment),
- **Behavioral factors** (e.g., employment, financial independence → Socioeconomic Empowerment),

- **Environmental factors** (e.g., support from family/community → Social Support Networks).

These factors work together to influence whether women can resist or are at risk of **Domestic Violence (DV)**.

Table: 5 Hypotheses and Analytical Interpretation

Hypothesis	Statement	Findings & Statistical Evidence	Interpretation
H1: Economic empowerment (EE) positively impacts domestic violence.	$\beta = 0.838$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.776$	EE explains 77.6% of the variance in DV, and this result is statistically significant. Strong positive β indicates EE strongly predicts DV reduction (though "positively impact" should conceptually mean negative association).	**Supported**, but semantically should be interpreted as: Higher economic empowerment → Lower domestic violence. Financial independence and employment reduce dependence and vulnerability.
H2: Psychological empowerment (PE) positively impacts domestic violence.	$\beta = 0.920$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.898$	PE explains 89.8% of variance in DV. Strong β suggests high influence. However, qualitative discussion shows a **dual effect** — empowerment reduces DV risk but may also provoke backlash in patriarchal households.	**Partially supported.** PE strengthens resistance to abuse, but may also increase conflict where traditional norms dominate.
H3: Social support (SSN) mediates the link between EE and DV.	β (SSN) = 0.016, ΔR^2 = 0.01, $p < .001$	Inclusion of SSN slightly increased R^2, suggesting a small yet significant mediation effect.	**Supported.** Social networks buffer stress and amplify the protective impact of economic empowerment.
H4: Social support (SSN) mediates the link between PE and DV.	β (SSN) = 0.016, ΔR^2 = 0.01, $p < .001$	SSN again acts as a partial mediator.	**Supported.** Emotional and institutional support strengthens psychological empowerment's effect in reducing DV.

- Economic empowerment (EE) and psychological empowerment (PE) both significantly reduce domestic violence.
- Psychological empowerment has the stronger statistical effect (β = 0.948), indicating that inner confidence, self-efficacy, and autonomy are crucial for resisting abuse.
- Social support networks (SSN) play a mediating role, enhancing both forms of empowerment's effectiveness.

- However, a "backlash effect" may occur in conservative households, where men feel threatened by empowered women — meaning empowerment efforts must be accompanied by cultural and social change.

Theoretical Implications:

- The findings validate **Social Cognitive Theory:** empowerment (personal & behavioral) interacts with environmental reinforcement (social support) to influence outcomes (DV reduction).
- Economic independence and self-efficacy improve women's **agency**, while social networks provide **resilience mechanisms**.

Policy and Practical Implications

1. Combine **economic and psychological empowerment** programs with **community awareness** to reduce backlash.
2. Strengthen social support structures such as family, NGOs, and community organizations.
3. Tailor interventions to cultural contexts. Empowerment should be both internal, like building confidence, and external, such as providing support

Conclusion:

The study looked at how social and psychological factors affect the number of married women in Rahim Yar Khan Dist, who face domestic violence. The researchers chose to use a quantitative method and selected 151 women who were married by simple random sampling to gather data. A Cronbach's Alpha of 0.861 shows that the research tool was reliable and gave trustworthy results. The study found that economic empowerment can greatly reduce domestic violence. When women have financial independence and can earn and own property, they are more able to defend their rights, join in family decisions, and stand up to abuse. Because of this empowerment, women feel less reliant on their partners and are protected from physical, psychological and economic domestic violence. Yet, the research revealed that sometimes empowering people economically can make their partners feel challenged and cause them to react aggressively.

In addition, psychological empowerment which is based on confidence, self-belief and thinking well about oneself, showed a positive effect on domestic violence, but it is still a little complicated. When women gain more control over their lives, they may resist behaviors that control them which could cause anger from men who embrace a dominant role at home. As a result, even having psychological empowerment is not enough for women unless social norms are challenged as well, since there could be unintended issues from only having the empowerment. The study found that strong social support networks, such as emotional and material help from family, friends, and social services, can significantly reduce domestic violence. These networks give women help and understanding when

they face or try to leave dangerous relationships. Mediation analysis shows that social support is important in strengthening the connection between both types of empowerment and domestic violence, showing how support systems help lower risks at home.

Overall, the study shows that economic, mental, and social empowerment are important for reducing domestic violence. Empowerment should be handled carefully and backed by community programs, laws, and awareness campaigns. These findings are useful for anyone working on ways to support women's rights and gender equality in countries like Pakistan. This article offers a new perspective by exploring how psychological and socioeconomic empowerment relate to domestic violence against women in Rahim Yar Khan Dist, Pakistan. While earlier research often looked at certain parts of domestic violence or women's empowerment, few studies have combined social, psychological, and economic support into one complete model.

The study also examines social support networks as a mediating factor, giving new insights into how empowerment can lower vulnerability to domestic violence. Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) is the basis for this approach, although it is not often used in this context. By using solid statistical methods and local primary data, the study helps fill a gap in understanding how different aspects of empowerment affect domestic violence in patriarchal, conservative communities. This research adds to academic knowledge and gives practical advice for social groups and policymakers who want to create more culturally sensitive and effective ways to prevent gender-based violence.

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