



# **Contextual Assessment of Women Empowerment and Its Determinants: Evidence from Pakistan**

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**Contextual Assessment of Women Empowerment and Its Determinants:**  
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**ABSTRACT**

The main objective of this study is to evaluate women empowerment in different contexts of family planning and economic decision making within the household. Further this paper investigates its appropriate determinants sifting through sociology resource control theory and economic bargaining theory by controlling for socio-cultural intervening factors. We examine this empirically by utilizing extensive micro level data information (15,453 households) from 'Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey' (PSLM) for the year of 2005-06. Results suggest the presence of highly constrained and largely dichotomous empowerment within the household. Interestingly, we find that the number of children however not the sex of a child relevant in enhancing women's empowerment. Further, the common determinants of empowerment depict varying degree of effectiveness depending on the specific context of empowerment. Moreover, socio-economic, level of education and employment status of a woman depict as effect modifier factors across the empowerment contexts and regions. Furthermore, geographic divisions within Pakistan, significantly explain the contextual empowerment of women.

**JEL Codes:** C42, Z13

**Keywords:** Contextual empowerment, family planning decision making, economic decision making, socio-cultural, ordered logistic regressions.

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## INTRODUCTION

Theoretical research on women autonomy<sup>1</sup> has achieved significant space in the sociology, social demography and socio-economic literature for the last three centuries<sup>2</sup>. Many academicians and the policy makers frequently emphasize on the vital role of women participation in economic development. Further, the practical implications of women empowerment can be traced from the development and social change experience of the developed world. Therefore, many applied researchers have been striving to explain this concept and replicate the evidence for developing nations where women are conventionally perceived to be with limited role in household decision making process hence slow speed of economic development and social change. Available research focuses on the concept of women empowerment and its determinants particularly in the light of sociology gender inequality theory and economic household decision making theory. Sociology theory emphasizes on the strong relationship of resource control and women empowerment within household. Whereas the economic theory demonstrates the increasing threat utility as bargaining power of women within household decision making process. Another strand of researchers however emphasize intervening role of socio-cultural environment along with this conventional explanation of women autonomy.

Large amount of literature cluster around discussing different aspects of empowerment through mostly used indirect measures of empowerment<sup>3</sup>. Some studies discuss empowerment as an outcome indicator, while other consider it as an intermediary factor to examine further effects of empowering women on other developmental outcomes. The level of analysis, in the majority of studies, is the household or individual level from one district, city or single state of the country. Literature<sup>4</sup> also identifies a variety of factors which may influence women empowerment within household. However the results are mixed and lack any consensus on the common determinants of empowerment. Previously, a wide variety

<sup>1</sup> We may find several terminologies referring to women autonomy. Mainly these include empowerment, choice, status, and decision making power of a woman within the household. This study considers and analyse women autonomy as a decision making power relative to husband or any other head of the household that may be father-in-law or mother-in-law. Hence, we use above different terminologies interchangeably throughout the discussion in the paper. For example among others see Dixon-Mueller, 1978; Safilios-Rthschild, 1982; Dyson and Moore, 1983; Batliwala, 1994; Keller and Mbewewe, 1991; Kabeer, 2001; Rowlands, 1995; and Nussbaum, 2000 for further details on definition and terminologies.

<sup>2</sup> For instance see Connell, 1987; Cubbins, 1991; Ferree and Hall, 1996; Kane and Sanchez, 1994; Mason, 1986.

<sup>3</sup> For example see Ackerly, (1995); Kishor, (2000a); Kabeer, (2001); Keller and Mbewewe, (1991); Malhotra et al., (2002).

<sup>4</sup> Malhotra and Mather (1997) present evidence from Kalutara districts of Sri Lanka. Mason (1998) and Mason and Smith (2000) present evidence from both urban and rural areas in five Asian countries (Pakistan, India, Malaysia, Thailand, and Philippines). Frankenberg and Thomas (2001) analyzed data from a decision making module in the 1997-98 Indonesia Family Life Survey of 5,168 couples and also used qualitative data from 4 focus groups. Jejeebhoy and Sathar (2001) compared the lives of women in different regions of South Asia-(Punjab in Pakistan, Uttar Pradesh in north India and Tamil Nadu in south India).

of evidence reflected education and employment as the significant drivers of women empowerment in the household. While recently, a popular argument has been widely discussed that women empowerment is largely affected by the intervening factors commonly known as socio-cultural factors. In the same vein, it is also emphasized that women economic power is influenced greatly by the gender stratification and indigenous family systems of corresponding household.

For example, Goetz and Gupta (1996)<sup>5</sup> finds that microcredit programs not always happened to enhance women empowerment as these loans were usually controlled by men. However, other studies<sup>6</sup> conclude that microcredit programs have helped to empower Bangladeshi women, but these studies also acknowledge that microcredit programs were not able to change the highly patriarchal structure of society. Schuler and Hashemi et al. (1994, 1997)<sup>7</sup> contrarily conclude that access to microcredit programs enhance women autonomy overall. Research evidence overall suggests that education attainment, employment status and opportunities to microcredit access provide women with more bargaining power, options and control over resources within household. Further, evidence corresponding to empowerment as an intermediary variable, conclude that women control over financial matters leads to greater participation in household decision making, this in turn results in the well being of their families (e.g. reduced child mortality and reduced fertility rates). Similarly, alternative school of thought emphasize that social context is the most important component of the decision making process. In highly gender stratified societies, social and cultural norms shape the rules and regulations of families, therefore it is important to focus on structural matters involving family, social, and economic organization.

There is dearth of any compelling evidence<sup>8</sup> on contextual assessment of women autonomy and its determinants particularly on the following lines. The available empirical literature either focuses on the earning ability or control over resources of a woman and/or anecdotal socio-cultural factors as determining the degree of women autonomy. Secondly, previous research depends mostly on the proxy measures or on a limited dimension of women autonomy which might be unfair to generalize the results. Thirdly, important point to be realized is that most of the research appears handicapped with the data availability which thwarts generalising the results. For instance, most of the case studies utilize published or

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<sup>5</sup> Interviewed 253 women and 22 men from 5 regions of Bangladesh and used loan characteristics, (size of loan and investment activity) as independent variables and women's control of loan as dependent variables.

<sup>6</sup> For example Hashemi, Schuler et al. 1996; Kabeer 1998

<sup>7</sup> interviewed women in 6 villages in Bangladesh

<sup>8</sup> Anderson and Eswaran (2009), Rahman and Rao (2004) and Kantor (2003) are exceptions.

survey data corresponding to single state, city or village which essentially might not be representative of the population of that country. Fourth, most of the existing research explains single aspect of women autonomy, however totally ignores other contexts of women autonomy where earning ability alone may not sufficiently enhance women autonomy. Therefore, subject to the diverse complexity of issue, it demands encompassing multidisciplinary approach to investigate through determinants of women empowerment.

Current study shows distinctive features over the previous available empirical literature on women autonomy and its determinants. Therefore, this study aims at the evaluation different aspects of autonomy including family planning and economic decision making within household. Along with it, we also investigate the relative importance of wide variety of factors which may substantially explain the variation in country wide contextual autonomy of rural and urban woman. Furthermore, unlike to the previous research the determinants of autonomy include from sociology resource control and economic bargaining theory of household by controlling intervening socio-cultural factors. Besides, unlike to the majority of previous literature current study utilizes direct measures of autonomy which may provide sufficient interpretation of women autonomy. Moreover, this study utilizes sufficiently large data set representative of population of country from both rural and urban regions including all states.

## **HOUSEHOLD AND WOMEN STATUS**

Pakistani society in social and cultural context is patriarchal and highly gender stratified, man and woman appear with the separate roles within household. This gender division defines home as the woman's sphere, and confines her to the distinctive responsibilities including reproductive roles particularly. Man, on the other hand, precincts the role of breadwinner and explicitly may correspond to other activities outside of the household from which woman is conventionally restricted<sup>9</sup>. Therefore, strong and persistent adherence to family life and family values are the key features of the social organization of this society. The family formation in general is patrilineal and marriage is starting point. Marriages are usually arranged within the kin-group, after marriage, a young woman supposedly faces her mother-in-law along with her husband in the household. In the beginning, she achieves restricted participation in household decision making and limited degree of freedom to move

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<sup>9</sup> Among many others observed by Asian Development Bank (2000) and Khan (1999).

or travel independently outside of the household. Reproduction of the patrilineal lineage, particularly the number of sons, is probably the most important means available to a woman in securing a good position within her husband's home<sup>10</sup>.

One of the most obvious manifestations of gender in that society is the institution of 'PURDHA' (covering head, face or whole body), which apparently differentiates the role and space of woman from man. Many observers therefore have pointed out different reasons and implications of 'PURDHA' within this society<sup>11</sup>. Interestingly, 'PURDHA' practice or so called above gender divide do not reflect as a homogenous characteristic of women across the states and regions of Pakistan. In general, we observe women from the urban region are relatively more engaged in paid labour activities hence less gender based inequalities. Further, this heterogenous trend also prevails across different states along with the region wise stratification within the country. Customarily, females rely on the authority of male hence patriarchal structure remain stronger in tribal and rural, more so, than urban settings. While urban middle-class women are increasingly successful at ensuring greater access to education and employment for themselves, rural women are however engaged in work at husband's farm or with limited opportunities to receive education. Correspondingly reasonable amount of literature observes other forms of social exclusion such as socioeconomic status, urban/rural divide and ethnic factors<sup>12</sup> in explaining heterogeneity of women autonomy.

## CONTEXTS OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND DETERMINANTS

Previous research suggests a range of components which directly or indirectly define women's empowerment. Mainly it includes women participation in decisions concerning their own and their family's lives, access and control of economic resources, and freedom of movement outside of the household. We therefore focus on a range of questions closely related to decision making regarding different aspects of women's life. These questions are from different walks of life directly gauging the status of women in decision making process within the household. This study mainly focuses on two important contexts of women empowerment which are family planning and economic decision making within the household.

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<sup>10</sup> This is also observed by many for instance see Jejeebhoy and Sathar, (2001); Sathar et al., (2000) and Winkvist and Akhtar, (2000).

<sup>11</sup> Among those see Hafeez, S., (1998); Khan, (1999); Cain et al., (1979); Sathar and Kazi, (1997); Donnan, (1997); and Mumtaz, (2002).

<sup>12</sup> See Donnan, (1997); Asian Development Bank, (2000); and Mumtaz, (2002).

Family planning decision making is one of the most important indicator of women empowerment in the household. Further, there are deep implications if majority of women are excluded from this decision making. For instance, the health of a woman and her child directly depends on who makes the family planning decisions within the household. There are two sub-divisions which largely assess the level of this decision making. These are respectively use of ‘contraceptive measures’ and decision about ‘having more children’. Another important context is woman’s relative power of economic decision making within the household. Economic decision making may range from deciding essential purchases for herself, for her children and family. More specifically, this context includes the purchasing of food, clothing and foot wear, medical treatment, and recreation or travel. These variables reflect and explore the involvement of women in making routine and organisational decisions.

Above two contexts of women empowerment explain degree of involvement in relative decision making process within the household. Both of these contexts are apparently different from one another in terms of operations and significance on the entire assessment of her empowerment. Therefore, it is not necessary that corresponding determinants might also be common for both of these contexts. However the commonly identified determinants may have relatively different importance with respect to family planning and economic decision making context. As a main objective of this study we derive these determinants from resource control, economic bargaining and socio-culture as intervening factors in determining the empowerment in the household. Thus employment status and embodied education respectively pertain as enabling factors of resource control and economic bargaining power of women. Further, age of a woman, the socio-economic status (based on per capita consumption of the household) and number of children particularly the sex of a child constitute the socio-cultural factors of determining women empowerment within the household.

## **STUDY SCOPE**

### **Survey Data Information and Sample Characteristics**

We use data from ‘Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement survey’ (PSLM) 2005-06 for analysis. PSLM comprises over a series of surveys approved in 2004 for the

period July 2004 to December 2009. This extensive information comes through district-level and national/provincial- level surveys conducted in alternate years. The first round of PSLM was conducted in 2004-05 in which data on social indicators was collected from 77,000 households at the district level. The second round of survey series, conducted in 2005-06, includes the detailed income/expenditure module. This survey aims to provide detailed outcome indicators on education, health, population welfare, water & sanitation, and income & expenditure. PSLM is of extraordinary importance and has been utilized in various policy formulations including ‘Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper’ (PRSP) and ‘Medium Term Development Framework’ (MTDF) in the overall context of the United Nations ‘Millennium Development Goals’ (MDGs). Thus, it also pertains to one of the central mechanisms in monitoring the implementation of the PRSP and MDG indicators. Further, it provides a set of representative, population-based estimates of social indicators and their progress under the PRSP. Therefore, we utilise second round survey data (PSLM 2005-06) in this study to analyse dynamics of women’s decision making in Pakistan. The survey (2005-06) carries interviews of 15,453 households corresponding to almost all of the socio-economic issues through two-stage stratified sample design<sup>13</sup>.

It is important to note, this survey represents population including urban, rural and other specialised areas of the country. Table 1 in the following presents number of enumeration blocks and villages corresponding to population living in urban and rural regions. All urban areas comprising cities/towns have been divided into small compact areas known as enumeration blocks (which are 26698 in numbers), identifiable through geographic map. Each enumeration block comprises over about 200 to 250 households and further categorized into low, middle and high-income group, keeping in view the socio economic status of the majority of households. With regard to the rural areas consisting over about 50590 villages, the lists of villages (mouzas/dehs) according to the population census (1998) have been used as a sampling frame.

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<sup>13</sup> Some limitations of this data can also be pointed out for instance the questions asked in the survey were not very clear and in some cases they are leading questions. For example in the question “Who in your household decides whether you should have more children?” By including the word “more” this question does not separate the women who don’t have any children and those who have nine children already. Similarly codes for questions about decisions about purchase and consumption of certain items were very ambiguous (too many categories and also some of them overlapping), which may have caused bias in answers. As, we have no information in this survey about dowry and co-residence with mother-in-law (which are very important factors for women to secure her position in her husband’s home in Pakistani society), we were not able to do any analysis related to this and we might have missed important findings related to it.

*Table 1. Number of Enumeration Blocks and Villages as Per Sampling Frame*

Province	Number of Enumeration Blocks	Number of Villages
Punjab	14,549	25,875
Sindh	9,025	5,871
NWFP	1,913	7,337
Balochistan	613	6,557
A.J.K	210	1,654
Northern Area	64	566
FATA		2,596
Islamabad	324	132
<b>Total</b>	<b>26,698</b>	<b>50,588</b>

Regarding sample stratification, large size cities with population 0.5 million and above have been treated as independent stratum. Each of these cities has further been sub-stratified into low, middle and high income groups. The remaining cities/towns within each defunct administrative division have been grouped together to constitute an independent stratum. The entire rural domain of a district for Punjab, Sindh and NWFP provinces has been considered as independent stratum, whereas in Balochistan province defunct administrative division has been treated as stratum.

A two-stage stratified sample design has been adopted for this survey. Table 2 in the following describes distribution plan of primary sampling units (PSUs) and secondary sampling units (SSUs). The purpose of this classification is to capture the variability in the entire population from all regions including both urban and rural. A sample size of 15453 households enumerated from 1109 sample PSUs (consisting of 531 from urban and 578 from rural areas) has been considered sufficient to produce reliable estimates across all provinces.

*Table 2. Profile of The Sample (PSLM 2005-06)*

Provinces	URBAN	RURAL	TOTAL
<b>Primary Sampling Units</b>			
Punjab	240	244	484
Sindh	140	132	272
NWFP	88	119	207
Balochistan	63	83	146
<b>Overall</b>	<b>531</b>	<b>578</b>	<b>1109</b>
<b>Secondary Sampling Units/Households</b>			
Punjab	2790	3892	6682
Sindh	1666	2107	3773
NWFP	1049	1901	2950
Balochistan	735	1313	2048
<b>Overall</b>	<b>6240</b>	<b>9214</b>	<b>15453</b>

### *Selection of primary sampling Units (PSUs)*

Enumeration blocks in the urban domain and mouzas/dehs/villages in rural domain have been taken as primary sampling units (PSUs). In urban domain, sample PSUs from each stratum have been selected by probability proportional to size (PPS) method of sampling scheme using households in each block as measure of size (MOS). Similarly in rural areas, population of each village has taken as MOS for selection of sample villages using probability proportional to size method of selection.

### *Selection of Secondary Sampling Units (SSUs)*

Households within each sample Primary Sampling Unit (PSU) have been considered as Secondary Sampling Units (SSUs). 16 and 12 households have been selected from each sample village and enumeration block respectively by systematic sampling scheme with a random start.

The outcome of interest of this study is to investigate determinants of women empowerment. For this purpose of analysis, data from the section of women on decision making was merged with basic demographic, education and employment information. There were 25651 women aged 15-49, but 1047 women were not present at home at time of interview; therefore, these women have been excluded from analysis. The main analysis has been restricted to currently married women, which reduced data to 15,506 women.

The outcome of interest is to observe relative importance of different determinants in women's decision making. For this purpose, we merge data from women on decision making with basic demographic, education and employment information. The survey involved 25,651 women aged 15-49, but 1047 women were not present at home at the time of interview; therefore, these women have been excluded from analysis. The main analysis was also restricted to currently married women, which reduced data to 15,506 women.

After making adjustments in the survey design to limit our analysis to currently married women, we distribute according to age categories which range from 15 years to 49 years. We observe in this sample the majority of currently married women are in the age group of 25 years to 29 years, which remains true for both urban and rural areas. It seems early marriages are no longer a common phenomenon in urban areas, and in rural areas of Pakistan only 6 percent of currently married women are under the age of 20 years. The

distribution of these women by education, employment, and contraception for provinces and regions also varies correspondingly.

Sample indicates that women from different regions show large amount of variation in empowerment and autonomy characteristics. Women from Punjab province score higher percentages of autonomy and empowerment whilst Balochi women reflect the lowest levels corresponding to all empowerment characteristics surveyed. Similarly, urban areas reflect an improvement over the rural areas for all factors except employment; more women employed in rural areas suggest that these women are engaged in employment on family farms. We also witness a large percentage of women in all four provinces never attended school, and there are disparities reflected in the level of education between urban and rural areas.

Corresponding to the distribution of women by number of children we observe that majority of women (45 percent) have 4 or more children, these numbers remain consistent across urban and rural areas.

## **MEASURE OF EMPOWERMENT AND DETERMINANTS**

Women empowerment is subjective and contextual hence deficient with global measure. Therefore, we find a variety of indirect measures used in the previous literature. A few studies have utilized direct measures of empowerment but most of those are contextual in nature. Current study has advantage of using extensive data which allows us to capture broader range of components necessary to measure both contexts of empowerment. Furthermore, this data as explained in the above permits us to evaluate through direct responses hence direct measures of empowerment.

Broadly, we focus on ‘use of contraceptive’ measures and ‘having more children’ collectively measuring the relative power of women within the household. The component of ‘use of contraceptive’ partially measures degree of a woman empowerment in the context of family planning context. Regarding the use of contraception originally it shows seven categories<sup>14</sup> from the surveyed data which directly measure involvement if any in this decision making within the household. Similarly, ‘having more children’ carries eight categories<sup>15</sup> in the questionnaire thoroughly explaining all possible dimensions. For analytical

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<sup>14</sup> Husband alone = 1, Woman herself = 2, Husband & woman jointly =3, Mother of woman or husband = 4, Nobody = 5, Menopausal/infertile =6 other = 7.

<sup>15</sup> Includes all categories as appeared in footnote 12 but with one extra i.e. It's in hands of God=8. The decision about having more children categories with, “nobody” and “it is in the hands of God”, have been re-coded to “no say” category.

purposes, women who responded “menopausal/infertile” were excluded (data reduced to 15,302 observations), since they were not relevant for decision making in family planning matters.

We recode both of above two dimensions into three categories 0, 1 and 2 respectively pertaining to ‘no say’, ‘some say’ and ‘major say’. Further we convert both dimensions into aggregate ‘family planning decision index’ by adding up the categories ranging from minimum of 0 to the maximum of 4. Furthermore, to avoid overlapping we recode categories 3 and 4 of the summed index of family planning to 3, thus the final summed index ranges from 0 to 3.

Table 3 in the below presents that the average (arithmetic mean) score of *family planning index* accounts 0.36, 1.49, 1.55 and 1.67 respectively for the province of Baluchistan, Punjab, Sindh and NWFP. It implies that women from the province of NWFP depict relatively greater participation in family planning decisions than those from other provinces. However, interestingly women from urban Baluchistan reflect higher ‘most say’ compared with the urban Punjab, Sindh and NWFP.

*Table 3. Province-vise Regional distribution of women’s Say (%)*

<b>Punjab</b>		<b>Sindh</b>		<b>NWFP</b>		<b>Baluchistan</b>	
Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
<b><u>Family planning decision making index</u></b>							
0 ‘No say’	16.9	27.1	18.49	20.4	8.73	17.6	64.88
1 ‘Minor say’	7.85	7.61	7	14.9	1.3	3.96	6.73
2 ‘More say’	71.3	61.2	70.23	58.6	87.68	75.7	20.4
3 ‘Most say’	3.9	4.03	4.28	6.09	2.29	2.82	7.99
<b>Total Obs.</b>	<b>2,386</b>	<b>3,338</b>	<b>1,526</b>	<b>2,333</b>	<b>1,091</b>	<b>2,373</b>	<b>801</b>
<b>Mean (Index)</b>	<b>1.62</b>	<b>1.42</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>1.84</b>	<b>1.64</b>	<b>0.72</b>
<b><u>Economic decision making index</u></b>							
0 ‘No say’	17.3	18.7	18.05	39.8	26.4	38.2	65.76
1 ‘Minor say’	13.9	12.4	21.29	32.2	48.6	37.9	14.6
2 ‘Mid say’	30.8	34.3	37.08	22.8	12.55	9.99	16.4
3 ‘More say’	20.3	19.2	21.14	4.97	6.88	8.51	2.7
4 ‘Major say’	17.7	15.5	2.43	0.22	5.57	5.4	0.54
<b>Total Obs.</b>	<b>2,417</b>	<b>3,396</b>	<b>1,547</b>	<b>2,350</b>	<b>1,111</b>	<b>2,415</b>	<b>806</b>
<b>Mean (Index)</b>	<b>2.07</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1.69</b>	<b>0.94</b>	<b>1.17</b>	<b>1.05</b>	<b>0.58</b>

Source: Authors calculations from PSLM (2005-06).

Corresponding to economic decision making the dimensions are participation of women in purchasing food, clothing and foot wear, medical treatment, and recreation or

travel. These dimensions capture involvement of women in making routine and occasional decisions within household. We re-code each one of these four dimensions into corresponding three categories 0, 1 and 2 using the same procedure as utilized for family planning index. Individual dimensions are then added to form an aggregate index of economic decision making and ranges from 0 to 8. For further analytical purposes the aggregate index is recoded and reduced to final 5 categories hence index varies from 0 to 4 respectively ‘no say’ to major say’.

In general, the *economic decision making index* suggests a lower degree of authority in economic matters however with varying degree among states and regions. Women from the Punjab province appear with the highest degree of ‘say’ in making her independent purchasing decisions in comparison with other three provinces. However evidence also suggests that the majority of women are excluded from making such like decision e.g. Baluchistan with the highest percentage of exclusion following by NWFP, Sindh and Punjab. Thus, the overall average score for economic decision making index ranges from 0.41, 1.07, and 1.29 to 2.03 respectively for Baluchistan, NWFP, Sindh and Punjab.

The vector of explanatory variables include years of woman education, employment status, age, number of children, sex of the childe (number of sons to differentiate the relative significance of gender of a child), socio-economic status and province relative effects. We categorise education into 3 categories respectively referred to ‘no education’, ‘1-5 years of education’, and ‘6 years & above education’. Statistics show almost 70 per cent women are with no education therefore a small proportion of women receive education. We are interested to observe any incremental effect of any education level on women empowerment. Regarding employment status we categorise it into a strict binary variable 0 and 1 representing ‘not employed’ or ‘employed’ respectively. Employed category shows if a woman is receiving any income from her services. It is also important to note that some of the women might be employed but not receiving any earned income for instance working at family business or husband’s farm without any paid income.

The other determinant is age and we categorise this into several different age brackets to observe any effect of age over the young age. Number of children also enters as one of the determinants to observe its influence on women status within the household. It is generally believed that a woman with more children receives relatively greater status as compared with the one without any child. Similarly, various categories accounting for number of sons are also included to observe the any impact of gender of child on woman’s empowerment. Furthermore to capture the effect of socioeconomic status we include five different categories

based on per capita consumption of the household, hence ‘1’ for the poorest and ‘5’ for the wealthiest group. We also conjecture that women from different provinces may have different level of empowerment from one another. Finally, we reproduce these results for both of the urban and rural regions along with the aggregate analysis.

We estimate ordinal logistic regressions to evaluate the relative importance of above determinants in both contexts of family planning and economic decision making of women within the household. We treat these outcome measures as ordinal, under the assumption that the levels of the decision making indices has ordering from low to high, but the distance between them is unknown. Consequently we use two main models to measure two different dimensions of autonomy with the same predictors i.e. education, employment, age, number of children, number of sons, and socio economic status. Further, we compute proportional odds ratios to compare relative effect of each category over the reference category to explain variations in the decision making power of women. Finally, we rearrange the information of the determinants of autonomy by utilizing urban and rural stratification.

## **EMPIRICAL RESULTS**

### **Bivariate Analysis**

Bivariate analysis as appeared in Table 4 in the below provides statistical significance among two different contexts of empowerment and corresponding determinants. Data reflects almost 70 per cent of women are without any education, 11 per cent are with the primary school education and only 19 per cent are with 6 years and more level of education. Hence large number of women is without education therefore any level of education as expected shows high level of significance in connection with any context of empowerment. However employment status shows mixed behaviour with both contexts of empowerment, significant with economic decision making and insignificant with family planning aspect. Previous literature does not differentiate the effect of employment status in contextual assessment. In this study we witness that employment status of a woman may not improve bargaining power in family planning context of the empowerment however it does in economic decision making aspect.

In the patriarchal household set up number of children particularly sons add to the status of a woman also witnessed by Garcia and Oliveira (1995) among many others. In the same vein, we find that both the number of children and sex of a child significantly correlate

with both of the contexts of women empowerment. Regarding age we find highly significant relationship that each successive category of age appears relevant with the empowerment regardless of the context. The socioeconomic status which measures the relative effect of being from the poor household or rich also shows significant relationship with the empowerment of woman.

*Table 4. Associations between summed indices of autonomy and different predictors*

Variables	Number of women	Family planning index		Number of women	Economic decision index Most say (%)	p-value
		Most say (%)				
<b>Education Level</b>						
No education	10,786	4.53		10,946	8.37	
1-5 years education	1,655	3.05		1,674	13.44	<0.001
6 years & more education	2,861	2.85		2,886	13.21	
<b>Employment</b>						
No	13,869	3.98		14,054	9.30	p=0.162 for FP*
Yes	1,433	4.18		1,452	15.16	p<0.001 for ECDEC*
<b>Age categories</b>						
15-19 years	780	3.39		785	2.69	
20-24 years	2,500	4.08		2,513	4.43	
25-29 years	3,179	4.22		3,204	7.97	
30-34 years	2,653	3.48		2,676	8.15	<0.001
35-39 years	2,639	4.06		2,670	14.01	
40-44 years	2,085	4.44		2,117	15.19	
45-49 years	1,466	3.96		1,541	14.89	
<b>Socioeconomic status</b>						
Very poor	3,023	4.93		3,040	5.39	
Poor	3,163	4.79		3,198	8.71	
Lower middle class	3,032	4.35		3,079	9.81	<0.001
Upper middle class	2,916	3.53		2,958	11.77	
Rich	3,171	2.69		3,231	13.31	
<b>Number of living children</b>						
No children	1,987	2.86		2,029	7.00	
1 child	1,985	4.33		2,003	6.22	
2 children	2,237	3.30		2,254	8.16	<0.001
3 children	2,205	4.09		2,222	10.06	
4 + children	6,888	4.45		6,998	12.43	
<b>Number of living sons</b>						
No son	3,784	3.81		3,884	7.42	
1 son	3,726	4.10		3,762	9.16	
2 sons	3,345	3.76		3,387	11.22	<0.001
3 sons	2,335	4.12		2,365	12.59	
4 + sons	2,112	4.51		2,148	11.09	

\*represents for family planning and economic decision making

## Multivariate analysis

Ordinal characteristics of both indices allow us to estimate multivariate ordinal logistic regressions. Similar to the bivariate analysis we estimate two separate models respectively for

family planning and economic decision making. In addition to the specified determinants we include respective state variable to differentiate empowerment effects across the provinces. Further, we compute odds ratios, commonly known as proportional odds ratios for the Ordered Logistic model along with the necessary statistical diagnostics. We discuss results corresponding to each context of family planning and economic decision making in the following.

### *Family Planning Decision Making Context*

Table 5 in the following presents the proportional odds ratios for the ordinal logistic model of family planning decision making index. We find each category of education over the reference category shows significantly greater odds of having more empowerment in family planning decision making within the household. Primary education reflects 1.15 times higher odds as compared with no education level on women empowerment. Education attainment of 6 years and above is also a significant predictor of the family planning decision making index. Women with 6+ years of education have 1.63 times higher odds of having family planning decisions, in other words they participate to some extent in the family planning decisions than women with no education. Perhaps educated women may have more convincing power to interfere in using contraceptive measures hence deciding about to have any more children. Interestingly, employment status does not appear significant in improving empowerment of women in family planning. It is worthwhile to note that only 9 per cent of total women are employed or with the status of earned income. Similarly all age categories do not appear improving the women empowerment except two categories including 20-24 and 25-29 years age bracket at 10 per cent level of significance. It implies that relatively women with the young age profile may have greater participation in such like decision making within the household.

Regarding socio-economic status, women representing the upper middle and the wealthiest class achieve more decision making power in family planning matters as compared with from very poor socio-economic status. Women from the upper-middle class and rich status respectively show odds of 1.31 and 1.38 times greater than very poor women. The number of living children a woman has is also a highly significant determinant of this context of women empowerment. Women having 4+ children show odds of 2.02 times higher decision making score than women with no children. Further, contrary to the prevalent belief we do not observe number of sons as a significant determinant of family planning index.

With respect to the province effects we find that women from the province of NWFP show 1.7 times greater odds ratios over the women from the province of Punjab however the Balochistan with the least.

*Table 5. Determinants of Family Planning Empowerment Context (proportional odds ratios)*

<b>Dependent variable: Family planning decision making index</b>			
	<b>Odds ratio</b>	<b>p-value</b>	<b>95% C.I.</b>
<b>Independent variables</b>			
<b>Women's education</b>			
No education	1.00		
1-5 years education	1.15	0.07	0.99↔1.34
6 years & more education	1.63	<0.001	1.41↔1.88
<b>Women's employment</b>			
No	1.00		
Yes	1.16	0.176	0.94↔1.43
<b>Women's age</b>			
15-19 years	1.00		
20-24 years	1.22	0.082	0.98↔1.52
25-29 years	1.24	0.062	0.99↔1.56
30-34 years	1.08	0.512	0.85↔1.38
35-39 years	1.06	0.660	0.82↔1.37
40-44 years	1.04	0.769	0.79↔1.38
45-49 years	0.95	0.730	0.72↔1.27
<b>Socioeconomic status</b>			
Very poor	1.00		
Poor	0.99	0.950	0.84↔1.18
Lower middle class	1.10	0.250	0.93↔1.31
Upper middle class	1.31	0.002	1.11↔1.55
Rich	1.38	<0.001	1.16↔1.64
<b>Number of living children</b>			
No children	1.00		
1 child	1.52	<0.001	1.27↔1.81
2 children	1.57	<0.001	1.30↔1.90
3 children	1.92	<0.001	1.54↔2.40
4 + children	2.02	<0.001	1.60↔2.54
<b>Number of living sons</b>			
No son	1.00		
1 son	1.02	0.633	0.84↔1.11
2 sons	1.19	0.942	0.85↔1.20
3 sons	1.70	0.597	0.87↔1.28
4 + sons	0.09	0.843	0.83↔1.25
<b>Province</b>			
Punjab	1.00		
Sindh	1.19	0.059	0.99↔1.42
NWFP	1.70	<0.001	1.35↔2.13
Baluchistan	0.09	<0.001	0.06↔0.13

Notes: number of observations included are 15,302. F-statistics=54.66, P=0.000

Table 6 in the following respectively presents evidence from the urban and rural region on determinants of women empowerment. Educational attainment as witnessed in the aggregate results appeared significant across all categories of education. Unlike to the aggregate results primary school education (1-5 years) does not seem to improve women empowerment in the urban region. Moreover, 6 years and above level of education is highly significant implying that women with this level of education have odds 1.67 times greater than uneducated women in family planning decision making. Results also show that employment status similar to the aggregate results does not improve women empowerment in the urban region. Similarly, age of a woman also remains insignificant determinant of her status in family planning decision making within the household.

Interestingly, socio-economic status depicts significant effect on improving the women empowerment in urban region. We find all socio-economic classes over the very poor class significantly increasing source of empowerment. However, there is not any difference in the degree of empowerment of a women belong to poor or very poor class of the society. In line with the conventional belief we find number of children significantly increasing the status of a women in family planning decision making within the household in the urban region. Results show that odds of participation in decision making increases with increasing number of children, women with 4+children have a decision making odds 1.88 times greater than women with no children. However, increasing number of sons only does not differentiate with the one without sons in explaining the empowerment assessment. Further, similar to the aggregate evidence, women from the urban NWFP, shows 2.12 times higher odds of decision making than women from the urban Punjab. However women from urban Baluchistan have appeared with lower odds of 7 times than same cohort from Punjab.

Similar to the urban we reproduce results on the identical lines for the rural stratification. We find primary education as well as 6 or more years of education significantly increase the empowerment hence more decision making power in family planning context within the household. It is important to note that any level of education is more sensitive to increase women status in the rural region of the country. Women in the age bracket of 20-24 and 25-29 years respectively have odds of decision making score 1.31 and 1.26 times greater than women aged between 15 and 19 years. However contrary to the urban evidence, socioeconomic status is not a significant determinant in the rural areas. In rural areas, again women from NWFP show odds of a higher decision making score 1.72 times greater than women in Punjab while rural Baluchistan women have 13 times smaller odds of decision making than rural Punjab.

Results from urban and rural stratification indicate that education attainment, socioeconomic status and age are effect modifiers for the regional divide. It implies that the above three determinants have different degree of effectiveness in modifying the contextual assessment of women empowerment. On the basis of this evidence we may differentiate between common and effect modifier determinants of contextual empowerment.

*Table 6: Determinants of Family Planning Empowerment Context (proportional odds ratios)*

<b>Dependent variable: Family planning decision making index</b>						
	Urban Stratification			Rural Stratification		
	Odds ratio	P-value	95% C.I.	Odds ratio	P-value	95% C.I.
<b>Independent variables</b>						
<b>Women's education</b>						
No education	1.00			1.00		
1-5 years education	1.06	0.60	0.84↔1.34	1.18	0.087	0.98↔1.43
6 years & more education	1.67	<0.001	1.34↔2.09	1.44	<0.001	1.19↔1.74
<b>Women's employment</b>						
No	1.00			1.00		
Yes	1.08	0.63	0.79↔1.47	1.19	0.196	0.91↔1.56
<b>Women's age</b>						
15-19 years	1.00			1.00		
20-24 years	0.97	0.893	0.61↔1.54	1.31	0.032	1.02↔1.68
25-29 years	1.18	0.453	0.76↔1.85	1.26	0.088	0.97↔1.64
30-34 years	1.26	0.315	0.80↔1.99	1.01	0.941	0.76↔1.34
35-39 years	1.10	0.722	0.66↔1.83	1.04	0.784	0.77↔1.40
40-44 years	1.00	0.989	0.60↔1.68	1.07	0.703	0.76↔1.49
45-49 years	1.05	0.859	0.62↔1.78	0.92	0.647	0.65↔1.30
<b>Socioeconomic status</b>						
Very poor	1.00			1.00		
Poor	1.16	0.288	0.88↔1.52	0.96	0.70	0.78↔1.18
Lower middle class	1.55	0.002	1.17↔2.06	0.97	0.813	0.78↔1.21
Upper middle class	1.46	0.005	1.12↔1.91	1.10	0.381	0.89↔1.36
Rich	1.29	0.077	0.97↔1.72	1.18	0.119	0.96↔1.45
<b>Number of living children</b>						
No children	1.00			1.00		
1 child	1.53	0.015	1.09↔2.17	1.50	<0.001	1.22↔1.83
2 children	1.58	0.016	1.09↔2.29	1.54	<0.001	1.23↔1.92
3 children	1.83	0.003	1.24↔2.72	1.88	<0.001	1.44↔2.47
4 + children	1.88	0.002	1.26↔2.83	1.98	<0.001	1.50↔2.62
<b>Number of living sons</b>						
No son	1.00			1.00		
1 son	1.01	0.921	0.78↔1.32	0.94	0.483	0.79↔1.12
2 sons	1.05	0.757	0.79↔1.39	0.98	0.833	0.78↔1.22
3 sons	1.00	0.998	0.73↔1.37	1.07	0.589	0.84↔1.37
4 + sons	0.96	0.846	0.67↔1.39	1.03	0.827	0.80↔1.31
<b>Province</b>						
Punjab	1.00			1.00		
Sindh	0.99	0.969	0.77↔1.29	1.23	0.104	0.96↔1.57
NWFP	2.12	<0.001	1.55↔2.90	1.72	<0.001	1.33↔2.23
Baluchistan	0.15	<0.001	0.09↔0.24	0.08	<0.001	0.05↔0.13

Notes: number of observations included are 15,302. F-statistics=55.25, P=0.000

### *Economic Decision Making Context*

Similar to the family planning context, Table 7 in the following presents aggregate results on determinants of women economic empowerment context. We find all levels of education, the primary education (1-5 years) and above (6+ years) education appear as significant determinant of the economic decision making index. Therefore, both of above categories of education respectively show 1.34 and 1.45 times greater odds of increasing economic empowerment as compared with those who are without any education level. Hence education attainment qualifies as a significant determinant of both contexts of women empowerment in this analysis. Another important determinant is employment status which reflects significantly increasing women empowerment within the household. Results show that women with the employed status depict 1.61 times greater odds of decision making than a woman without employment. It is also important to note that employment status was not significant in the family planning context.

The age of a woman is another significant determinant of economic decision making index. All age categories are significant over the reference category (which is 15-19). Women with the age bracket of 40-44 years show highest odds of 2.82 times greater power in economic decision making as compared with those who fall in the reference category of age. It implies that as married age of a woman increases she gains more confidence of participating in making economic decisions within the household. As perceived the socio-economic status of woman does matter in explaining variation in the economic decision making on aggregate level. Results show that gradual improvement in the socio-economic status increases women empowerment in the household. Therefore, woman belonging to the wealthiest class shows 1.88 times highest odds of having empowerment compared the one from poor class in economic decision making context.

Similarly, this study finds number of children also equips a woman with more power as compared with the one without any child. Hence a woman with 4 and above number of children has odds of 1.68 times of higher decision making score than with no children. However we do not find the number of living sons only as a significant driver of a woman empowerment in economic decision making context.

Regarding geographic effect we find women from the province of Punjab apparently reflect greater power of economic decision making compared women from other provinces. However, it is different from the results we found corresponding to the family planning context where women from the NWFP province reflected greater say within the household.

Further, the women odds of decision making score are 3 times less from the province of Sindh, 4 times less from NWFP and 17 times less from Baluchistan compared with the reference category of Punjab province.

*Table 7. Determinants of Economic Decision Making Context (proportional odds ratios)*

Dependent variable: Economic decision making index	Odds ratio	p-value	95 % C. I.
<b>Independent variables</b>			
<b>Women's education</b>			
No education	1.00		
1-5 years education	1.34	<0.001	1.17↔1.55
6 years & more education	1.45	<0.001	1.27↔1.67
<b>Women's employment</b>			
No	1.00		
Yes	1.61	<0.001	1.41↔1.84
<b>Women's age</b>			
15-19 years	1.00		
20-24 years	1.20	0.071	0.98↔1.57
25-29 years	1.66	<0.001	1.35↔2.05
30-34 years	2.00	<0.001	1.58↔2.52
35-39 years	2.67	<0.001	2.14↔3.34
40-44 years	2.82	<0.001	2.22↔3.60
45-49 years	2.65	<0.001	2.04↔3.45
<b>Socioeconomic status</b>			
Very poor	1.00		
Poor	1.14	0.064	0.99↔1.32
Lower middle class	1.38	<0.001	1.19↔1.59
Upper middle class	1.64	<0.001	1.42↔1.90
Rich	1.88	<0.001	1.61↔2.20
<b>Number of living children</b>			
No children	1.00		
1 child	1.23	0.015	1.04↔1.46
2 children	1.33	0.002	1.11↔1.60
3 children	1.55	<0.001	1.26↔1.90
4 + children	1.68	<0.001	1.35↔2.09
<b>Number of living sons</b>			
No son	1.00		
1 son	0.95	0.433	0.83↔1.08
2 sons	0.93	0.309	0.80↔1.07
3 sons	0.90	0.221	0.76↔1.06
4 + sons	0.88	0.142	0.74↔1.05
<b>Province</b>			
Punjab	1.00		
Sindh	0.37	<0.001	0.32↔0.43
NWFP	0.28	<0.001	0.22↔0.35
Baluchistan	0.06	<0.001	0.04↔0.09

Notes: number of observations included are 15,302. F-statistics=75.14, P=0.000

Table 8 in the following presents stratified results for the urban and rural regions further from the aggregate results of women empowerment in economic decision making context. Unlike to the family planning context either level of educational attainment is not significant determinant in enhancing economic decision making power of a woman from the

urban region. However employment status in contrast to the family planning is highly significant determinant of economic empowerment within the household in the urban region. Corresponding odds of an employed are 1.67 times higher than unemployed women in economic decision making context. Similarly, all age categories over 20-24 years have been witnessed as significant determinant of enhancing empowerment in economic decision making.

Regarding socioeconomic status results show that women from the lower middle, upper middle and rich class are with greater power of economic decision making compared with those from poor or very poor classes in the urban region. Further, results depict that women in the wealthiest class have 2.02 times greater odds than women in the poorest class. Similarly, urban stratification corresponds to increased women empowerment in economic decision making by having more children compared no children status. Hence, women with 4+ children have odds of higher decision making 1.90 times greater than women with no children. The number of living sons is not a significant predictor for economic decision making as observed in family planning context in the urban region.

Similar to the aggregate findings women from the urban Punjab show greater empowerment in economic decision making as compared the urban women from other provinces. Correspondingly, the odds of decision making score are almost 2, 4 and 13 times less respectively from urban Sindh, NWFP and Baluchistan women as compared with those of women from urban Punjab.

From the rural region unlike to the urban region, results show that education level of a woman significantly improves economic empowerment within the household. Therefore, the odds of economic decision making score are respective 1.5 and 1.67 times greater for women with primary level and 6+ years of education, compared to women with no education. Further similar to the urban stratification, employment status appears significant determinant in improving women empowerment in the rural region. Results show odds of economic decision making score 1.60 times greater than unemployed women.

Age variable is also significant determinant in increasing economic empowerment within the household. Alike to the urban experience, all age categories subject to the reference age category have been greatly significant in improving women economic empowerment within the household in the rural stratification. Likewise increasing number of children has been found positively increasing economic empowerment. However, number of sons similar to the aggregate and urban evidence we fail to any significance in increasing women economic empowerment in the rural region.

Socioeconomic status depicts more sensitive in influencing women empowerment in the rural region. For instance, in the rural region we find that women from relatively better socioeconomic status over the very poor status reflect with relatively greater economic empowerment within the household. Further, again results show that women from the rural Punjab have appeared with relatively greater empowerment over the women from rural Sindh, NWFP and Baluchistan.

*Table 8. Determinants of Economic Decision Making Context (proportional odds ratios)*

<b>Dependent variable: Economic decision making index</b>						
	Urban Stratification			Rural Stratification		
	Odds ratio	P-value	95 % C.I.	Odds ratio	P-value	95 % C.I.
<b>Independent variables</b>						
<b>Women's education</b>						
No education	1.00			1.00		
1-5 years education	0.95	0.651	0.77↔1.18	1.51	<0.001	1.25↔1.81
6 years & more education	1.02	0.799	0.85↔1.24	1.67	<0.001	1.37↔2.04
<b>Women's employment</b>						
No	1.00			1.00		
Yes	1.67	<0.001	1.34↔2.08	1.60	<0.001	1.35↔1.89
<b>Women's age</b>						
15-19 years	1.00			1.00		
20-24 years	1.08	0.71	0.73↔1.60	1.3	0.028	1.03↔1.64
25-29 years	1.63	0.019	1.08↔2.46	1.76	<0.001	1.37↔2.24
30-34 years	2.11	0.002	1.33↔3.35	1.98	<0.001	1.50↔2.61
35-39 years	2.59	<0.001	1.69↔3.99	2.75	<0.001	2.10↔3.59
40-44 years	2.82	<0.001	1.75↔4.57	2.8	<0.001	2.11↔3.72
45-49 years	2.48	<0.001	1.51↔4.08	2.78	<0.001	2.02↔3.84
<b>Socioeconomic status</b>						
Very poor	1.00			1.00		
Poor	1.03	0.853	0.75↔1.41	1.15	0.087	0.98↔1.35
Lower middle class	1.29	0.066	0.98↔1.69	1.35	<0.001	1.14↔1.59
Upper middle class	1.93	<0.001	1.44↔2.61	1.35	<0.001	1.16↔1.59
Rich	2.02	<0.001	1.52↔2.67	1.65	<0.001	1.36↔1.99
<b>Number of living children</b>						
No children	1.00			1.00		
1 child	1.34	0.06	0.99↔1.81	1.15	0.164	0.94↔1.41
2 children	1.48	0.029	1.04↔2.11	1.19	0.104	0.96↔1.48
3 children	1.84	0.002	1.26↔2.69	1.28	0.048	1.00↔1.63
4 + children	1.90	0.002	1.26↔2.86	1.45	0.005	1.12↔1.88
<b>Number of living sons</b>						
No son	1.00			1.00		
1 son	0.97	0.812	0.77↔1.23	0.95	0.496	0.81↔1.11
2 sons	0.83	0.123	0.65↔1.05	1.02	0.860	0.85↔1.22
3 sons	0.92	0.554	0.69↔1.23	0.94	0.581	0.77↔1.16
4 + sons	0.82	0.196	0.61↔1.11	0.93	0.551	0.75↔1.17
<b>Province</b>						
Punjab	1.00			1.00		
Sindh	0.55	<0.001	0.44↔0.69	0.25	<0.001	0.21↔0.30
NWFP	0.28	<0.001	0.22↔0.37	0.26	<0.001	0.20↔0.35
Baluchistan	0.08	<0.001	0.05↔0.11	0.05	<0.001	0.03↔0.08

Notes: number of observations included are 15,302. F-statistics=86.19, P=0.000

## **FURTHER DISCUSSION ON FINDINGS**

Empirical results in the above indicate that a woman empowerment in both decision making authority contexts formerly referred as family planning and economic decision making is largely constrained in Pakistan<sup>16</sup>. Results show that 62 per cent out of total women have some say in family planning decision making within the household. Similarly, only 54 per cent of women are involved on any stage of economic decision making within the household. On the other side, very limited amount of women are involved in either context independent decision making. For example, only 4 per cent and 6 per cent women make independent decisions respectively in the contexts of family planning and economic decision making within the household. This suggests that a large proportion of women are excluded from participation on any level of decision making in family and household related decisions. In other words about 34 per cent and 40 per cent respectively excluded from the contexts family planning and economic decision making. The diverse profile of women empowerment therefore confirms the contextual enquiry of empowerment on the household level.

Another important observation is existence of the regional stratification subject to the above contextual empowerment. There exists wide proportionate difference of participation in decision making authority between urban and rural women. For instance 37 per cent of women are absolutely excluded in family planning related decisions in the rural region compared with 27 per cent in the urban region. Similarly, 44 per cent of rural women have absolutely no say in economic decision making in the rural region however 32 per cent excluded from the urban region. Similarly, geographic differences also have been found predominantly significant in explaining women empowerment subject to each context of empowerment. For instance, in family planning context women from NWFP have been observed with highest empowerment compared with women from other provinces. Likewise, in economic decision making context women from the province of Punjab have been observed with greater say over other provinces of Sindh, NWFP and Baluchistan respectively. Therefore, the regional and geographical differences of women empowerment support the argument that patriarchy and gender stratification is common in tribal and rural settings of Pakistan.

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<sup>16</sup> Also noted in Jejeebhoy and Sathar (2001).

Hence to explain the contextual nature of women empowerment we use determinants derived from both the sociology theory of resource control and economic bargaining theory of household by controlling socio-cultural intervening factors. As noticed above in the empirical exercise that education level of women generally improves their empowerment in both contexts of decision making. However, both categories of education were not found to be significant in urban stratification particularly in economic decision making context. There may be many reasons of this contradictory result. The main possible reason is that there is very small proportion of women who show enough level of education which could add any value to the existing status of a woman. In contrast to the urban stratification, rural woman with all those included categories of education vividly reflect higher empowerment compared with those who never received any education. It is also possible that in fact it is educational gap between the head of the household and the woman which determines the level of empowerment of a woman in the household however not the absolute level of a woman. Perhaps this is the reason that rural stratification in which gap of educational attainment between male and female is relatively wider hence any level of education of a woman improves her empowerment.

Further, economic bargaining theory of household suggests that increase in the earned or unearned income increases bargaining power of a women hence more empowerment of a woman in the household. However, in current study we do not find consistent results with this theory in relevance with the family planning context of empowerment. Furthermore, results are consistently contrary to the above theory regardless of the regional stratification in family planning context. Reason behind these insignificant results may be the strong patriarchal and conventional environment in the families particularly in family planning context of empowerment. Moreover, as predicted in the theory, employment status substantially enhances women empowerment in economic decision making context within the household<sup>17</sup>. These results prevail in both urban and rural stratification of the country however relatively stronger effect in the urban region.

Many but non-overlapping age categories depict mixed results in both contexts of women empowerment. In the family planning context results show only two age categories (20-24 years and 25-29 years) as significantly adding to the empowerment compared with the relatively young married women. Alike results were observed corresponding to the rural stratification however insignificant in the urban experience. Again it seems that family

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<sup>17</sup> Malhotra and Mather (1997) also mentioned that paid employment and education increased decision making in financial matters, but had less impact on decisions relating to social and organizational matters.

planning context is more towards the patriarchal and cultural norms prevailing in that society. It is because unlike to the family planning we find as the age of woman increases she gains more empowerment in economic decision making context within the household. This evidence is found valid in both of urban and rural stratification in economic decision making context. It implies that over the time woman becomes successful in achieving trust of head of the household to be with more power in household expenses. These results are further consistent with the general evidence found in the previous literature.

Regarding socio-economic status we find it as a significant determinant of family planning empowerment in general and urban region in particular however insignificant in the rural context<sup>18</sup>. It implies that socio-economic status plays a modifier role in determining family planning decision making power of a woman. It also indicates that family planning context is largely subjective to the customary cultural norms in the rural region. It is also evident from the economic decision making context where socio-economic status has been significant in determining the empowerment of a woman within the household. It was found significant in both urban and the rural region. Each successive class (socio-economic status) with the increased level of consumption per household shows evidently higher empowerment as compared with the woman of reference category.

It is widely believed that in the traditional society number of children also provides empowerment to the woman within the household<sup>19</sup>. Consistent with this perception we also find that increasing number of children enhance the level of a woman empowerment in the family planning as well as economic decision making context. Further these results are consistent with the general evidence as well as with the regional stratification. However, number of living sons in contrast to the conventional view was not found to be significant determinant of either context of the woman empowerment. These results remain valid in aggregate as well as in the rural and urban dichotomy.

Finally, the geographic influence dominantly has been found significant in both contexts of woman empowerment. In the aggregative analysis results show that women from the province of NWFP depict greater empowerment as compared with women from other provinces. Similar results prevail corresponding to the urban and rural NWFP in comparison

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<sup>18</sup> This may be due to the fact that poverty is widespread in rural areas, and there may be less variation in the characteristics of women in the different classes as witnessed in Cheema (2005).

<sup>19</sup> Reproduction, especially giving birth to sons, is one of the important milestones in a woman's life and proves her worth to her husband's family and secures her position in her new home as emphasized in Winkvist and Akhtar (2000). And with the passage of time women gradually expand their sphere of influence after securing their position within a household (by giving birth to children especially sons), and gain greater control in household matters, Sather (1996).

with regional stratification of Punjab, Sindh and Baluchistan. In contrast results show that women from the province of Punjab show greater empowerment in economic decision making compared with other three provinces. Corresponding to the aggregate results women from urban and rural Punjab<sup>20</sup> reflects higher level of empowerment over women from both of these regions respectively from all other three provinces.

## **CONCLUSION**

Findings in the above recognise and indicate presence of contextual women empowerment within household level of Pakistan. Therefore, it motivates to investigate through both empowerment contexts formerly known as family planning and economic decision making independently.

Empirical results show that there exists highly constrained autonomy of females in contrast with males within the household. This suggests that a large proportion of women are excluded from participation on any level of decision making in family planning and household related other decisions. In other words about 34 per cent and 40 per cent respectively excluded from the contexts of family planning and economic decision making. Further, there exists wide proportionate difference of participation in decision making authority between urban and rural women. Similarly, geographic differences also have been found predominantly significant in explaining women empowerment subject to each context of empowerment.

Further to explain the contextual nature of women empowerment we use determinants derived from both the sociology and economic bargaining theory of household by controlling socio-cultural as intervening factors. As noticed in the empirical exercise that education level of women generally improves their empowerment in both contexts of decision making. In contrast to the urban stratification, rural woman with all those included categories of education vividly reflect higher empowerment compared with those who never received any education. Perhaps this is the reason that rural stratification in which gap of educational attainment between male and female is relatively wider hence any level of education of a woman improves her empowerment. Furthermore, economic bargaining theory of household suggests that increase in the earned or unearned income increases bargaining power of a women hence more empowerment of a woman in the household. However, in current study

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<sup>20</sup> Similar conclusion was found in Mumtaz (2002) regarding empowerment of women from the province of Punjab.

we do not find consistent results with this theory in relevance with the family planning context of empowerment. Reason behind these insignificant results may be the strong patriarchal and conventional environment in the families particularly in family planning context of empowerment.

Women with different age categories depict mixed results in both contexts of women empowerment. It shows that family planning context is more towards the patriarchal and cultural norms prevailing in that society. It is because unlike to the family planning we find as the age of woman increases she gains more empowerment in economic decision making context within the household. Regarding socio-economic status we find it as a significant determinant of family planning empowerment in general and urban region in particular however insignificant in the rural context. We also find that increasing number of children enhance the level of a woman empowerment in the family planning as well as economic decision making context. However, number of living sons in contrast to the conventional view was not found to be significant determinant of either context of the woman empowerment.

Finally, the geographic influence dominantly has been found significant in both contexts of woman empowerment. In the aggregative analysis results show that women from the province of NWFP depict greater empowerment as compared with women from other provinces. Similar results prevail corresponding to the urban and rural NWFP in comparison with regional stratification of Punjab, Sindh and Baluchistan. In contrast results show that women from the province of Punjab show greater empowerment in economic decision making compared with other three provinces. Corresponding to the aggregate results women from urban and rural Punjab reflects higher level of empowerment over women from both of these regions respectively from all other three provinces.

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