

## **MANAGING WOMEN EMPOWERMENT - AN ANALYTICAL STUDY ON SOCIOECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF WOMEN LIVING IN KARACHI**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*In this research study, an investigation on the socio-economic conditions and historical background of women living in Orangi Town, Karachi, has been chosen, and the purpose of selecting this subject is to get factual information about the lives of women living in this town. The main objective was to scrutinize the actual position of women in socioeconomic contribution and examine their economic status in society. The researcher selected a quantitative research methodology. The research sample consisted of about two hundred (200) women. The researcher used a self-administrative questionnaire to collect data from the respondents. Paid (stitching, embroidery, beauticians, teachers, etc.) and unpaid (homemakers) women were selected as respondents to the research. The study results reveal a strong male-dominant social structure in Orangi town, and women cannot participate in any decision-making activities in public or private spheres of life. The standard education system, patriarchal society, religious misconceptions, the low participation level of women in decision-making, the low level of economic activities, and financial weakness are the main reasons for the decline in the socioeconomic status of women in Orangi town. The researcher suggested that public and private sectors should assist women in small-scale businesses; high-standard educational opportunities because these opportunities increase women's socioeconomic conditions in Orangi town, Karachi.*

**Keywords:** Education; Patriarchy; Socioeconomic; Norms; Religious Misconceptions; Discrimination.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Globally, women's socioeconomic status, conditions, and situations are incredibly complex (OECD, 2022). Many public and private institutions give much attention to the concept of the socioeconomic status of women. Still, they cannot clearly show women's actual status in

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society (Androsik, 2020). Various social scientists and feminists use many concepts to highlight the socioeconomic status of women in society, like female autonomy, employment opportunities, health facilities, skill development, rights, obligations, patriarchy, etc. The World Bank (2022) describes that increasing women's socioeconomic status is the UN's top agenda (UNWomen, 2022). Many research studies reveal that socioeconomic disparity between males and females stems from poverty, employment opportunities, health facilities, skill development, rights, obligations, patriarchy, unpaid work, literacy rate, etc.

On the other hand, it is widely recognized that women's participation in the labor market is significant for national socioeconomic development (Pennings, 2020). On the contrary, the involvement of women in socioeconomic development is unrecognized in society. However, women constantly suffer from fewer rights and privileges than their male counterparts, facing inequality in every aspect of life, specifically in developing countries. The socioeconomic status of women is based on gender equality in society, as part of which every citizen of every country has the fundamental right to education, which brings about a social revolution in societies. Socioeconomic conditions require structures in society that are responsive to the process of change and change the position of women through the achievement of sustainable development with government support. Consequently, women's empowerment involves raising the status of women with privileges related to social components such as norms, culture, and traditions to enhance their well-being, gratitude, and recognition (Quek, 2019).

This research is based on the socioeconomic conditions of women living in *Orangi* town, Karachi. This city is the economic hub known as the “city of light” in the world. That is why this city's expansion rate is about 5 percent yearly. Karachi is the planet of slums because these employment seeker people live in these slums (Katchi Abadies), and after settlement, they settle their families with them. The largest slum settlement in Asia is the Orangi town, Karachi. *Muhajirs, Punjabis, Sindhis, Kashmiris, Seraikis, Pakhtuns, Balochis, Memons, Bohras, Ismailis*, etc., are the major ethnic groups living in Orangi town (Hassan, 2011). The history and the current structure of the society highlight that all the ethnic groups follow the patriarchal social system in their lives at the research study site. Furthermore, women face numerous discriminations in every walk of their lives. They are the victim of assault and face violence in every aspect of life, like food, education, health, employment, and decision-making for her selves. They also have less freedom in economic activities, politics, and social lives.

On the other hand, almost working women of Orangi town are self-employed or perform income-generating activities in the factories. Due to the shallow socioeconomic standards,

women are vulnerable to petty crimes and sexual assaults. According to the research study, about 77% of women were raped between the years 2011 to 2014 in Orangi town (Shah, 2019). The daily Dawn news (June 22, 2015) highlighted that a cross-sectional survey research study mentioned that about 65% of women in Orangi town use different types of tobacco (hooka, naswar, betel quid, and gutka) as a habit, and 90% married women are involved in this activity. Poverty is another vital factor that declines the socioeconomic status of women in the study area (Iqbal et al., 2015; Ilyas, 2015). Sultana (2019) highlighted that slum areas are the hub of social evils because males usually stay home due to unemployment and are frustrated, so they show violent attitudes toward their female counterparts (mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters).

The Annual Status of Educational Report (2012) stated that the rate of female enrolment is meager in slum areas of Karachi compared to males. The females of Orangi town (scattered) also have problems with the standard of education, enrollment, trafficking, harassment, gender disparities, complex political system, socially constructed values, and poverty in getting an education. Sultana (2019) stated that the female enrollment ratio is very low due to the socioeconomic status of women because women earn very less money from their economic activities, and these incomes are consumed to fulfill their necessities, so they are not able to use their own funds to enroll themselves to get an education (Sultana, 2019).

Women's socioeconomic and historical background in Orangi town is much worse concerning population, urban sprawl, and inadequate social and economic facilities. Mostly women of Orangi town are working in the informal sector or self-employed. They receive a minimal amount against their economic activities. Still, they compel to carry out these income-generating activities because they do not have any other option for income. Hence, providing facilities for getting skills, education, and employment is essential. However, these women improve their income-generating activities and increase their standard of living (Hassan, 2011). The Orangi Pilot Project (OPP) volunteers worked to break socioeconomic barriers that segregated women of Orangi town. Furthermore, this project also set up Women's Work Centers (WWCs) in Orangi homes to help the seamstresses by offering them training and management of business aspects previously handled by contractors. The WWCs, entirely self-supporting now, have played a key role in raising their annual wages since and in the economy of Orangi (Hassan, 2011). The growth of microfinance and work centers for women helped strengthen the economy and facilitate cooperation, as opposed to conflict, across the people in

Orangi Town. Thus, the present study is designed to examine the socioeconomic conditions and historical background of women faces in Orangi town, Karachi.

**Table 1.** Socioeconomic Conditions of Women in Orangi Town

Socioeconomic Conditions of Women	Percentages
Female literacy rate	41%
Child birthrate	23%
Fertility rate	2.8%,
Birth intervals	36 months
Mothers with at least one antenatal care visit	86%
Contraceptive prevalence rate	50.4%
Unmet Need for Family Planning	19%

*Source: Baseline Household Survey (2021)*

Hence, this study aims to achieve the following research objectives:

- To find out how the patriarchal social system restricts women from participating in economic activities.
- To find out the lack of skills and education is the main reason for women's poverty in Orangi town.
- To discover the religious misconceptions that deprive women of socioeconomic activities in Orangi town.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The distribution of components of social class (occupation, income, wealth, education, employment, skills, and social status) is called socioeconomic position (UNDP, 2022). Societal grouping of the position involves reserves-based gauges like earnings, informational credentials, prosperity, and wealth, while status-based variables gauges aspect of hierarchal status and assets correlated with the right of entry and utilization of resources (goods, services & knowledge) (UNDP, 2022). The expression socioeconomic condition involves these two features of social condition as well as these terms used as per their requirement interchangeably. Employment status, earnings, education level, health status, living standard, and profession are the basic tools defining the socioeconomic condition of people in society. Naturally, the number of women worldwide is more than men (Equileap, 2022).

About 70% of total poverty is enclosed with women due to socially constructed values, myths, norms, traditions, and patriarchal social structures of society. It means that women are poorer than men and hardly fulfilled their basic necessities. The primary reason for women's poverty is that women cannot get their actual rights and opportunities because men occupy all the income-generating resources due to their strong dominance of them in society. Similarly, all around the world, women have significantly fewer opportunities for income-generating activities (UN WOMEN, 2020). Women are consistently recognized under men's names

(relationships) due to cultural practices in society. Taking the name of Pandora and Eve, the West had erected great barriers for women because they supposed that women were the root cause of human evil, were responsible for bad luck, and had weak self-control over immorality. Historically, except in a few rare cases, women have always seemed dependent on men in every aspect of their lives (social, economic, psychological, and spiritual) (Woodward, 2013). O'Sullivan (2005) states that women are recognized under their reproductive role, fertility, and sexuality, and their roles are not judged in any society based on their socioeconomic status (O'Sullivan, 2005).

Another critical factor contributing to women's declining socioeconomic status in society is women's low participation in the political arena. At the same time, women are considered sexual temptations because history shows that socially constructed values and traditions have defined customs and traits adopted and enforced by a group of people, giving women a less important position in society (Palermo et al., 2014). According to Beydoun (2014), the literature highlighted that women are considered a symbol of sex and sexuality and responsible for provoking men into sexual activities, while men are the leader, the commander, controller, and chief of the household (Beydoun et al., 2014). The social status of women gradually changed in the 15th century. The low socioeconomic status of women is due to men because women are less educated and unskilled than men, so men give women a lower socioeconomic status in society (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2015). More than half of the world's population comprises females deprived of their fundamental rights (Fulu et al., 2013). Women are facing inequality in every sphere of life, including socioeconomic conditions. Due to social values, women cannot highlight their voices for their rights (Stöckl et al., 2013).

Women are treated as submissive and the second sex of society (Aizer, 2011). Women are underrepresented in politics and economics, but their representation in poverty and deprivation is high because they have less right to use resources. Women faced gender base violence quietly. There is a lack of opportunities in politics, economics, and society. Still, socially, and culturally, different laws and policies have been formulated for women that deprive them of their rights and create obstacles to development (World Bank, 2022). The prominent feminist writer Simon de Beauvoir mentions the women's social status in "The Second Sex" (book) that "One is not born but rather become a woman" (Smits & Bruce, 2015). Male and female gender roles are not biologically given or inherited by nature; instead, they are forced on men and women by society (Smits & Bruce, 2015). Society must separate sexuality from the gender

roles that are part of our social fabric so that violence against women (VAW) can be eradicated from societies (Palermo & Farkas, 2013).

The position of women is highly pathetic and low (social, political, and economic) in developing countries due to gender inequalities. The restrictions on women are off-putting societies from working to resolve conflicts, improving economies, and thriving societies. Meanwhile, Nations cannot achieve the desired goal of development without the inclusion of women, who constitute half of their population (Klugman et al., 2014). All developed nations like the United States, United Kingdom, China, Germany, etc., provide equality and empower their females in every walk of their lives without biases. On the other hand, in today's world, some women are getting better, but still, there is a gender gap for them to be equal to men. The last few decades have brought various changes in women's lives as women are now working in the economic field for wages which was a dream for previous generations. Almost half of the superpower (USA) workforce consists of women who are given decision-making roles (Hoare & Gell, 2009).

In the current scenario, women are working in male-oriented professions. Women are working in factories, industries, and field workers. Feminists argue that women get less pay in every field than men because society considers men as bread-earners while women as homemakers. That is why; the wage gap is quite common between both genders in many countries. It is a pragmatic reality that in developing countries, males do not like to work under the female head (Hanmar et al., 2014). Contrarily, Baheshti (2020) stated that in many corporate and economic sectors, women still do not reach the topmost positions and work in very low ranks for a very long time (Baheshti, 2020).

On the other hand, Aguboshim et al. (2022) stated that globally the literacy rate of women is rising daily, and about 40% of women are employed in the informal sector of the economy worldwide. Furthermore, 43% of women are engaged in the agricultural sector globally. The global statistics and the ratio of women's employment in the formal sector varies from country to country per their socioeconomic conditions (Baheshti, 2020). In 2017 the women's employment rate in the formal sector of the economy in the Middle East and North Africa was only 21%, while in East Asia and the Pacific, approximately 71% of women are involved in income-generating activities in the formal sector (Hasan et al., 2015). Furthermore, about 24% of women worldwide work in management ranks, and the ratio is augmented daily. Similarly, in about 16% of developing countries, women are board members of international platforms. As per the research of Lagerberg (2015), about 26% of board members are women in China,

Russia, Brazil, and India in international forums as well as 38% of women are involved in organization boards in the Baltic region (Lagerberg, 2015).

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research study scrutinized the socioeconomic position of women who live in Orangi town, Karachi. About 200 women respondents have been chosen from Orangi town; however, precisely eleven (20) localities of this town, i.e., *Gulfamabad (17.5%), Sector 1D (2.5%), Bangla Bazar 15A (1.5%), Saleemabad (0.5%), Block L (5%), Block J (5%), Block D (12.5%), Rehmat Chowk (0.5%), Sector 11(2.5%), Baloch colony(1.5%), Block M(3.5%), Sector 10 (0.5%), Sector 15(3%), Sector III/2(14.5%), Sector 14/C(2.5%), Chisthi nagar (2%), Toheed colony (17.5%), Thorani goth (4.5%), Chandni chowk (0.5%), and Mehmodabad colony(0.5%)* have been selected as a population of the research study. The motive for choosing all these localities as a research population is that all these areas have extremely low socioeconomic status with respect to women compared to other localities of this town. For this reason, this study has been chosen as no such study has been conducted in the past. It will help identify the troubles and grounds that hinder the process of women's empowerment and, with the help of governmental and non-governmental organizations, will solve women's problems and ultimately elevate their status in society.

### **RESULTS AND FINDINGS**

**Table 2.** Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Age	25 to 60 years
Type of family	52% Nuclear and 48% Joint Family System
Religion	99.5% Muslims & 0.5% Christens
Marital status	78.5% Married, 10.5% Unmarried, 7% Widows, 2.5% Divorced, 1% 2 <sup>nd</sup> Marriage & 0.5% Temporary Separation
Qualification	15% Illiterate, 7% Literate (Religious Studies), 7% Primary, 28% Middle, 1% Matric, 15% intermediate, 5% Graduate, and 4% Just Read & Write
Type of profession they are working	66% Household, 9% Teacher, 13.50% Stitching, 0.5% Embroidery, 1% Cooking, 1.5% Small Shops, 1.5% Maids, 3.5% Beauticians, And 2% Paper Workers
Monthly income	14.70% (3000-7000), 36.73 % ( 70001-11, 000), 24% (11,001-15,000), 19.16% (15,001-19,000), 1.47% (19,001-23,000), 2.94% (23,001-27,000), & 1% (27,001-31,000)

*Source: Author's Own Data*

The above table transparently shows the demographic status of the respondents. The age bracket of the respondents was 25 to 60 years. The results of the data indicate that the highest range of the data belongs to the interval of 23 to 28 years. Only 6% were in the age bracket of 55 to 60 years. Another profile question is about the type of family, in which the most

significant number, 52% of respondents, belonged to the nuclear family system. In comparison, 48% of respondents live jointly with their parents or in-laws. As an Islamic state, most of the respondents, 99.5%, were followers of Islam, and only 0.5% of the targeted population belonged to the religion of christens. The highest ranges of married women were 78.5%, and 0.5% of respondents were temporarily separated from their husbands due to some socioeconomic conditions. The most significant number of respondents making, about 28% mentioned that they were middle passed, and 15% of women replied that they were illiterate and not able to read and write or intermediate; however, 7% of women reported that they were literate (read Quran only) or primary passes, whereas 5% respondent mentioned that they are graduate and working and received very handsome salaries against their professional work.

In comparison, 4% of respondents stated that they just read newspapers, books, and magazines in Urdu, and only 1% of respondents highlighted that their qualification is matric. Due to the male-oriented society, women have very low chances of employment. Most of the women are working in their homes. The amounts of their professional activities are very low. The highest number of respondents, 66%, are from households and only perform their domestic chores, while 13.5% of women generate income from stitching, whereas 9% of women are teachers. 3.5% of respondents reported that they are engaged in the field of beautician, 2% of respondents informed that they are obtaining income by performing paperwork, 1.5% of respondents are involved in the work of maids, while 1% of respondents said that they earn their income by cooking or having small shops in their houses. Only 0.5% of respondents earn money from embroidery.

Economic sound position increases the socioeconomic condition of anyone. If an individual is financially strong, they do not compel to obey anyone. Unluckily, the socioeconomic situation of Pakistani women is very wretched because of the socioeconomic structure of Pakistani society. About 36.73% of women's incomes started from 7,001-11,000 PKR, 24% of incomes ranged between 11,001-15,000 PKR, 19.16% of incomes were 15,001-19,000 PKR, whereas 14.70% earned 3,000-7,000 PKR, 2.94% incomes are approximately 23,001-31,000 PKR, 1.47% incomes are 19,001-23,000 PKR, and only 1% whose earnings are about 27,001-31,000PKR. The inflation rate is increasing daily, but income is not rising compared to the rate of inflation. Their income is not enough to afford the expenses but only a small amount of support for the house. The government officially fixed an individual's monthly salary of about twenty thousand rupees for everyone without discrimination of gender. Still, as per the patriarchal structure of Pakistani society, women's work is unrecognized in the economy.



Hence, they earn very little, and their socioeconomic conditions are often worse than their counterparts. It is essential to raise voice against the difference in salaries of women compared to men because if the wages/salaries of women are equal to men, the chances of improving the socioeconomic conditions of women will automatically increase.

**Table 3.** Economic Position

Economic Position	Frequency	%
<b>Stable</b>		
Due to income-generating activities	48	34.53%
Due to economic assistance from relatives	45	32.37%
Due to the facility of credit	46	33.09%
<b>Total</b>	139	100%
<b>Unstable</b>		
Limited income	19	31.14%
Irregular income-generating activities	07	11.48%
High inflation rate	16	26.23
Expenditures are more than incomes	8	13.11%
Debts repayments	11	18.03
<b>Total</b>	61	66.5%

In the present era, economic stability is essential for everyone, especially for women, because women are considered a subordinate part of society. Men view women as their property. Men treated women according to their mood. If men are glad, they think that women are also happy because women are their followers, and if men are angry, they put all the aggression on women. 34.53% of respondents reported that their economic position is stable because they are involved in income-generating activities, whereas 33.09% of respondents stated that their economic status is stable because they have the facility of credit from their relatives, friends, colleagues, neighbors, office, and shopkeepers, while 32.37% informed that their economic settled relative financially assist them quietly that is why they run their household very smoothly. Rising prices of every small and big item and inflation are putting severe pressure on the middle class, lower middle class, and low-income families, along with daily expenses in Pakistan. Generally, women prefer jobs because they are not financially able to start a small business. 31.14% of respondents stated that their financial condition was unstable due to limited monthly income. Even at the end of the month, women are forced to borrow from their friends to meet their expenses, whereas 26.23% of women reported that their financial status was not stable due to the high inflation rate. In contrast, 18.03% stated that their economic condition was constantly unstable due to the payment of debts of relatives, friends, office staff, and shopkeepers. At the end of every month, they were indebted to many people, and 13.11% of respondents described that their expenditures were more than their incomes, so they were financially weak and

unbalanced. Only 11.48% of respondents informed that they did not have a regular income because they were earned on daily wages. Sometimes they earn much, and sometimes, they do not earn, so their economic position is unstable.

**Table 4.** Primary Factors of Conservative Social Values

<b>Factors Of Conservative Values</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
Cultural and traditional values	31	15.5%
Misconceptions about Islam	97	48.5%
Male dominancy	17	8.5%
Tribal social structure	38	19%
Females do not have access to social activities	17	8.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>

As an Islamic state, the majority of Pakistan's population (96.47%) follows Islam. Due to the long togetherness with Hindus, many myths, traditions, and cultural values exist in Pakistani society with the same religion. A lot of misconceptions exist regarding Islam as women must live within four walls, women cannot participate in economic activities, Islam forces women to play an obedient role in society, during periods, women should not touch anything edible or sacred, women always follow the men, women do not raise their voice in front of their counterpart, etc. The frequency distribution expresses that the most significant number, 48.5% of women, have revealed that the fundamental factor of conservative society is the misconceptions about Islam because women are deprived of their rights due to these misconceptions, although religion allows them to enjoy equal rights. 19% of women said that conservative society for women is due to a tribal system, whereas 15.5% of women considered conservative society responsible for cultural and traditional values, and 8.5% of the women stated that male dominance or less access of women in social activities are the root cause of conservative society.

**Table 5.** Basic Health Issues of Women

<b>Basic Health Issues of Women</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
The number of so-called doctors is more	69	34.5%
Lack of awareness regarding health	13	6.5%
Lack of health facilities	19	9.5%
Lack of female doctors	11	5.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>

Health is the blessing of God. Without health, the human being becomes a burden to the family and the nation. It may be a strange question for many of them that women get sick and treated. However, there are many restrictions and limitations surrounding women's existence in male-oriented societies that women still face in this 21st century. There are obstacles to moving

forward. Unfortunately, the health system is very pathetic in Pakistan without any discrimination of gender, but women face many health issues compared to men. Due to malnutrition, childbearing, and poverty, women cannot access adequate food and health care throughout their lives. Also, due to male preferences, women do not get proper nutrition at birth, so women in Pakistan are not very healthy. 34.5% of respondents reported that the basic health issue of women is that the number of so-called doctors is relatively more common than actual doctors. These doctors take very less money as compared to the expert and professional doctors, so several women did not have access to specialists and take health facilities from these so-called doctors, whereas 9.5% of the targeted population mentioned that they do not have any nearest hospital in their so they have health issues, whereas 6.5% of respondents informed that they have very little knowledge regarding health, so they do not understand the seriousness of the health condition. Only 5.5% of respondents said that due to the unavailability of female doctors, they do not go to the hospitals and bear the health issues because their males do not like that their females receive treatments from males. 34.5% of the respondents said that the number of so-called doctors is more common than that of real doctors. These doctors charge less money than specialists, and professional doctors, so many women turn to specialists and experienced doctors due to poverty. 9.5% of the target population said they do not have any nearby hospitals, so they face health problems, while 6.5% of the respondents noted that they have very little health knowledge. They do not understand the seriousness of the health condition. Only 5.5% of the respondents said that due to the non-availability of female doctors, they do not go to hospitals and suffer health problems because their men do not like their women to be treated by male doctors.

**Table 6.** Women Select Income Generating Activities as per their Choice or Cultural Norms

Choice or Cultural Norms	Frequency	%
<b>Yes</b>		
As per their skilled	11	10.5%
As per their qualification	12	11.4%
As per their training	19	18.1%
As per their experiences	63	60%
<b>Total</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>No</b>		
Women cannot decide according to their own will	41	43.1%
Women do not perform any paid work	9	9.5%
Women only engage in domestic chores	11	11.6%
Women are only responsible for taking care of their family	34	35.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>75%</b>

A larger part of the targeted population described that they select their income-generating activities per their choice. About 60% of the respondents reported that they chose their income-generating activities as per their experiences because they did not have any assets to start a new business/job and bear the loss. In comparison, 18.1% of the targeted population mentioned that they selected income-generating activities as per their professional training because they were confident in their work and performed their duties independently. Out of 3.6%, 18.1% of respondents said that they were nurses in the hospitals because they were trained for their jobs, whereas 11.4% of respondents informed that they selected their profession according to their qualifications, and 10.5% of respondents declared that they choose their profession as per their skills like stitching, embroidery, cooking, etc. Usually, in developing countries, women cannot select their occupations freely. There are lots of issues that restrict women from participating in income-generating activities independently. 43.1% of respondents reported that due to socially constructed values, women could not decide according to their own will, whereas 35.8% of respondents explained that women are only responsible for caring for their families rather than participating in economic activities. A religious misconception has commonly existed that Islam restricts women from participating in income-generating activities and that women should live within four walls of their homes. 11.6% of the targeted population described that women only engage in domestic chores rather than economic activities, while 9.5% of respondents said they do not perform any paid work. They engage in their homes and families.

**Table 7.** Problems that Decline the Socioeconomic Position of Women

<b>Social Problems</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
Cultural values	88	44%
Social position	33	16.5%
Belonging to a specific cast or clan	35	17.5%
Gender division of labor	44	22%
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>

Many socioeconomic issues exist in developing nations that restrict women from participating in their country's development process. About 44% of women stated that cultural values (malevolence myths, evil norms, customs, negative socioeconomic status, rituals) create significant hurdles for women to enter the mainstream development of the nation, whereas 22% of women said that gender division of labor is another critical factor that declines the socioeconomic position of women in the society. Karachi is the country's economic hub, which is why multiethnic peoples live in this city. The population of the targeted area of the research also belong to many different casts, clans, ethnicity, and tribes; hence, 17.5% of the respondents reported that belonging to different tribes is another crucial reason for the low socioeconomic

position of women in the town. Similarly, 16.5% of the respondents informed that the low social position of women is the major obstacle that declines the socioeconomic status of women in society because most societies in developing countries are male-oriented and follow patriarchal social structures.

**Table 8.** Issues of Women Living in Orangi Town

<b>Problems</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
Fewer employment opportunities	84	42%
Lack of health facilities	51	25.5%
Less educational facilities	31	15.5%
Fewer mobility opportunities due to culture	34	17%
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>

The main purpose of this research study is to transparently find out the fundamental problems of females who are living in this town; due to the slum, many basic facilities like electricity, cleanliness, gas, employment, education, health, etc. are scarce in this slum area like other slums of the city. 42% of respondents reported that employment opportunities for women are too less in this town; due to fewer employment opportunities, women have poor socio-economic conditions of women in this largest slum of Asia, while 25.5% of respondents described that health (hospitals, maternity homes, skilled and professional peoples) facilities are scarce, in this regard women have face lot of issues during pregnancy and illness. Due to fewer healthcare centers, women are not healthy and physically inactive, whereas 17% of the respondents described that cultural values restrict women from mobility. Usually, women give preference to staying at home. Only 15.5% of respondents draw attention to the fact that fewer educational facilities are another critical issue for women living in this town.

**Table 9.** Women's Empowerment through Economic Stability

<b>Women Empowered through Economic Stability</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Yes</b>		
Economic stability increases women's social status	61	35.7%
Economic stability increases women's importance	42	24.6%
Economic stability increases women's confidence	31	18.1%
Economic stability enables women to make positive decisions independently.	37	21.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>No</b>		
No change due to strong patriarchal social structure of the society	7	24.1%
Economic stability makes women rebels.	9	31%
Empowered women want society to follow them	6	20.7%
Income-generating activities are not for women	7	24.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>75%</b>

Economic stability opens the doors of happiness for everyone because every individual can achieve their dreams through financial stability. Women bear more burdens of their families than men because they perform three types of responsibilities (productive, reproductive & household tasks). With performing these three types of duties, they are oppressed by their counterparts due to the socially constructed values of society. The results of the data suggested the same situation. 35.7% of respondents reported that economic stability increased the social status of women in society, whereas 24.6% of respondents stated that economically empowered women received more importance in society in contrast to less economic solidity. At the same time, 21.6% of respondents mentioned that financial stability enables women to make positive decisions independently, and only 18.1% of respondents described that economic stability increases women's confidence. Mixed answers were received in which 31% of respondents said that economic stability makes women rebels. They feel more confident and independent. They do not obey their parents or spouses, make decisions without advice from their elders, and usually bear losses due to inexperience; even sometimes, they make incredibly adverse decisions for their lives and pay the cost of the wrong decisions. 24.2% of respondents stated that economic empowerment does not change due to the strong patriarchal social structure of the society or income-generating activities are not for women, whereas 20.7% of respondents mentioned that empowered women want society to follow them and obey their decisions.

**Table 10.** Variables Responsible for Low Socioeconomic Status of Women

<b>Responsible for Low Socioeconomic Status</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
Federal institution	14	7%
Provincial institutions	96	48%
District institutions	75	37.5%
Cultural values	15	7.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>

Corruption is present in many sectors in Pakistan. Results of the data unveiled that about 48% of provisional institutions are responsible for the low socioeconomic status of women because they do not use the funds concerning women's empowerment clearly, whereas 37.5% of respondents stated that district institutions do not allocate the funds for the women socioeconomic betterment that's why the socioeconomic status of women do not upgrade. While 7.5% of respondents mentioned that women do not participate in socio-economic activities due to cultural values, so their socioeconomic conditions are declining. Lastly, 7% of respondents said that federal institutions are responsible for the low socioeconomic conditions of women because they do not put a strict check and balance system on the allocation of funds.

**Table 11.** Work for Improvement of Socioeconomic Condition of Women

<b>Work for Improvement</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
Positive policies	14	7%
Provide employment opportunities	96	48%
Provide health facilities	75	37.5%
Provide education facilities	15	7.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>

Sustainable employment is the key to happiness because when an individual or a family successfully fulfills their necessities, then it is more probable that the disputes, quarrels, tension, and violence rate will decline. The results of the research indicate that 48% of respondents reported that the socioeconomic conditions of women should be increased if women have employment opportunities very well; nonetheless, 37.5% of respondents said that health facilities are more important than any other facility because good health status is the key to healthy living. 7.5% of respondents highlighted that the availability of high-level educational facilities is crucial in increasing women's socioeconomic conditions in Orangi town. Only 7% of respondents mentioned that women-oriented favorable government policies could improve the socioeconomic conditions of women in the targeted population.

## **CONCLUSION**

The research study was conducted in Orangi town, Karachi. According to the 2017 census, the ratio of the female population is about 52.2% (248524) in the town (ABS). The greater part of the population consists of the Serailki, Sindhi, Ismaili, Kashmiri, Mahajirs, Bohras, Punjabi, and Pakhtuns. About 99% of the population follows Islam. A patriarchal social structure exists in Orangi town. Men are the leaders, and women are the followers in all socioeconomic decisions. Women cannot take any step without the permission of their counterparts in every issue because women's socioeconomic condition is fragile compared to men in every aspect of their lives. Traditionally, women assumed they were bound to accept all oppression from men. The socioeconomic conditions of women are very susceptible. They do not have good education, skill, health, and employment facilities. Often serious health problems arise for women when they give birth in the hands of unskilled and inexperienced staff and midwives who mishandle them hence the high mortality rate in the target population. The researcher observed that the female literacy rate in Orangi town is higher than in the other cities of Karachi. Usually, women prefer to perform income-generating activities at home, so they participate in stitching, hand embroidery, cooking food for beauticians, and managing shops inside the houses. To

improve the socioeconomic condition of the women of the targeted population, there is a need to improve the situation with the involvement of public and private sector organizations.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- The provincial/district government should allocate a significant amount in the fiscal year's budget for the betterment of the socio-economic conditions of women in Asia's largest slum.
- The provincial/district government should establish separate skill development centers for women in whom women can be skilled and economically empowered.
- The provincial/district government should establish separate schools for girls. Monthly stipends, free books, uniforms, stationery, etc., should be provided to encourage girls and their parents. Also, try to enforce sending every girl to school strictly.
- The health ministry should build dispensaries and hospitals in slums with more women doctors, especially developing maternity homes with all equipment and facilities.
- Provincial/district government should provide employment opportunities to women. Provide long-term low markup loans and simplify the loan process so women can easily borrow, start small-scale businesses, and improve their socioeconomic conditions.



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