

Unlocking Confidence: The Psychological Empowerment of Women through Education

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Abstract

This research delves into the transformative influence of education on women's psychological empowerment in District Swat, Pakistan. A phenomenological study design was adopted to explore the lived experiences of 30 educated women from different walks of life. The impact of education from different perspectives has been observed through the thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews and group discussions. Accordingly, it is revealed that education has positively affected confidence level, critical thinking, self-efficacy, financial independence, social engagements, resilience as a quality of mind, emotional well-being empowering one in relationships, and the dismantling of gender stereotypes. With critical thinking being observed, women can ask questions to genuinely be part of society's progress. Education affects self-efficacy, which leads to decision-making for personal and societal development. Breakdown of constraints, financial independence, and holistic empowerment are what education provides. Education leads to engagement in social and community activities and provides personal fulfillment and resilience in life. In District Swat, education creates a platform that breaks gender stereotypes and gives women enough confidence to take up active roles, changing society using advocacy and leadership. The study explains that women's education should be given a higher priority in policy, and critical life operational skills and sources of economic empowerment should be inculcated. Based on thesis recommendations, education that will eventually result in a more resilient, equitable, and inclusive society is strengthened through supportive environments and mentorship programs in District Swat, Pakistan.

Keywords: Women's Education, Psychological Empowerment, District Swat, Critical Thinking, Gender Stereotypes, Policy Implications

Introduction

Education plays a guiding force which sheds the light on the path towards psychological empowerment of women in the intricately woven fabric of societal progress. It is obvious in Pakistan, a country where entrenched norms, cultural and life expectations often keep women away from many domains. As the canvas of educational opportunities in Pakistan continues to expand, it becomes a trigger for developing wider opportunity for empowering different dimensions (Daraz, Ahmad et al., 2025; Sundaram et al., 2014). From bustling cities to remote

villages, the journey of women towards psychological empowerment begins in classrooms. Education acts as a catalyst, igniting the flame of knowledge and awareness (Daraz et al., 2024; Singh, 2016). Through formal education, women gain insights into their rights, potential, and the myriad opportunities that extend beyond traditional roles. This newfound knowledge becomes a cornerstone, laying the foundation for enhanced self-confidence and self-esteem—integral elements in the psychological empowerment of women.

Education hones critical thinking, an important theme, because it teaches women how to break through, go beyond the confines of their community, and overcome the complex terrain of society's expectations (Calise, 2024). Women, who can analyze the situation, make a better decision and question norms are empowered to break the mold of limiting stereotypes (Daraz, Ali, et al., 2025). An independent mind educated within this framework becomes the source of strong psyche. Self-efficacy becomes the theme as more women in Pakistan strive to gain knowledge through education. With a host of skills and knowledge, they have a strong belief that they can determine their fates (Khan, 2021). This is a self-efficacy, which is beyond academics and applies to most aspects of life. Now, women who once had to lip synch with the circumstances, feel a sense of control and power in their hands as they step into the narrative themselves (Daraz & Hussain, 2024). Education further ensures economic empowerment to overcome the obstacles (Ullah et al., 2024). Traditionally, in a place like Pakistan where many women have not been economically independent, education gives women the chance to join the workplace and its opportunities for economic autonomy (Kabeer, 2016). Additionally, this financial agency, along with educational attainment, contributes to women's psychological well-being. Education has a large influence on social as well as community participation (Daraz, Nawab, et al., 2023). Tertiary educated Pakistani women are also not simply recipients of knowledge, these women also play an active role within the processes of development of the country. By being civically involved in the community, they feel belonging in the community and have a sense of purpose in life that helps them in building psychological resilience. With this transformative experience, education touches the essence of relationships and restructures the traditional gender roles. Toxicity, be it in personal or professional relationships, is stemmed from the use of poor communication skills, which is an aspect honed in educational settings (Engida, 2021). Breaking down the stereotypes of gender is a sign that the whole society is changing as a result of education. Education in District Swat is a light of hope for women, instilling self-confidence, critical analysis, and resilience. It breaks traditional gender roles and stereotypes so that there can be increased social and community engagement. When women in Swat get access to education, they become the voice, the leaders, and the chains that holds them back. The study in District Swat is an example of the transformational role that education plays by not only academically but also psychically infusing women with tremendous energy that rates to the community around them.

Literature Review

Sundaram et al. (2014) from global studies have empirically proven a positive link between education of women and the increase in confidence and self-esteem. This work sets the stage for understanding the psychological effect of education on women in the District Swat, Pakistan. Global trends of women's education are backed by Naz and Ashraf (2020)'s research in the local context as, in Swat, women pursuing their educations are perceived to become more confident. However, the shift found especially in an educational intervention is very noticeable as it gives women in Swat an opportunity to defy traditional norms, which improves their self-esteem. As per Parkar and Mishra (2024), they illustrate the importance of education in teaching critical thinking skills to women at a global level. Daraz et al. (2024) also discovered this trend in District Swat; where the study by Daraz, Hussain, et al. (2024) projects that educated women use more acute critical and decision making abilities. Women in Swat learning this work as they learn also learn academic knowledge but also learn to challenge such expectations as that has been a broader discourse about education and critical thinking (Daraz,

Khan, et al., 2023). In Bandura's (1982) theory on self-efficacy, we can also rely on the global studies on the positive relationship between education and women's belief in their capabilities (Lev, 1997). In line with these global trends, research conducted by Daraz, Ali, et al. (2025) in District Swat demonstrates that education creates a very strong sense of self efficacy in women. The cultural and intellectual empowerment effect is not only restricted to academic achievement, but also changes women's concept regarding their capability to lead their lives in Swat. According to Bleck and Michelitch (2018) in their studies globally, education plays an important role in the attainment of financial independence for women. In the same context, District Swat presents Daraz, Mulk et al.(2024), to do so. According to the study, education opens up the avenue for women of Swat to acquire employment opportunities as a means to achieve economic independence. Education and financial independence is the link that makes the women in the given region psychologically empowered (Choudhry et al., 2019). Farooq et al. (2024) research, conducted on a global scale, is supportive; education acclimatizes women into active members of societal development. The patterns identified by these studies are confirmed by studies in District Swat, (Khalid et al., 2020) demonstrate that educated women are involved in community initiatives. Education helps build the sense of empowerment that goes beyond individual wellbeing contributing to the development of the social sphere in Swat. The research conducted by Kitole and Genda (2024) about resilience can be associated with global studies which demonstrate the role of education in enabling women to adapt to challenges. District education helps women acquire better resilience and coping skills. While going through educational experiences for women in Swat, they also develop secondary (non educational) psychological strengths which make them capable enough to face difficulties of life (Daraz et al., 2021; Leproni & Azara, 2025). At the global level, education is recognized as a protective factor for women's mental health (Hammond & Overall, 2015) and in District Swat. According to Daraz, Ullah, et al., (2023), education serves as a buffer to mental health challenges, making one emotionally positive. While women in Swat are able to develop psychologically and emotionally (Daraz, Mulk, et al., 2024), there is a parallel development of access to education. Education which foster the communication skills is globally acknowledged as the contributor towards healthy relationships (Daraz, Mulk, et al., 2024). Trovato and O'Brien (2024) have supported this connection through a research in District Swat, arguing that education translates into more empowered women in expressing themselves in their relationship. This makes a shift from traditional dynamics to more equitable and empowering relations in Swat. According to Skelton et al. (2007) and global studies on the topic, education plays an important part in confronting and shattering gender stereotypes. Similarly, this perspective is supported by research carried out in District Swat by Hussain et al. (2015) in which they argue that educations enables women to defy the traditional roles assigned to them. With education, women in Swat become agents for deconstructing deep seated stereotypes and leading a change from the expectations society holds. As the Stockton (2024) indicates, education has the potential to enable women's leadership and advocacy as asserted by the international literature. Aneela and Devi's (2024) research in District Swat elucidates the same trend in that education better equips women for advocacy and leadership. With educational opportunities coming to women in Swat, women become advocates of change in making equalities and contributing to the greater change going on in the society (Daraz, Ullah, et al., 2023).

Statement of the Problem

The emanation of hope for social progress in District Swat, Pakistan is evident in itself, with the psychological empowerment of women through education. However, there is a void in the literature with regards to a nuanced understanding of exactly what is the impact of education on the women's psychological wellbeing in this particular region, despite the transformative potential of education. Although they are important, studies conducted on a global level are not enough; a localized study becomes warranted in order to understand how education and

women's empowerment relate to each other in Swat's particular socio cultural context. Existing norms and traditional expectations in Swat become an obstacle that necessitates a study on the extent to which educational interventions could support the psychological empowerment of women.

Aim of the Study

The purpose of this research is to comprehensively investigate the relation to between education and women's psychological empowerment in District Swat, Pakistan. However, the main intent is to determine how educational experiences result to greater confidence, critical thinking, sense of efficacy, financial freedom, commitment to social and communal empowerment, resilience, emotional wellbeing, powers of empowerment in relationships, and overcoming gender stereotypes. The study, thus, focuses on these dimensions in order to supply a more nuanced understanding of the multiplicity of the effects of education on women in Swat and hence, on the august debate of women empowerment.

Gap in the Literature

The current literature recognizes that there is a global correlation between education and women's psychological empowerment, however, it fails to be specific about the sole challenges and opportunities surrounding District Swat. This relationship, however, is poorly understood since few studies have explored the relationships between this socio cultural specificity, education and how education, in Swat, can address the specific socio cultural barriers faced by women. Therefore, an urgent need exists for research that bridges this gap in order to initiate targeting interventions and policy that would be meaningful and specific to the needs of women in Swat.

How the Gap Was Filled by this Research

Thus, this research closes up the existing gap by an exhaustive study of how education transforms on psychological empowerment of women in District Swat. The study establishes a basis of understanding of the trends through large scale review of local and global literature. However, it is not bounded by doing that as it conducts the localized research done in District Swat, which helps in shedding lights on the complexities of women's education at this local level.

Novelty and Contribution of the Research

This research offers a novel contribution to demonstrate a complete picturisation of education's effect on psychological empowerment of women in District Swat, also exposing the dimensions of under exploration. In addition to confirming the global trends, the study adds to the periodicity of knowledge in understanding the localized challenges and opportunities. Empirical findings were collated from District Swat to provide insights for policymakers and their partners to design interventions that would effectively meet the women's needs in this area. The results of the study contribute to the academic literature on women's empowerment providing an easing additional nuance in an existing body of thinking.

Methodology

Research Design

The aim of this qualitative study was to explore through a phenomenological research design women's lived experience regarding the impact of education on their psychological empowerment in District Swat (Daraz, Hakim, et al., 2024). The phenomenological approach gives a thorough understanding to the subjective meanings and perspectives about the education of women and offers a rich and contextual meaning to the account of the women.

Universe and Target Population

For this study, the universe is women who have gone to school and reside in District Swat of Pakistan. The distribution of target population is across various age, education and socio economic backgrounds to ensure diversity in representation of community. The study is done in both urban and rural areas in the district in order to get perspectives from a variety of people.

Sampling Procedures and Sample Size

In order to study people with varied educational backgrounds and active involvement of different type of people in the education process, purposive sampling was strategically employed so that diverse educational background and experiences of women could be studied in District Swat, Pakistan to understand how education empowers women. The sample size was decided through saturation principle and 30 educated women belonging to the district were selected for the study. The scope of the approach was to produce a representative and full list of participants, who could let us explore, in their multifaceted ways, how education empowers women in the socio cultural context of District Swat, Pakistan.

Tool of Data Collection

This research carried out to find out how education empowers women in District Swat, Pakistan, was conducted through semi structured open ended interviews and focus group discussions. The interview guide was carefully built around the themes that were culled from the literature review, including confidence, critical thinking, self-efficacy, financial independence, social engagement, resilience, emotional wellbeing, empowerment in relationship and challenging gender stereotypes. Open ended question enabled participants offer their unique point of views which helped with thorough investigation of their education experiences. The individual perspectives obtained through interviews were validated and enriched with use of the focus group discussions. Giving rise to this approach one consequently created a forum for disputants to corroborate each other's insights thereby bringing authenticity and depth to the findings, the latter actually being two. With the purpose of achieving holistic understanding about the role of education in women's psychological empowerment, semi structured interviews and focus group discussions were combined, taking place in the unique cultural and social context of District Swat, Pakistan.

Ethical Considerations

The study used ethical considerations of getting informed consent from the participants, ensuring confidentiality, and placing the respondents wellbeing above any other factor. The study was conducted in an ethical manner and participants were duly informed that their participation was voluntary. Names of participants were changed, and the data were kept confidential by being securely stored.

Data Analysis

Patterns, themes, and categories found in the data were identified using thematic analysis. The participants were coded, categorized, and then interpreted within the process of analysis. Credibility and reliability of the findings were enhanced by rigorous validation procedures, member checking and peer debriefing (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Results were presented in rich, contextualized narratives about the effect of education on psychological empowerment in District Swat.

Results

Confidence and Self Esteem

In District Swat, education has the capacity to be a strong and powerful catalyst for women's psychological empowerment by developing confidence and self-esteem. Education is an

enabling force for knowledge and resistance against societal norms that work as a transforming force for resilience and self-worth of women. The participants indicated that the educational experiences help to develop autonomy and personal growth and can help women overcome the challenges of the society.

Participant-1 argued:

“Swat has indeed changed my education and raised my confidence and self-esteem. The skills and knowledge it imbues is that, it has equipped women with means by virtue of which we can shatter stereotypes and make meaningful contribution to the society, beyond the walls it consigned us to.”

Participant-2 reviewed:

“I had learned through education about a complete transformation in self-perception. Hence the traditional roles of women were no more. “Education creates a feeling of being worthy, making us capable in meeting the norms of society, it has led to the improvement of self-esteem and its broader psychological empowerment.”

Participant-3 explored:

“Women in Swat are liberated through education, gaining confidence and self-esteem. It enables cultivating resilience while providing tools to challenge systemic inequalities. Knowing we have the knowledge, we shed any limiting beliefs and transform the identities and support the creation of a stronger and empowered community.”

The education in District Swat acts as the potent force for the women to gain the confidence and self-esteem. This is an empowerment that goes beyond the personal and promotes the psychological well-being of women and affords them opportunity to meaningfully contribute to societal progress.

Critical Thinking and Decision-Making

Women’s psychological empowerment in District Swat is based on education which supports critical thinking and decisions. When women are in education, they have the skills of analyzing, deciding, and questioning society’s norms thus promoting intellectual independence and strength. When talking about education with participants, they elaborated on how this allows a woman to analyze, assess, and have informed choices of choices which in turn equips women to do the same to every issue that arises whether it is on a personal or societal scale.

Participant-4 demonstrated:

“Beyond rote learning, Swat — or rather, education in Swat — is also a pedagogue for critical thinking. Women equipped with the analytical skill empower the voice of these women and challenge stereotypes and norms assumed in communities. This intellectual empowerment gives rise to the confidence in our decision making, and helps us to mould our destiny and make positive contribution to the human progress.”

Participant-5 noted:

“In Swat education landscape, critical thinking has been made the cement. The women become astute decision makers, amidst social juggles. Education enables us”to challenge norms, and to make choices in line with our values, in a sense we become more psychologically strong and autonomous”.

Participant-6 described:

“Education in Swat is a learning process which is thinking critically. Women play the role of decision-makers and overcome the challenges of society with wisdom. Ranging beyond the academics, this intellectual empowerment creates confidence to make well-informed choices hence playing a part in personal growth plus it propels the progress of the society.”

Of course, education in our district Swat is a way through which women learn critical thinking and role play in decision making. In this regard, it enables them to go through life in an assured way and promote psychological well-being which sways societal progress.

Self-Efficacy

It is in District Swat where education proves to be a transformative agent in women's empowerment psychologically that nurtures their self-efficacy. With learning and skill, women build considerable confidence in themselves to make decision and to give direction in their life. Participant-7 emphasized:

"Education in Swat shapes self-efficacy. Society can no longer restrict women as they continue to provide more skills and confidence in learning. With knowledge under our belt, we trust in the capability to lead, to give and to make a difference. Education becomes a factor for psychological empowerment."

Participant-8 explained:

"Swat's educational landscape is empowering. Women, through education, cultivate self-efficacy. Confidence comes from the learning process which allow us to overcome barriers. We believe in our abilities, and this transformational belief turns troubles into occasions, to our own development and mankind advance."

Participant-9 said:

"Everything else is an empowerment journey to a person." And this in turn builds self-efficacy by building skills and knowledge. Armed with confidence in their ability and to go against societal complexities, Women. It is not for academics, this transformative process is about molding empowered human beings of distinction to community."

Women's self-efficacy is built in Education of District Swat, which makes them believe in their own capabilities. Based on the education, this belief makes challenges opportunity and empowers psychologically and seeks to be an active ingredient for advancement of society.

Financial Independence

In District Swat, education plays the role of a gateway to women's psychological empowerment (mainly through financial empowerment). Access to education for women leads to employment on the basis of which women become economically independent. The application of financial agency along with education actively contributes in the decision-making and overall psychological well-being of women conceding them full freedom. Women's education is instrumental over and above itself and gives them the confidence, skills, and opportunities to engage in economic endeavors that changed their lives and those of their families and by extension the larger society.

Participant-10 discussed:

"Education in Swat is actually a way of becoming financially independent. This enables them to be able to acquire skills and knowledge and at the same time get access to economic opportunities. Furthermore, psychological empowerment and financial autonomy is not a result but a source of breaking the societal constraints and being self-reliant."

Participant-11 visualized:

"With education, women from Swat are breaking the chains of finances. Skills in education are needed to attain careers, businesses, and independence economically. It is the kind of financial empowerment that can cause a transformative change in an individual's sense of confidence, sense of agency. It brings a change in our narrative, helping not just one's progress, but also of the society."

Participant-12 explicated:

"Swat has the ability to provide financial freedom by getting its children educated. With knowledge, women are operating in diverse economic activities. It allows you to become financially independent, a role that will be taken as a source for pride into the women themselves and to be empowered and challenge traditional roles. Therefore, education is significant in recasting women's life and that of the community at large".

Education in district Swat, as an important tool for women's financial independence, hat would lead to psychological empowerment. Acquiring skills and knowledge empowers women to

transcend the traditional barriers, promote agency, confidence and also contribute positively to their own and society well-being.

Social and Community Engagement

Education in District Swat is an area where women's psychological empowerment is a catalyst in women's growth from individual to social level of the community. Women empowerment allows it to contribute in the development of a society in which it finds its purpose and belonging, enabling it to enhance its psychological resilience and wellbeing.

Participant-13 asserted:

"...and so education in Swat goes far beyond the classroom. It encourages to be socially responsible. With knowledge at hand, women also actively participate in community initiatives. The active involvement becomes a psychological factor of empowerment that makes one fulfilled individuals and a progressive society."

Participant-14 claimed:

"Education empowers Swat's women to become agents of positive change. Education fosters social responsibility and civic engagement. By getting involved in local development, we ensure the well-being of us all. This type of engagement is transformative, based on community growth but also personal empowerment."

Participant-15 claimed:

"Swat education breeds women as community active owners. This equips you with the context and the skills to solve societal problems. Women are given purpose and empowerment through community. Then as now, education is key to creating not just individual success, but a vibrant and successful community."

Psychological empowerment obviously reflects in women's social and community engagement and education is a bridge in between in District Swat. The involvement of women in shaping society has effects that rebound, creating fulfillment.

Resilience and Coping Skills

Providing education to women helps in psychological empowerment in terms of developing coping skills and resiliency in District Swat. Women find strength in quotidian life circumstances through educational experiences, nurturing their psychological well-being and their holistic empowerment.

Participant-16 acknowledged:

"Education in Swat is a resilience builder and helps combat indoctrination through radicalism," he said. Women learn coping strategies through repeated experience. Education is our shelter, our walls that protect us from the storms of life outside. This resilience is transformative; it enables us to overcome adversity and make a positive impact on our lives and our communities."

Participant-17 augmented:

"Swat's education journey is a resilience training ground. Education, teaches women on how to cope. Obstacles transform into opportunities instead of setbacks. Such mental resilience causes empowerment, providing us with the strength to withstand adversities with confidence and enhance our communities and society."

Participant-18 expressed:

"Education is a matter of resilience and a source of resilience in Swat. It gives us women coping skills to deal with the complexities of life. This psychological power turns obstacles into possibilities, and cultivates empowerment. Through educational journeys we leave not just educated but resilient members of the communities in which we live."

Educational opportunities in District Swat play a transformative role in building resilience and coping mechanisms in women. Every bit of hard work instills a psychological resilience that

allows them to tackle challenges adeptly, positively impacting overall personal development and societal prosperity.

Emotional Well-being

Pakistan District Swat education greatly impact women's mood and mental well-being. Education allows to feel empowered, improving psychological resilience and reducing spatial self-perception, which can provide a sense of completeness and self-worth for women.

Participant-19 shared:

“School opened doors and brought me power in dealing with life’s problems. It bred confidence, so that I could speak up and give back to my community in a meaningful way.”

Participant-20 reflected:

“Educational empowerment changed my identity in Swat. It became a protective sheath from society, a tool to move away from emotional harm. Now I’m a change agent — breaking barriers for the next generation.”

Participant-21 articulated:

“Education in Swat freed my mind, making me believe that I could do things that society won’t allow me to do. It gave me the strength and determination to meet adversity with grace and sustain emotional wellness, rather than allowing myself to regress; and to benefit my community with its advancement.”

In Swat education of women is transformational in nurturing emotional resilience and empowering individuals to conquer challenges. Education in Swat is a vehicle for psychological empowerment and, as these personal accounts indicate, for the well-being and progress of society.

Empowerment in Relationships

Education is a driving force of women's empowerment in marriage and family in Pakistan in District Swat. Providing knowledge and skills to women, promotes healthy relationships and respect for each other, this is one of the reasons it forms a part of their psychological empowerment and well-being.

Participant-22 stated:

“Education changed my relationships, giving them a common ground of understanding. It enabled me to articulate myself during fears, demands respect and equality in my relationships and in turn, it has helped me exponentially with my overall psyche.”

Participant-23 examined:

“Education in Swat empowered me to have a different attitude toward relationships. In doing so, it allowed me to move through complexity with compassion and confidence. Education bridged, linking hearts and minds, resulting in healthier, fulfilling connections.”

Participant-24 acknowledged:

“In Swat, my studies became my ground in relationships. It enabled me to establish boundaries, articulate my needs and come to the table in a meaningful way. This new strength not only positively impacted my relations, but also my psychological resilience and well-being.”

Introduction When we talk about empowerment, we often refer to empowerment of the female population. The participants also testify for its transformative powers in terms of mutual understanding, communication, boundary setting and generation of healthier patterns, psychological resilience and mental well-being for women.

Breaking Gender Stereotypes

When women receive education they are empowered with knowledge and skills to break down gender stereotypes. It builds confidence and resilience, which enables women to upend social conventions. This process of reshaping consciousness enables women to break away from archaic customs, resulting in psychological emancipation and paving the way for egalitarian interaction.

Participant-25 analyzed:

“Education broke the taboos in Swat and gave me knowledge to challenge the gender discrimination. It possessed an assurance, creating mental empowerment, to be able to break barriers when I was scantily required to be in line with the traditional roles and contribute to my community meaningfully.”

Participant-26 probed:

“In Swat, education changed my perception so that it equipped me with tools to confront norms in society,” he explained. This inspired psychological strength which defined my role, contributing to gender equality and community development.’

Participant-27 discovered:

“Education in Swat freed me from gender constraints. Equipped with knowledge, I was able to push back against stereotypes and create psychological empowerment. “You awakens me from these unconscious limitations and empowers me to actively contribute towards transforming gender dynamics, participating in gender equality campaigns and serving my community.”

This liberates women psychologically and empowers them to grow in the gender-biased norms and perceptions of society in the region, just as it is the case in (Swat Pakistan) province of Pakistan. They gain knowledge, they challenge the status quo, they question roles, they promote gender equality, and they also positively change their community.

Advocacy and Leadership

Education fosters advocacy and leadership in women, acting as an engine for empowerment. It gives them an understanding, as well as the ability to understand their rights, challenge the norms of society, and take on leadership roles, which in turn brings about their full empowerment and transformation of society.

Participant-28 explored:

“Education was the driving force behind my advocacy and leadership in Swat, Pakistan. This realization led me to pursue women's rights, something society does not quite advocate. From that education, I became empowered to become a leader who empowered and transformed my community.”

Participant-29 described:

“Education was my first step towards activism and leadership, especially in Swat. It equipped me with tools to confront norms, promote the rights of women, and take on leadership positions. It was through education that I found my voice and became an agent of empowerment.”

Participant-30 viewed:

“Education was the spark for my activism and leadership in Swat. Knowledge empowered me to question the status quo, fight for equity, and take on leadership roles. Thanks to education, I am now giving back by working toward women's empowerment and social change.”

Women fighting injustice, demanding their rights and attaining leadership roles in Swat, all thanks to education. Armed with information, they take on leadership positions and emerge as change agents for the transformation of communities and the holistic empowerment of women.

Discussion

The emerging findings illustrated education empowers women psychologically in diverse ways in District Swat, Pakistan. The stories shared by the respondents highlight the profound

changes that education can bring across the multiple domains of psychological empowerment, including but not limited to confidence and self-esteem, critical thinking and decision making, self-efficacy, independence and control of financial health, participation in social and community life, resilience and coping strategies, emotional well being, empowerment in interpersonal relationships, challenging gender stereotypes and advocacy and leadership. The participants repeatedly stated that District Swat education is crucial in improving women's confidence and improving self-esteem. One participant-1 talked about education empowers women with skills and knowledge, helping them to fight stereotypes and meaningfully engage in society. This is backed by evidence, with studies across the globe indicating a strong positive correlation between education levels and self-esteem (Rosenberg et al., 1995). The empirical support to the respondents claim was found in the study by Buhrmester et al. (2011), which shows how education plays a big role in one's self-esteem. The narratives illustrate that education in District Swat inculcates critical thinking and decision-making in women. As noted by Participant-4, education is beyond rote and molds critical thinking. This is consistent with empirical evidence; for example, a study by Sternberg et al. (2014) highlights in the *Journal of Educational Psychology* indicates that education kills critical thinking skills and equips individuals with the capacity to analyze, evaluate and make informed decisions. Education in District Swat emerges as a transformative agent in driving self-efficacy in women. As highlighted by Participant-7, education defines self to a large extent. Evidence shows that education in the *Journal of Applied Sports Psychology* encourages the development of self-efficacy beliefs and affects how people view themselves (Bandura, 1990). The narratives also point to the role of education in women empowerment in psychology, especially financial independence. Participant-10 reveals that education opened doors economically. This notion is congruent with the views from studies by Buvinic & O'Donnell (2016) and Dunsch (2022) confirming that education is critical to the economic empowerment of women. Education in the narratives is underscored as the force behind female social and community engagement in District Swat. Participant-13 asserts social awareness as people gained from education. Balsano (2005) notes in the *Journal of Psychology* that education promotes social responsibilities and civic engagement. The narratives also reveal that education enhances the resilience and coping in women in District Swat. For instance, Participant-16 recognizes resilience. This correlates with studies by Fullerton et al. (2021) showing the relationship and presence of enhancing education on resilience capacity. Education also positively impacts female emotional well-being in District Swat. Tennessee shares the positivity around education on an individual's path. According to the study by Tennant et al. (2015), there is a positive relationship between education and emotional well-being. Education is a theme that enables women to take control of their lives and their relationships, as chronicled in these narratives. Participant-22 explored the ways in which education reshaped her relationships, promoting mutually understanding. Empirical studies conducted by Zimmerman et al. (2015) and Orengo-Aguayo (2015) argue that education is linked to better relational social practice.

Education emerges as an antidote to gender stereotypes, empowering women with skills and knowledge. Participant-25 broke down education and how it broke the stereotypes and created psychological empowerment. Empirical data like the one presented by Dhiman (2023) provide evidence that education helps challenge gender norms. Education is a tool for advocacy and leadership among women. Participant-28 delved into how education fueled her advocacy and leadership. Curry (2000) indicates that education is one of the most important methods of bringing women into leadership roles.

Conclusion

The narratives of women in the beautiful valleys of District Swat, Pakistan with the transformative power of education in igniting their psychological empowerment. The respondents express a deep change in how they see themselves, underscoring how education acts as a driver for confidence and self-worth. This liberation not only cuts across individual

domains, but also crosses societal boundaries that actually empowered women who were otherwise limited to perennial and orthodox roles in India. These concepts exemplify the foundations of education in Swat that build towards critical thinking and decision-making. If women are endowed with analytical tools, they shall challenge social beliefs, carving out their own fates and contributing to society's advancement. As empirical data support, this intellectual empowerment allows them to face the complexities of life and psychology with confidence. The stories are a tapestry of the story of self-efficacy through education. As female members learn and grow, a strong sense of ability can inspire hearers in the sphere of decision making, life alias and contributing to personal and social development. Financial independence is not merely a tool; it is a powerful enabler of holistic empowerment, granting freedom from societal constraints and the ability to never have to rely on someone else's income. Qualitative studies complement the testimonies of participants to further underscore the importance of education in enabling women's financial independence. Education in Swat goes beyond classrooms and beyond to become a driving force in social and community engagement. If in the configuration of local territories in the Development Plans women find their role, it is the basis for recording in the prevention of revitalization, combined with the qualification of the level of social and political activity, which only enrich real women, giving them the opportunity to make us whole. Educational experiences cultivate resilience and coping skills that equip women to navigate life's challenges with fortitude and convert obstacles into opportunities. Educating women in Swat also yields satisfactory levels of mental health. Illuminated paths, reshaped identities, and the ability to respond to adversity with grace are defining characteristics of emotional resilience. Education itself is a force for betterment, breaking down walls for the next generation. In Swat, education breaks gender disparity, leading to confidence and psychological uplift. The sentence gave from knowledge, the women go against to the culture and contribute a strong impact for the gender equality and their society. Lastly, education also leads to advocacy and leadership, with many women advocating for their rights, breaking stereotypes, and playing a key role in producing significant changes in their communities.

Policy Implications

The stories coming out of District Swat emphasize how urgently we need policy initiatives to invest in and improve women's education. The policymakers need to adapt the education system by introducing skills like decision-making, critical thinking, etc. Economic empowerment comes through tailored programs in vocational and financial literacy. Also, policies need to factor in community involvement, resilience, and social/emotional health in schools. It is essential to challenge gender stereotypes and encourage advocacy and leadership. Education, when supplemented by mentorship programs and a supportive culture, can have an even greater effect. Finally, promoting economic empowerment for women through policy interventions based on these principles will not only benefit women individually but also establish the foundation for a more resilient, equitable, and progressive society in District Swat, Pakistan.

Limitations and Future Directions

There are some limitations of the current research, such as qualitative nature of data which may restrict generalizability. It also lacks longitudinal data, as a result precluding a measurement of long-term impacts. We encourage future studies to use quantitative measures for a more holistic view.

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