



## Empowerment of Rural Women at Household Level in District Nankana Sahib

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**Abstract:** *This quantitative research was conducted in District Nankana Sahib. The size of the sample was 150 Female respondents. A convenient sampling technique was used for the assortment of the respondents. The questionnaire was used as a tool. The results revealed that the empowerment level of rural women in the household is low in district Nankana Sahib. Women are facing a lot of problems that create the main hurdle in the empowerment status of rural women. The result showed that 46.7% of women were illiterate and 26.7% of women had a primary level of education, 75.3% of women had no right to get a share in the inheritance property, only 39.3% of women took decisions for the selection of their children spouse, 68.7% women were monitoring child rearing activities, 54.0% women were not taking decisions about disposable income for expenses. There is a highly positive association between age and decision-making autonomy, income and decision-making autonomy, and education and decision-making.*

**Key Words:** Women Empowerment, Decision Making autonomy, Household Management, Women Education, Property Rights, Physical mobility, Gender Discrimination, Health facilities.

### Introduction

The empowerment of women is essential for the development of society. Empowerment means individuals who take decisions and act freely according to their basic rights and fulfil their ability as identical members of society. According to the United Nations National Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the term women's empowerment means: gaining knowledge and understanding of gender relations and methods to change those relationships, creating a sense of self-confidence (Dandona, 2015). Empowering women in terms of eliminating gender disparities and reducing their negative consequences, whether in terms of health, agricultural productivity, or economic productivity, has been recognized both in its own right and in the forefront. Empowerment

is the process by which people who were denied the ability to make strategic choices acquire such qualifications (Dick *et al.*, 2019). Worldwide, 98 million girls are out of school. Globally, 1 in 3 women will experience gender-based violence in their lifetime. In the developing world, 1 in 7 girls gets married before their 15th birthday, with some brides being eight or 9 years old. More than 287,000 women each year, 99% of whom, Die from pregnancy - and birth complications (Groake *et al.*, 2018).

Women's participation means their close involvement in the economic, social, cultural and political process that affects their lives. The majority of workers who maintain life-enhancing food, cooking, child rearing, elderly care, home care, water supply and women work, and this job is

underestimated globally. Yes, and no salary is paid. Women earn only 10% of the world's income. Where women work for money, they may be limited to a set of jobs that are considered appropriate for women, including those with low-paying, low-level positions. Do women own less than 1% of the world's property (Rehman *et al.*, 2008)? Women play an important role in the development of a country. Pakistani women face barriers from birth and equal access to resources, including food, education and health care. Women are unable to in the case of South Punjab, self-confidence, decision-making power and freedom of movement are statistically important factors that have a positive impact on rural development, proper education and employment opportunities can play an important role in women's empowerment. In addition, access to the media, especially TV, can empower women in a significant way. [Baig \*et al.\* \(2018\)](#) women in North Punjab still face multifaceted problems, but to a lesser extent than in the South, such as gender discrimination, wage gaps, harassment and social risks. The cultural approach to women's empowerment can also be exploited at home by shedding light on broad examples of Islamic values, including its special emphasis on women's property [rights \(Almandeel \*et al.\*, 2019\)](#). The biggest social and cultural factors in women's empowerment in Pakistan are educational barriers, good jobs and access to property. All of these social and cultural factors are potential barriers to women's empowerment. Moreover, states have failed to pursue policies with a genuine letter and spirit. The state seems to be concerned about the documented policy of women's empowerment but has failed to bring the oppressed and backward groups out of oppression ([Akmal Ismail \*et al.\*, 2019](#)). Education plays a key and most important role in the development of rural areas. Education contributes to the quality of life, quality of human resources, and economic growth. The development of society requires the empowerment of women who add skills and experience, asset ownership, health and most importantly, education ([Jali \*et al.\*, 2017](#)). Women are becoming more independent as their education increases as women are moving towards media, awareness, greater access to resources, freedom from domestic violence, stronger relationships with their husbands and freedom of movement ([Anwar \*et al.\*, 2013](#)).

In India, rural women still face a lot of problems, but women are not given a fair go in making decisions about marriage. Age of marriage, choice of spouse, age of birth of children, etc. Most of the economic activities of women are unnoticed and are paid for free, like raising and rearing cattle from morning till evening is a big deal. Even after participating in physical work with full vigour, rural women as a whole are not enjoying their proper social status, social respect, dignity and esteem in their families and society. That is why they do not play a decision-making role in economic decisions. Most rural women blame their poor social assessment for their lack of education ([Badsiwai, 2015](#)). Women face many issues when carrying out agriculture work, such as poor ownership, issues of earning salaries in times and the problem of operating in harsh weather situations. Education improves the status of women, and then they will be able to support their families financially and find respectable and best-earning chances ([Alvi, 2012](#)).

Land ownership is the main source of empowerment. It plays a significant role in raising women's security, encouraging and increasing their control over household decisions ([Allendorf, 2007](#)). Decision-making power is firmly connected to maternal and child health, empowerment of women and gender equality perceived as the foundation of productive health programs. In South Asia, gender differences in health are very protuberant, where women and girls have totally different benefits as compared to western women. Women of South Asia cannot take decisions in life, and they have restricted access to and control of resources. South Asian countries must develop programs for the best health care treatments and gender inequalities (Senarat *et al.*, 2009).

## Review of Literature

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Women's empowerment could be the key to opening up women's productivity in Africa. Women's health outcomes and better capacity to meet future food and agriculture needs in Africa. Women's membership in social and economic groups, females' access to credit, and increasing females' income are key strategies for empowering women to improve their health status and productivity (Kara *et al.*, 2015). Females are an essential and important part of our society, but unfortunately, they have low influence in society. Our

society cannot be built without women's contributions. They face gender discrimination and hurdles in every sphere of work. Nowadays, women play diverse roles in society but still face gender discrimination (Mariam, 2014). It is important to empower women to ensure not only their own health and well-being but also the well-being of the whole family. They are the primary means by which social norms are passed on to their children, and thus they are in a critical position to promote attitudes towards gender equality in their children and families (Gupta et al., 2006). In managing household responsibilities, it is important for women to have access to information on a variety of aspects. These include child development, health care and well-being, diet and nutrition, hygiene, rehabilitation and more. They need to have effective communication skills and communicate effectively with people inside and outside the home(Kapur, 2019). females will be empowered if they participate in decisions about their health care, mobility, household income expenditure, large household purchases and contraceptive use. Education and employment play a vital role in women's empowerment. Educated and working women are more independent in making decisions about their health care, large household purchases, meeting family and relatives, spending on household income, and contraceptive uses than illiterate women (Raiz et al., 2018). Rural women work hard for a long time, usually for a small reward, which is often overlooked by extension services. The share of women in the world's total agricultural labor is 43%, which increases to 70% in some countries. Some barriers have hampered the role of women in agriculture development, low literacy rate, lack of self-confidence, sense of inferiority and resignation, increase in work inside and outside, domestic affairs, and lack of information are major obstacles to empowering rural women (Akbay et al.,2018).

**Objective**

- To study the socio-economic characteristics of respondents.
- To assess the status of rural women empowerment at the household level
- To identify the factor that affects women's autonomy and decision-making power in the household.
- To establish the association between the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents and their status of empowerment.
- To give the social policy measurement to the rural women's status.

**Material and Method**

Research is a process in which the researcher uses a methodological knowledge approach for the finding or understanding of afresh obtained information. The study was planned to assess the empowerment of rural women at the household level in the district of Nankana Sahib. The objective of the research was to find out the socio-economic characteristics of respondents and to assess the status of women's empowerment at the household level. This study was quantitative in nature. The study was conducted in rural areas of District Nankana Sahib. The size of the sample was 150 Female respondents. A convenient sampling technique was used for the selection of the respondents. Five villages were selected, with 30 women from each village. For the data collection, a survey method was used. A questionnaire was used as a tool. The questionnaire was filled out by the researcher in a face-to-face setting. A statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) was used for data analysis.

**Table 1.**

Controlled variables	Variables (Background Independent Variables	Dependent Variables (Effect)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Age</li> <li>▪ Source of income</li> <li>▪ Education</li> <li>▪ Marital status</li> <li>▪ Family structure</li> <li>▪ Family size</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Economic Factors</li> <li>▪ Education</li> <li>▪ Health Facility</li> <li>▪ Property Right</li> </ul>	Women's Empowerment in household <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Decision-making autonomy</li> <li>▪ Household management</li> </ul>

Controlled variables	Variables (Background)	Independent Variables	Dependent Variables (Effect)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Household income</li> <li>▪ Household head</li> <li>▪ Occupation respondent</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Freedom of movement/physical mobility</li> <li>▪ Gender discrimination</li> <li>▪ Level of information</li> <li>▪ Leadership in the community</li> <li>▪ power and autonomy</li> </ul>	

### Univariate analysis

Univariate statistics summarize only one variable at a time. Data analysis is a method in which logical or

statistical procedures are used to describe or determine, summarize, and analyze the data ([Shamoo and Rank, 2003](#)).

**Table 2.** Socio-economic characteristics of the Respondents.

	Categories	F	% age
Educational Level	Illiterate	70	46.7
	Primary	40	26.7
	Middle	5	3.3
	Matric	11	7.3
	Above Matric	24	16.0
Age	18-28	31	20.7
	28-38	57	38.0
	38-48	43	28.7
	Above 48	19	12.7
Monthly income	10,000-20,000Rs	33	22.0
	20,000-30,000Rs	29	19.3
	30,000-40,000Rs	35	23.3
	50,000Rs and above	53	35.3
Family Type	Joint	122	81.3
	Nuclear	22	14.7
	Extended	6	4.0
	Total	150	100%

Socio-economic characteristics are defined as the social status of an individual living in a society. These characteristics, e.g. Age, Education, Income level, Family type, Education of an individual, plays a crucial role in research finding because every individual provide the answer according to his knowledge and experience. Table No.1 represents that the majority (46.7%) of the respondents have an

illiterate educational background, and (26.7%) of the respondents have a primary education level. (38.0%)of the respondents belonged 28-38 category of age. Less than half (35.3%) of the respondent deriving monthly income 50,000Rs and (23.3%) had 30,000-40,000 Rs income. Most of the respondents, 81.3%, belonged to the joint family system.

**Table 3.** Property Rights of

Sr. No	Property rights	Usually		Rarely		Never		Total	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Purchase property for own	24	16%	29	19.3%	97	64.7%	150	100%
2	Get a share in inheritance property	23	15.3%	14	9.3%	113	75.3%	150	100%
<b>Economic Factor</b>									
1	Access to jobs without any restrictions	25	16.7%	20	13.3%	105	70%	150	100%
2	Availability of pocket money	55	36.7%	78	52.0%	17	11.3%	150	100%
3	Opportunity to open bank accounts	38	25.3%	24	16.0%	88	58.7%	150	100%
4	Equal access to resources	42	28.0%	51	34.0%	57	38.0%	150	100%
5	Wages differentiation problem	58	38.7%	60	40.0%	32	21.3%	150	100%
<b>Freedom of Physical Mobility</b>									
1	Move freely within the country	39	26.0%	43	28.7%	68	45.3%	150	100%
2	Choose a place of residence	23	15.3%	17	11.3%	110	73.3%	150	100%

The majority of the respondents (64.7%) never had a right to purchase property to own. Most of the respondents (75.3%) never had the right to get inheritance property. Women's property rights were the main hurdle in empowerment. The distribution of land in rural areas among males and females is highly imbalanced (Deere *et al.*, 2014). The majority of respondents (70%) never had access to jobs, and the majority of respondents (52.0%) rarely had the availability of pocket money. The majority of respondents (58.7%) never had opportunities to open bank accounts, and the majority of the

respondents (38.0%) had never access to equal resources. The majority of the respondent (40.0%) were rarely and (38.7%) were usually faced with wage differentiation problems. Women's participation and access to economic opportunities increase their status of empowerment, and females consuming a bank account was also verified, which revealed a highly optimistic impact on empowerment of women (Bushra *et al.*, 2015). (45.3%) of the respondent had never right to move freely within the country. The majority of respondents (73.3%) never had right to choose a place of residence.

**Table 4.** Distribution of the respondents according to decisions of children

Sr. No	Decisions regarding children's health	Usually		Rarely		Never		Total	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Selection of Hospital	78	52.0%	56	37.3%	16	10.7	150	100%
2	Who goes to the hospital with baby	68	45.3%	65	43.3%	17	11.3%	150	100%
3	Treatments of children	63	42.0%	54	36.0%	33	22.0%	150	100%
<b>Decisions regarding children's Marriage</b>									
1	Selection of children's spouse	66	44.0%	58	38.7%	26	17.3%	150	100%
2	Age of children's marriage	103	68.7%	41	27.3%	6	4.0%	150	100%
<b>Decisions regarding child Rearing</b>									
1	Monitoring children activities	103	68.7%	41	27.3%	6	4.0%	150	100%

2	Social Competence	79	52.7%	59	39.3%	12	8.0%	150	100%
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The majority of respondents (52.0%) usually take decisions for children's hospital selection, and the majority of respondents (45.3%) took decision on who goes to school with the baby. The majority of respondents (42.0%) usually take decisions for children's treatments. The majority of the respondents (39.3%) usually take decisions for

children marriage. The majority of respondents (44.0%) usually take decisions on children's age of marriage. The majority of the respondents (68.7%) were usually monitoring children's activities, and the majority of the respondents (52.7%) were usually monitoring children's social competence.

**Table 5.** Distribution of the respondents according to household management functions

Sr. No	Household management functions	Usually		Rarely		Never		Total	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Senior management functions	42	28.0%	62	41.3%	46	30.7%	150	100%
2	Family members equal help to perform work	46	30.7%	70	46.7%	34	22.7%	150	100%
3	Control their own time	46	30.7%	56	37.3%	48	32.0%	150	100%
4	Equally, participate in financial saving or investment	36	24.0%	40	26.7%	74	49.3%	150	100%
5	Right to purchase large items	33	22.0%	48	32.0%	69	46.0%	150	100%
6	Right to purchase small items	81	54.0%	45	30.0%	24	16.0%	150	100%

The majority of respondents (41.3%) rarely performed senior management functions, and the majority of the respondents (46.7%) had family members who rarely helped to perform work at home. The majority of the respondents (37.3%) were rarely controlled on their own time, and the majority of respondents (49.3%) never equally participated in saving or dissaving. The majority of the respondents (46%) never had the right to purchase large items for the house, and the majority (54.0%) had the right to purchase small items for the house, like food.

### Empirical Results

#### Bivariate Analysis

Bivariate analysis is a simple form of analysis in the quantitative study in which we systematically determine the pragmatic relationship between two variables.

**Hypothesis 1:** Younger the age of the women, the Higher will be the decision-making autonomy

**Table 6.** Association between the age of the respondents and Decision-making autonomy

Age	Decision-making Autonomy			Total
	Usually	Rarely	Never	
18-28	20 64.5%	7 22.6%	4 12.9%	31 100.0%
28-38	23 40.4%	22 38.6%	12 21.1%	57 100.0%
38-48	6 14.0%	30 69.8%	7 16.3%	43 100.0%
Above 48	3	9	7	19

Age	Decision-making Autonomy			Total
	Usually	Rarely	Never	
	15.8%	47.4%	36.8%	100.0%
Total	52	68	30	150
	34.7%	45.3%	20.0%	100.0%

Chi-square=29.369<sup>a</sup>      d.f. = 6      p-value=.000\*\*      Gamma=.417 \*\*=Highly Significant

Table 6 present the relationship between the age of the respondents and decision-making autonomy. Chi-square values illustrate a greatly significant association between the age of the respondents and females' decision-making autonomy. Gamma value also illustrates an intense positive association among the variables. It means decision-making autonomy increased in young people. So the hypothesis that "Young age of the women, will be higher decision making autonomy is accepted.

Wiklander (2010) was conducting research in Uttar Pradesh on household empowerment. The power of women in Uttar Pradesh is determined by age and education, and he found a positive association between age and decision-making autonomy.

**Hypothesis 2:** Higher the level of Education, Higher will be the decision-making autonomy.

**Table 7.** Association between Qualification of the respondents and Decision-making autonomy

Qualification	Decision-making Autonomy			Total
	Usually	Rarely	Never	
Primary	13	21	6	40
	32.5%	52.5%	15.0%	100.0%
Middle	4	0	1	5
	80.0%	.0%	20.0%	100.0%
Matric	9	0	2	11
	81.8%	.0%	18.2%	100.0%
Above matric	13	10	1	24
	54.2%	41.7%	4.2%	100.0%
Illiterate	13	37	20	70
	18.6%	52.9%	28.6%	100.0%
Total	52	68	30	150
	34.7%	45.3%	20.0%	100.0%

Chi-square=32.686<sup>a</sup>      df= 8      p-value=.000\*\*      Gamma=.303 \*\*=Highly Significant

Table 7 illustrates the relationship betwixt education of the defendants and decision-making autonomy. Educated women (80) showed good decision-making power, and (70) illiterate women showed low decision-making autonomy. Chi-square values show an extremely positive link between education of the respondents and women's decision-making autonomy. Gamma value also demonstrates a strong optimistic association between the variables. It means decision-making autonomy increases with the quality education. So the hypothesis "Higher the level

of education of women, will be higher the women decision making autonomy "is recognized.

Jali *et al.* (2017) concluded that education has to be given priority, and it is the supremely important aspect of women's empowerment. Jali collected data from rural areas of south Punjab, which he found that a positive association between level of education and empowerment of rural women.

**Hypothesis 3:** Higher the income of the Household, Higher will be the decision making autonomy

**Table 8.** Association between the Household income of the respondents and Decision-making autonomy

Household income	Decision-making Autonomy			Total
	Usually	Rarely	Never	
10,000-20000	11 33.3%	12 36.4%	10 30.3%	33 100.0%
20,000-30,000	13 44.8%	10 34.5%	6 20.7%	29 100.0%
30,000-40,000	7 20.0%	18 51.4%	10 28.6%	35 100.0%
50,000 and above	21 39.6%	28 52.8%	4 7.5%	53 100.0%
Total	52 34.7%	68 45.3%	30 20.0%	150 100.0%

*Chi-square=12.864*      *D.F. = 6*      *p-value=.045\**      *Gamma=-.143 \* =Significant*

Table 8 presents the relationship between the Family income of the defendants and decision-making autonomy, and Chi-square values indicate a significant relationship between the household income of the respondents and women's decision-making autonomy. The Gamma value also indicates an optimistic association among the variables. It means decision-making autonomy increases with high household income. So the hypothesis "Higher the level of household income of women, will be higher the decision making autonomy" is accepted.

[Sultana \(2011\)](#) showed that females' position in the household, including their role in the family decision-making, is positively related to their education, income as well as other economic variables. Sultana institute that there was an optimistic association between income and decision making.

**Hypothesis 4:** High access to social-economic facilities and property rights, Higher will be the decision-making autonomy

**Table 9.** Association between Access to socio- economic facilities and property rights of the respondents and Decision-making autonomy

Access to social-economic facilities and property rights	Decision-making Autonomy			Total
	Usually	Rarely	Never	
Usually	21 80.8%	5 19.2%	0 .0%	26 100.0%
Rarely	23 46.0%	21 42.0%	6 12.0%	50 100.0%
Never	8 10.8%	42 56.8%	24 32.4%	74 100.0%
Total	52 34.7%	68 45.3%	30 20.0%	150 100.0%

*Chi-square=48.621*      *d.f. = 4*      *p-value=.000\*\**      *Gamma=.738 Highly Significant\*\**

Table 9 illustrates the relationship between access to socio-economic facilities and property of the respondents and decision-making autonomy, and

Chi-square values indicate a greatly significant association between access to socio-economic facilities and property of the respondents and



decision-making autonomy. Gamma value also indicates a significant association between the variables. It means high access to socio-economic facilities and property of the respondents have high decision-making autonomy. So the hypothesis "High access to socio-economic facilities and property rights, will be higher the

decision-making autonomy" is accepted.

[Noreen \(2011\)](#) found a positive association between socio-economic commitments related to women empowerment and decision-making on the basic data of Bahawalpur city. Noreen found that inherited assets, education and marital status had a great influence on rural women empowerment.

## Result and Discussions

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Efforts are being taken in Pakistan to empower women in every field of life, but women in rural areas are still living in despondent situations. Women had been considered one of the most important groups despite their large shares in the population. Women were considered responsible for caring for the children and the household without any support. Women needed to equip with skills and capabilities for the better management of the business and their household progressing in social and economic conditions for family. Women had not been treated equally to men. They had not been allowed to get their own assets or share the property of their parents and even they had no access to jobs and education, especially in Pakistani rural areas. The present study assesses the empowerment of rural women at the household level. The empowerment of rural women in Nankana sahib is still low. Most rural women had no access to education, most women were illiterate and had the primary level of education, and most women had no access to jobs. They were dependent on their family income and had no opportunity to open bank accounts except for some women. They were also facing wage differentiation problems and inequality in resources. Most families had not invested money in girls' education, women also had no right to choose the faculty of education because of the illiterate population, mostly women had no right to purchase property to own, and they were not getting a share in the inheritance property, it's also a big problem in all over Pakistani society, our religious values give this right to women but our

society neglect this right by their so-called social values. The outcome of the present study also showed that usually, the majority of the women had no right to move freely within the country and choose a place of residence except for some women, who had also not participated in the community affairs, and their feedback also not important in the community. The result of the study also showed that most respondents face gender discrimination. Their family member favours their brother over her and sends him to better schools and spends more on their education. More than half of the respondents faced verbal abuse and physical abuse to a great extent, but the majority of the respondents were not faced sexual abuse. The study showed that Women's also faced Discouragement, underestimation and ignorance attitude at home. More than half of the respondents had no knowledge about women's rights and empowerment status. The current study also reported decision-making autonomy regarding household transactions. More than half of the females had not taken decisions regarding household transactions, e.g. (Disposable income for expenses, financial saving or dissaving).

The result of the current study showed a low level of empowerment status in rural areas of district Nankana Sahib, but on the other hand, females reported some positive aspects of empowerment regarding decision-making of their children at the household level.

## Conclusion

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After revering all the analyses, the researcher assesses the level of women empowerment at the household level in district Nankana sahib is low. Females reported Some positive aspects of empowerment regarding the decision-making power of Children (marriage, education, health) and Health opportunities, but still, the level of empowerment of rural women is very low in district Nankana Sahib. The majority of the respondents were no access to formal education. Most women had a primary level of education and were illiterate. They were not moving freely within the country, and they also faced gender discrimination in the family setting and out of the family. They had no access to jobs. The result of the study showed a highly significant association between the age and decision-making autonomy, income and decision-making autonomy, education

and decision-making. The outcome of the study also showed a significant relationship between access to socio-economic facilities and property rights with

decision-making autonomy. This study suggested that women's education is very important for the empowerment of rural women.

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