

The role of ICT in determining the Relationship between Socio-Economic Environment & Subjective Wellbeing of Women in Punjab: Evidence from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey

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Introduction

According to World Bank (2016) estimates more than 767 million people live under the poverty line of 1.90 dollar a day and grapple to meet even the basic necessities of life. Poverty exists in various forms and hampers their objective wellbeing. Poverty is injustice to those who are born with it, as it transmits across generations and perpetuates inequalities. However, poverty alone is not an accurate measure for indicating ill condition of humans and subjective wellbeing is equally important for human development. Concepts of human development and subjective wellbeing are closely knitted together.

Literature shows that while lives of many women have been transformed over the period of years, their subjective wellbeing is reduced. Although, several researches are based on expansion of women's opportunities, their subjective wellbeing remains unnoticed (Stevenson & Wolfers, 2010). Therefore, understanding human development and wellbeing is mandatory for the researchers and policy makers today (McGillivray & Clarke, 2006). Statics depict that majority of women in Pakistan are illiterate, marginalized and show poor health indicators. Their access to public space and mobility is also restricted in various ways (Zakar et al, 2014). It underpins that socio-economic environment is closely linked with the subjective wellbeing of women and hence worth investigating.

World is undoubtedly interconnected in terms of flow of information, services, communication and goods. This interconnectivity further leads to economic development and technological change in countries ([Kenny, 2005](#)). Consequently status of human beings is greatly affected as countries are exposed to new ideas, institutions and cultures. However, the impact of these changes is different on men and women; gender gaps are evident across countries. Key dimensions of welfare such as economic activity, educational attainment and subjective wellbeing are showing diverging trends with respect to gender ([Shawn F. Dorius](#) & [Glenn](#)

[Firebaugh](#), 2010). However, information communication technology has opened new arenas for women development; it has become a ray of hope in terms of providing them immense opportunities. ICTs have the strength to cross the barriers of illiteracy and help the disadvantaged women living in conservative patriarchal regime. ICTs in form of television, internet, phones, text messages and emails are user friendly and can be accessed by women living in remote areas. Nonetheless, mere access to ICTs cannot lead towards women's equality and empowerment (Zakar et al, 2014). Various researches have proved that developing countries have harnessed the true potential of ICT and expedited the process of women capacity building. Technology in itself is not gender neutral and therefore cannot mitigate gender gaps automatically; it needs to be directed through policy (Zakar et al, 2014).