

**PERCEPTION AND PRACTICES OF ORGANIZATIONS ENGAGED IN WOMEN
EMPOWERMENT IN PAKISTAN: AN ANALYSIS IN LIGHT OF IQBAL'S
PHILOSOPHY OF SELF-DEVELOPMENT**



**MOEENA KAUSAR SATTI
01-251212-015**

**Supervisor
MS. SOHIMA ANZAK**

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
award of the degree of Masters (Applied Anthropology)

Department of Humanities & Social Sciences

BAHRIA UNIVERSITY ISLAMABAD

SEPTEMBER 2023

Approval for Examination

Scholar's Name: Moeena Kausar Satti

Enrollment No. 01-251212-015

Programme of Study: MS (Applied Anthropology)

Department: Humanities and Social Sciences

Thesis Title: Perception and Practices of Organizations Engaged in Women Empowerment in Pakistan: An Analysis in Light of Iqbal's Philosophy of Self-Development

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Principal Supervisor's Signature: _____

Name: Ms Sohima Anzak

Date: _____

Internal Examiner

External Examiner

Program Coordinator

Head of Department

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Name of the Scholar: Moeena Kausar Satti

To Allah's light, I dedicate with grace,
To the Prophet's path, a perfect trace,
To those forging indigenous dreams, we embrace.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

الحمد لله

I express my profound gratitude to Allah SWT for His guidance and assistance in completing this thesis. It is through His blessings that I embarked on this journey to contribute to the development of indigenous Islamic theories and systems through research and development. I extend my heartfelt appreciation to my thesis supervisor, Ms. Sohima Anzak, for her unwavering support, guidance, constructive criticism, and friendship throughout this academic endeavor. She provided me with the freedom to explore and work in the areas that resonated with me and aided in my personal and academic growth. It was under her mentorship that I delved into the world of anthropology and gained valuable insights into ethnography. I hold Dr. Muhammad Abid Ali in high regard for introducing me to the essence of Allama Iqbal's work. His meticulous guidance not only pertained to Iqbal's contributions but also encompassed research ethics and style, enriching my overall research experience. Dr. Ali through his concerned guidance, helped me overcome procrastination and instilled a deeper sense of purpose in my thesis, transcending the pursuit of a mere MS degree. I am grateful for his time and efforts. I extend my acknowledgement to all my teachers throughout the MS program who, in various capacities, contributed to my growth as a researcher in anthropology. I am particularly grateful to Dr. Waheed Rana for his instrumental role in breaking the impasse during my data collection phase when I faced unresponsiveness from several women organizations. His encouragement and assistance, along with the support of his student, Maryam Tahir, proved pivotal in advancing my data collection efforts.

My heartfelt gratitude goes to the four organizations: the Pakistan Girl Guides Association, the All Pakistan Women Association, the Social Welfare Section (Gender Unit) under the Ministry of Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives, and Organization X (pseudonym), for their willingness to participate as respondent organizations in my research. I deeply value the knowledge and experience I gained from them and commend their impactful work in the field of women empowerment, positively impacting the lives of many. I am indebted to my key informants and all the other respondents and participants who generously contributed their time and insights through informal interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observations. Their cooperation was invaluable to my work.

My heartfelt appreciation extends to my parents for their unwavering support and guidance in shaping me into the person I am today. I am also grateful to my brothers, who ensured my safety during data collection, provided transportation, and patiently waited for hours during the process, despite their own busy schedules. Last but not least, I express gratitude to myself for persevering through the demanding routine that juggling a job, two parallel academic degrees (one private and one regular), and this research brought with it.

ABSTRACT

Women's empowerment within Pakistan is a multifaceted sociocultural challenge characterized by deeply rooted gender norms and cultural conventions that hinder women's advancement and autonomy. Despite the proliferation of numerous women empowerment organizations in Pakistan since its inception, there remains a deficiency in a unified and substantial conceptual framework and system for women empowerment that aligns with the country's ideological fabric. To have a meaningful and accepted impact within a particular society and culture, any social phenomenon must be grounded in a sound philosophical foundation drawn from the cultural context where the work is to be undertaken. Given this cultural contextual imperative, in this study, I draw on the philosophy of '*Khudi*' by Allama Iqbal, a prominent Muslim philosopher, to explore the concept and practices of women empowerment in Pakistan. In this research, a sample of four organizations located in Islamabad was chosen. These organizations include the Pakistan Girl Guides Association, All Pakistan Women's Association, Social Welfare Section (Gender Unit), and an organization referred to as Organization X (pseudonym). Adopting an ethnographic approach, the study explored the contemporary perceptions and practices of these organizations dedicated to women empowerment in Pakistan. Iqbal's philosophy serves as a fitting foundation for an indigenous examination of women empowerment. Methodologically, the study was divided into two phases. The initial phase entailed an ethnographic exploration of the participant four organizations in Islamabad with a focus on comprehending their perceptions and practices in women empowerment domain. In the second phase, to elucidate the Pakistani religious and cultural concept of women empowerment, Iqbal's notion of *Khudi* (self) was deployed to conceptualize the findings sorted out from the data collected from Islamabad and thematically analyzed. Ultimately, this research juxtaposed the perceptions and practices of the respondent organizations in light of Iqbal's outlined framework for women empowerment. The findings indicated that these organizations' envisioned goals primarily centered on self-development, economic empowerment, and the provision of a secure environment for women's advancement. Yet, the women working there were ambivalent regarding the ideological and conceptual sources of their perceptions and practices and the desire to develop and prosper. This ambivalence was largely due to the colonial and modern secular narratives that create dissonance between the local cultural imperatives and the womenfolk. Under this ideologically ambivalence condition, Iqbal's notion of *Khudi* provides an indigenous alternative, rather an antidote to the secular liberal colonization of women's agency. Further exploration of operational aspects of Iqbal's philosophy of *Khudi* as relevant to women empowerment needs to be done to develop it into a pragmatic model. This research has underscored the need for organizations to adopt a comprehensive, culturally sensitive, and theoretically informed approach to women empowerment. Such an ideological incorporation might generate a long-lasting impact in the efforts built to enhance women empowerment at the organizational levels.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Full Form
NGO	Non-Government Organization
INGO	International Non-Government Organization
MDGs	Millenium Development Goals
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
CA	Capability Approach
UNDP	United Nations Development Bank
PGGA	Pakistan Girl Gides Association
APWA	All Pakistan Women's Association
PC	Project Component
WHO	World Health Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

Women empowerment has emerged as a crucial and complex sociocultural issue in Pakistan, marked by deeply rooted gender norms and cultural practices that hinder women's advancement and agency (Gondal et al., 2023). Globally, women face significant disparities compared to men in various aspects of life, including nutrition, health, vulnerability to physical violence, and sexual abuse. Moreover, women often lack vital support systems for their basic human needs. Disparities in literacy rates persist, with women having lower literacy rates than men. Access to paraprofessional or technical education is also limited for women (Nahar & Mengo, 2022). Those women who aspire to pursue careers often encounter substantial obstacles, including intimidation from family members or spouses, gender-based discrimination during hiring processes, and instances of sexual harassment in professional settings. Unfortunately, the effectiveness of legal mechanisms to address these issues is often limited. These multifaceted challenges also extend to impede women's active participation in political spheres. In recent times, numerous organizations have initiated programs aimed at empowering women and challenging existing gender inequalities (Shah, 2020). This research endeavored to explore the intricate landscape of women empowerment in Pakistan within its sociocultural context by delving into the perceptions, practices and narratives of organizations engaged in these initiatives to study their philosophy and vision.

Human nature is inherently inclined to formulate a philosophy as a precursor to every action undertaken. The more precise and well-founded this philosophy, the more

productive and meaningful the resulting actions become (Rafi-ud-Din, 1961). The value of efforts directed to measure the impact of a social phenomenon decreases if its theoretical basis is ambiguous and confused (Richardson, 2018). This can seriously affect the efforts directed at the endeavors like women empowerment (Ochman & Ortega-Díaz, 2020), especially in cultures like Pakistan. As a matter of fact, since women empowerment and feminism are gaining popularity in Pakistan, relevance and standing in the local culture need to be established. The fears and apprehensions of cultural imperialism and post-colonialism regarding the “foreign funded Non-Governmental Organizations” (NGOs) exist in the local populations and the concept and practices of women empowerment is looked with suspicion as being an imposition of a foreign doctrine and a violation of local cultures (Jamal & Baldwin, 2019).

Islam is an important element of Pakistani culture (Bukhari et al., 2019) given Pakistan's status as an ideological state rooted in the principles of Islam. The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan (1973) is vocally clear that no law or practice repugnant to Qur'an and Sunnah can be promulgated (Constitution of Pakistan, Article 227, Part IX) and that “Steps shall be taken to enable the Muslims of Pakistan, individually and collectively, to order their lives in accordance with the fundamental principles and basic concepts of Islam and to provide facilities whereby they may be enabled to understand the meaning of life according to the Holy Quran and Sunnah” (Constitution of Pakistan, Article 31, Part II, p. 17). As such any social endeavour like women empowerment initiatives ought to be relevant to the Islamic paradigm. Thus, it is felt that from an Islamic perspective, women empowerment initiatives and endeavours have to be properly developed, organized and monitored with the objective of developing effective

women who can take over the role of '*Khilafa*' (God's vicegerent) at par with men as ordained by Allah Almighty as the purpose of the creation of Human beings. 'Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: "I will create a vicegerent on earth..." (Quran, 002.030).

Building upon the integral role of Islam in Pakistani culture and the constitutional foundation that upholds Islamic principles, it is crucial to align women empowerment initiatives with the Islamic paradigm. However, despite the increasing responsibility of organizations in training and developing women globally and in Pakistan, many of these efforts tend to have a secular nature and often lack a robust focus on Islamic personality and self-development in the Muslim world. Since we as Muslims believe that our roles have been laid down by our Creator Himself, and His knowledge is perfect, hence His guidelines are most suitable for us, it is but imperative that we endeavor to look at women empowerment from His perspective. Therefore, I deemed it necessary to undertake an analysis of women empowerment within the context of indigenous Islamic perspectives in Pakistan.

Allama Muhammad Iqbal, the national poet and ideological father of Pakistan, is a cultural figure in Pakistan (Shafi, 2018); he is highly revered for his services in Pakistan movement and has got acceptance and credibility worldwide especially in Muslim world as an Islamic philosopher (Khan, 2022). He has got image as a Muslim reformist philosopher in Pakistan and enjoys acceptance in most religious as well as liberal groups. According to Iqbal, his teachings are only based on Qur'an (Popp, 2019), which is endorsed by famous Islamic scholars Maulana Maudoodi (1979), Maulana Abul Hassan Ali Nadwi (2007) and many others. It is also widely acknowledged that Iqbal's interpretation of Islam is very dynamic and relevant to the contemporary age (Ali & Hussien, 2020). As such Iqbal is the

most suitable choice to construe guidance from for an indigenous study of women empowerment. Different aspects of his philosophy, model of self-development and its relevance to contemporary cultural practices have been researched widely both nationally and internationally (Khan & Malik, 2021; Popp, 2019). Literature (Eijaz & Ahmed, 2011; Khan, 2022; Shahbaz, 2021; Tahir, 2019) showed researches on relevance of Iqbal's thought to the concept of women empowerment yet how this is related to his model of self and self-development has not been explored. Moreover, the relevance of Iqbal's philosophy relevant to women empowerment with respect to women empowerment organizations' practices has also not yet been explored.

Each organization working for women empowerment, despite working on the SDGs and/or MDGs by the United Nations, has got their own perceptions and relevant specific practices for the same in the cultural context of Pakistan. There has been significant literature on such organizations practices (Awan, 2020), strategies (Akbar, 2010), impacts (Mastoi et al., 2021), evaluation of projects and strategies (Kabeer, 2019), and perceptions of people about them in Pakistani culture (Agboatwalla, 2000) yet the organizations' own perceptions about the concept of women empowerment and their own practices in Pakistani cultural context has been researched rarely. This research qualitatively analysed the perceptions and practices of managers and administrators of organizations working for women empowerment through an ethnographic study. The research was conducted in two phases. In the first phase, in-depth interviews of the organizational heads and/or managers, who carry weight in the tactical vision and its implementation, were coupled with participant observations, website analysis, and photographs. The field area was Islamabad. In the second phase, to bring forth the

Pakistani religious and cultural concept of women empowerment, Allama Iqbal was selected for his status of being a cultural figure and his concept of human empowerment and societal development through his philosophy of self (*Khudi*) was also analyzed through content analysis that included hermeneutics and exegesis. Finally, the perceptions and practices of the organizations under study were analyzed in light of Iqbal's framework drawn in the second phase of the research.

1.2. Research Gap

1.2.1. Theoretical Gap

The research on women empowerment has usually looked through the perspective of either the western philosophical framework and/or the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Kluczevska, 2022). This research intended to add an eastern perspective to it by analysis of current perceptions and practices of the organizations involved through the lens of a poet from Global South who holds special reverence in the masses of Pakistani population as an ideological father of nation, national poet and popularly accepted as contemporary interpreter of the Qur'an. He is held as a cultural figure in Pakistan. This analysis advanced the literature through nuanced discussion through Iqbal's perspective on conceptualization of women empowerment. It built on Iqbal's work on *Khudi* as relevant to women empowerment to conceptualize the perceptions and practices of organizations involved in women empowerment. It extended this line of thinking to indigenize the concept of women empowerment in Pakistani cultural context through Iqbal's Qur'anic philosophy of self-development through *Khudi* as relevant to women empowerment.

1.2.2. Contextual Gap/Analysis

Mostly the literature has focused on the practices (Kabeer, 2019), strategies and work of organizations involved in women empowerment (Akbar, 2010), the quantitative analysis and evaluation of their work (Ewerling et al., 2017). Other researches have looked into the perceptions of different sections of population about such organizations (Jamal & Baldwin, 2019). Literature and research on the perceptions of such organizations themselves are scarce. Such analysis has implications for strategizing long-term goals and planning for sustainable women empowerment.

1.2.3. Methodological Gap/Analysis

This was an ethnographic study with in-depth interviews from the managers and administrators of the organizations involved in women empowerment, focus group discussions and participant observation for analyzing their perceptions and practices in the field. This methodology of in-depth interviews has been widely used in literature, but this study added rigor to the research by using triangulation techniques such as photography, documents and website reviews instead of relying solely on in-depth interviews and informal interviews. It added the qualitative analysis of Iqbal's writings to analyze his philosophy of self-empowerment and its relevance to women empowerment. Hence the study applied the two-phase methodology of research- field study and the theoretical analysis.

1.3. Problem Statement

Any social phenomenon needs to have a sound philosophical grounding for its meaningful impact and acceptance in the subject society and culture. The rationale needs to be drawn from the cultural context where the work is to be done. Women

empowerment as an objective in itself has been an endeavour where different regions and organizations apply their own strategies and goals. Every culture has its own definition of empowerment. In Pakistan, the women empowerment initiatives have been taken by the government yet more enthusiastic participation is from civil society, NGOs and INGOs. Such organizations working for women empowerment usually work to meet the SDGs or previously MDGs by the United Nations, yet each organization has its own aims and objectives, and the perception of women empowerment of the administration differs from organization to organization even in the same nation-state. Since this empowerment of women directly relates to social outcomes, indigenization and localization of such initiatives is essential. There needs to be an in-depth study of the perceptions and practices of organizations working for women in Pakistan to see how their views and practices align with this cultural context.

Pakistan is an ideological state, Dr. Allama Iqbal is its ideological founder and is referred to as the “architect of Pakistan”. He is revered in most segments of Pakistani society and is known for his philosophy of *Khudi* (Self). His philosophy was based on Islamic teachings and is the foundational ideology of Pakistan. Derivation of the objectives and rationale from his theory of *Khudi* will be very relevant in Pakistani cultural context. This research hence in-depth studied the perceptions and practices of organizations involved in women development through ethnography paired with the analysis of Iqbal’s philosophy mainly through his primary text to analyze women empowerment in Pakistan in light of Iqbal’s philosophy of *Khudi* and self-empowerment.

1.4. Objectives

1. To find out the perceptions through vision and objectives of the organizations

involved in women empowerment

2. To examine the practices of organization working for women empowerment
3. To analyze the perceptions of women empowerment in these organizations in line with Iqbal's philosophy of *Khudi*

1.5. Research Questions

1. What are the perceptions of organizations involved in women empowerment initiatives regarding the concept of women empowerment?
2. How the organizations engaged in women empowerment have been implementing their vision into practice?
3. How Iqbal's philosophy of self-development is related to the concept of women empowerment and how is it different from the vision of concerned organizations?

1.2 Significance of the Study:

Significantly, research and scholarly inquiries have delved into various aspects of women empowerment over years. Many empirical investigations have explored dimensions of women empowerment encompassing elements like ability to take action, self determination, self confidence, agency, and autonomy, among others.

Considering that women constitute approximately half of the population in Pakistan, examining the perceptions and practices of organizations engaged in women empowerment in this context through the lens of Iqbal's philosophy of "*Khudi*" holds substantial significance. This methodology facilitated a more profound comprehension of the intersection between indigenous Islamic principles and ongoing empowerment initiatives, offering valuable perspectives on how to tackle the distinct challenges and prospects encountered by women in Pakistan. It not only enriched the discourse on

women's empowerment but also highlighted the critical role women play in shaping the nation's future, aligning their empowerment with the principles of self-realization and self-empowerment advocated by Iqbal. The current study is significant because it aimed to execute a clear-headed examination and implication of Iqbal's philosophy in the contemporary women empowerment environment by understanding his ideas of human nature, individuality, and development of human-self and its dynamics while simultaneously analyzing the perceptions and practices of some organizations practically involved in women empowerment initiatives. I attempted to conduct a content analysis of Iqbal's poetic works to extract these ideas which are specifically relevant to women empowerment. It was also a first endeavor to identify the factors recommended by Iqbal for the development of a strong self from the perspective of women empowerment. Iqbal's understanding of the human self is a way forward to address the disparities in Eastern and Western viewpoints regarding human empowerment. According to Qureshi (1979), Iqbal has a great understanding of western philosophy as he recognizes the value of the Western intellect for its passion for the investigative approach, is cautious about its materialistic worldview (Mir, 2006; Qureshi, 1979) while admiring the practical facet of Western life (Munawwar, 1985).

This study has important findings that strongly influence our understanding of different aspects of women empowerment. Anthropologically, it contributes to the contextual understanding of women empowerment through ethnographic research and the analysis of works of the indigenous philosopher Allama Iqbal. Anthropology, which emphasizes the uniqueness and historical context of cultural groups, benefits from the enriched data and literature provided by this study. Researchers in the field will find value

in this study as it identified gaps in the comprehension of individual growth dynamics that lead to women empowerment. Furthermore, it highlighted shortcomings in existing strategies for women empowerment and education, inviting future researchers to build upon these findings. The study also encouraged the exploration of Iqbal's philosophy of self-development and its application in assessing current women empowerment systems. Organizations dedicated to women empowerment stand to gain from this research as it offers a conceptual framework for empowerment through education, staff training, and learning activities. It provides a basis for refining and aligning empowerment initiatives with the proposed framework. Within society, this study fosters an appreciation for the individuality of every woman and deepens the understanding of her innate journey toward self-realization within specific contexts. Importantly, it offers this perspective from the vantage point of a revered figure in the Pakistani cultural context, Allama Iqbal.

Policymakers focused on women empowerment will find valuable insights to revise and enhance their policy outlines, aligning them with Iqbal's ideology. This study offers a reference point for the development of action plans and the nationwide implementation of women empowerment strategies, drawing from Iqbal's philosophy as an ideological pillar of Pakistan. On a global scale, stakeholders in women empowerment and education are encouraged to engage with this study. Iqbal's ideas regarding human nature and individuality transcend borders and address the intrinsic disposition of all individuals, regardless of gender, ethnicity, creed, or race. His philosophical contributions have been recognized and appreciated in the Western world, emphasizing the universality of his insights and their potential to resonate with a global audience.

1.6. Operationalization of the Main Concepts

1.6.1. Woman

In this research, the concept of "woman" was taken as defined by Merriam-Webster, which characterizes a woman as "an adult female person" (*Definition of WOMAN*, 2023). By considering individuals are biologically female within this framework, I created a starting point for this research for the concept of women empowerment. This research endeavored to delve deeply into the multifaceted dimensions of womanhood, acknowledging that their agency, societal roles, cultural perceptions, and individual experiences collectively contribute to the concept of women empowerment.

1.6.2. Women Empowerment

In this research, the concept of women empowerment was as delineated by the United Nations (2001), Kabeer (2019), and United Nations Women (2022). Women empowerment, within this framework, encompassed five interrelated components. First, it encompassed a woman's intrinsic sense of self-worth, emphasizing her recognition of her own value within society. Second, it pertained to her fundamental right to make autonomous choices that shape her life, both personally and professionally. Third, it addressed her entitlement to equal access to opportunities and resources, enabling her to participate fully in social and economic life. Fourth, it denoted her right to wield control over her own life, both within the domestic sphere and beyond. Lastly, it underscored her capacity to influence broader social changes, working towards the establishment of a more equitable and just societal and economic order, both at the national and international levels. This multifaceted conceptualization aligned with Kabeer's three-dimensional

model, which encompasses personal, relational, and environmental aspects of empowerment. Personal empowerment involves the enhancement of self-esteem, relational empowerment focuses on navigating power dynamics within immediate networks, and environmental empowerment pertains to addressing societal norms and belief systems. Through this comprehensive operationalization, my research aimed to explore the complexities and dynamics of women empowerment within diverse contexts, elucidating its multifaceted nature and its significance as a fundamental human right.

1.6.3. Organization

In alignment with the definition provided by the Cambridge Dictionary (2023), an organization was best operationalized for this study as a structured assembly of individuals who collaborate systematically with the common objective of achieving specific goals or fulfilling a shared purpose. Organizations can vary greatly in scale and purpose, encompassing a spectrum that includes corporations, non-profit entities, government agencies, educational institutions, and more. Key features of organizations include a defined structure, roles and responsibilities for its members, established processes and procedures, and a clear mission or vision that provides the overarching purpose. Moreover, organizations often possess distinctive cultures, norms, and values that guide their operations, impacting how individuals within the organization interact and work towards their common objectives. For this research, I selected organizations working for women empowerment at governmental and non-governmental levels in Pakistan.

1.6.4. Self-development

Building upon the definition offered by the Cambridge Dictionary (2023), this

study operationalized self-development as a transformative journey that individuals undertake through their own conscious and deliberate efforts to advance and refine various aspects of themselves, encompassing personal, professional, and intellectual dimensions. It involves a proactive commitment to lifelong learning, introspection, and skill acquisition, with the ultimate aim of realizing one's fullest potential and purpose in life. Additionally, Iqbal's concept of "*Khudi*," as articulated in his philosophical writings and poetry, provides a valuable cultural perspective on self-development. In Iqbal's philosophy, "*Khudi*" represents an individual's intrinsic and spiritual selfhood, emphasizing the realization of one's inner potential and the actualization of personal agency (Khan & Malik, 2021). It aligned closely with the idea of self-development, emphasizing the importance of self-awareness, autonomy, and continuous growth as integral components of personal development. Thus, self-development, for this research, encompassed a holistic and purpose-driven process of self-advancement, reflecting the dynamic nature of human growth and potential.

1.7. Organization of thesis

To ensure the cohesion and reader-friendliness of this study, it had been structured into seven chapters. In the initial chapter, the research topic is introduced along with its objectives, research questions, statement of the problem, and its significance. The second chapter provides an extensive examination of the existing literature in the field. It combines literature on women empowerment, its domains and levels and approaches followed by the role of organizations in it. It further provides the literature on women empowerment in Pakistani cultural context taking into account the role of organizations and religion. It finally ends with the work done on Iqbal's thought around the concepts

and practices of women empowerment. In the third chapter, an elaborate explanation is provided regarding the methodological processes and procedures utilized in the execution of this study. Each step and choice made in this process is supported by citations and rationalized through established research practices. Moving on to the subsequent chapters, the fourth and fifth chapters encapsulate the emerging themes derived from the primary data. The perspectives of the respondents are systematically presented in a thematic manner, enhancing comprehension of the subject matter. Chapters four and five present the thematic presentation of perceptions and practices respectively from data collected through the ethnographic study of the four organizations of Islamabad working for women empowerment. Chapter six covers the theoretical content analysis done to explore Iqbal's concept of self-development as relevant to women empowerment. Chapter seven brings into debate the discussion of the comparison between Iqbal's philosophy as relevant to women empowerment and the perceptions and practices of respondent organizations. Furthermore, it scrutinizes the gathered data within the context of existing literature. This involves a comparative analysis of the primary data in relation to the secondary data, allowing for the deduction of meaningful inferences. The conclusions drawn from such an analysis are subsequently summarized in the concluding section. In this final section, the study is encapsulated, and I suggest potential areas for future research, particularly from an anthropological perspective.

1.8. Summary

This chapter introduced the research topic setting the stage for the entire study. It underlined significance of women empowerment globally and in Pakistan, and its theoretical basis. The chapter underscored the importance of having a sound philosophical

foundation for any social endeavor, particularly in a culturally sensitive context like Pakistan. It addressed concerns about cultural imperialism and the need to align women empowerment initiatives with indigenous values. It established the significance of incorporating Islamic principles and Allama Iqbal's philosophy of "*Khudi*" into women empowerment efforts. The research gap and rationale were discussed, highlighting the need to integrate an Eastern perspective into the discourse on women empowerment. The chapter also addressed the lack of literature on organizations' perceptions of women empowerment in Pakistan, emphasizing the importance of understanding their viewpoints. The chapter presented the research questions and objectives, focusing on exploring organizations' perceptions and practices regarding women empowerment and analyzing these perceptions in the context of Iqbal's philosophy. Finally, the operationalization of key concepts (woman, women empowerment, organization, and self-development) was provided for clarity, followed by an overview of the thesis structure. Overall, Chapter 1 laid a strong foundation for the research, framing the context, rationale, and objectives of the study while highlighting its significance in the domain of women empowerment in Pakistan.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

The empowerment of women stands as one of the defining social justice challenges of our era. As societies around the world evolve, the quest for gender equality and the uplifting of women's status continues to gain momentum. Within this transformative narrative, the role of organizations dedicated to women empowerment has emerged as a crucial driver of change, offering structured pathways towards gender parity and the realization of women's rights. The previous chapter introduced this research through its rationale, objectives and research questions along with operationalization of main concepts relating to women empowerment. This chapter highlights, through the existing literature pertaining to women empowerment, pivotal role played by organizations in this endeavor, and the various theoretical approaches that underpin our understanding of this multifaceted phenomenon. The concept of women empowerment is inherently complex, encompassing a spectrum of economic, social, political, and personal dimensions. Scholars and practitioners alike have strived to define and operationalize this intricate construct. As I delve into the literature, I will explore the diverse conceptualizations of women empowerment and several indicators used globally to assess its progress. This exploration is essential to provide a solid foundation for our subsequent analysis of organizations' contributions to this cause.

Organizations working for women empowerment, whether through governmental or non-governmental platforms, play an important role in women empowerment. Understanding the roles, challenges, and effectiveness of these organizations is integral to

our comprehension of women empowerment efforts. The literature review will illuminate the various strategies and interventions employed by such organizations and assess their impact on the lives of women. Theoretical approaches form the underpinning framework of any research endeavor, providing the lenses through which researchers interpret and contextualize their findings. In this chapter, I will navigate through diverse theoretical perspectives that have been employed to analyze women empowerment. From capabilities approaches that focus on individual agency and opportunities to postcolonial theories that critique the western universalization of empowerment and emphasize indigenous cultural approaches, this chapter unpacks these theoretical lenses to shed light on the nuanced dynamics of women empowerment. The landscape of women empowerment is continuously evolving, influenced by cultural, political, economic, and technological shifts. The literature review presented in this chapter serves as the cornerstone for our exploration of women empowerment in the specific context of organizations in the subsequent chapters. It will provide the necessary background, theoretical grounding, and empirical insights to inform this analysis and contribute to the broader discourse on this vital subject.

2.2. Women empowerment

Women empowerment and gender equality have become significant element in the development scenario. They constitute a significant component of both the Millennium Development Goals (MDG3) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG5), serving as a crucial developmental target (Shah, 2020; *Sustainable Development Goals / United Nations Development Programme*, n.d.). Empowering women is considered a precursor to achieving gender equality. It not only represents a fundamental human right

but also carries favorable consequences for sustainable economic development. Empowerment of women relates to wellbeing of population as a whole owing to women's comprehensively pivotal role in family and society. Whereas gender equality is easier to understand, the concept of women empowerment is broad, multidimensional and context dependent. It has been associated with a wide range of definitions, its associated terminologies vary, and its measurement methods are not well established.

The term empowerment refers to the provisions to make free choices for themselves to those who previously did not have the right to do so (Asaolu et al., 2018) whereas gender equality stands for the provision of equal rights, opportunities and access to men and women in socio-political and economic domains and equal political and economic representation for decision making. Certain scholars characterize empowerment as the process towards individuals attaining increased command over their own existence. Another perspective on empowerment revolves around it being a personal evolution that encompasses elements like heightening awareness, self-sufficiency, and achieving fulfillment. It can also denote the means by which both individuals and collectives acquire the authority to access resources and govern the conditions of their livelihood. In its most comprehensive interpretation, empowerment signifies the capacity for personal influence over choices made in every facet of life. The empowerment process is fundamentally participatory, involving individuals in decisions regarding their welfare, potential, contentment, and mastery over the various aspects of their lives. The majority of research findings suggest that empowerment involves inner transformations and changes in women's perceptions, enabling them to recognize their needs and view themselves as capable and entitled to make choices. Key concepts such as option, choice,

control, and power are consistently linked with empowerment and widely discussed in literature (Kabeer, 2019). Women empowerment includes two elements that converge the vast researches on the topic, i.e. it is a process and it includes human agency which means that women's own role is at its center. This points out that empowerment is not just progress in gender equality indicators, they must include women as an agency. Methodical issues associated arise in the selection of indicators for empowerment such as intrinsic versus instrumental factors, contextual versus universal factors, individual versus collective factors, qualitative versus quantitative factors, the ambiguity in inclusion of psychological determinants, its unit of analysis and causality (Sharaunga et al., 2019).

2.3. Dimensions and Levels of Women's Empowerment: A Framework

Various frameworks exist to conceptualize empowerment, such as Kabeer (2005, 2019) presented three dimensions of empowerment; agency, resources and achievements. Here the agency refers to the ability to exercise one's decision freely regardless of the power dynamics; resources are the channels through which agency exhibits itself and the achievements are the outcomes thus obtained by the agency such as economic freedom and sociopolitical representation. Another model by Ewerling et al. (2017) uses an additional dimension of institutional structures in addition to agency and resources. In this context, "agency" pertains to decision-making, collective agency, and leadership. "Resources" encompass aspects like the integrity of women's bodies, their critical consciousness, and their assets. Meanwhile, "institutional structures" relate to the formal laws, policies, and societal norms that influence women's capacity to exercise control over these resources. Differing from the entrepreneurial perspective of empowerment, Rowlands (1998) offers an alternative definition, characterizing empowerment as a

progression in which individuals, organizations, or groups devoid of power experience a transformation encompassing the following aspects: (a) developing an awareness of the prevailing power dynamics within their life circumstances, (b) acquiring the requisite skills and capabilities to achieve a reasonable degree of autonomy over their lives, (c) responsibly wielding this newfound control while respecting the rights of others, and (d) actively promoting the empowerment of fellow community members.

The notion of women empowerment is multifaceted, encompassing diverse domains and levels. In recent years, scholars and practitioners have extensively explored these dimensions to advance gender equality and societal progress. Within the economic domain, there is a growing emphasis on women's financial inclusion, labor force participation, and entrepreneurship, all of which are central to achieving economic empowerment (Kabeer, 2019). Social empowerment, on the other hand, revolves around access of women to education and healthcare, along with their active involvement in social and community activities (Sen, 2009). Furthermore, political empowerment has garnered significant attention, as research underscores the significance of women's engagement in political participation and their representation in decision-making institutions. Legal empowerment is closely linked to women's access to justice, property rights, and protection against gender-based violence (Kabeer, 2005). Additionally, psychological empowerment is gaining recognition for its role in enhancing women's self-confidence and self-esteem, underlining the significance of personal agency and self-worth in the empowerment process. These domains operate across various levels, including the individual, interpersonal, community, institutional, and societal levels, reflecting the complex and interconnected nature of women empowerment within diverse

cultural and socio-economic contexts.

2.4. Organizational Perceptions of Women Empowerment

The largest and most familiar intergovernmental organization, the United Nations established its entity for gender equality and women empowerment in 2010 through merger of its four parts that previously worked for women development, gender equality and related research and training (UN Women, 2021). The UN Women thus established works to support inter-governmental bodies and member states worldwide to formulate favorable policies, global standards and gender norms. They provide financial and technical support to states in implementing such policies and actively participate with civil society for these endeavors.

According to World Bank, there has been evidence of significant improvements in women empowerment globally, yet there are no universal standardized methods of measuring it hence it is complicated to compare the progress of states and individuals in this domain (Asaolu et al., 2018). Currently, there are several indices developed and used by different UN agencies to measure empowerment globally and country-wise indicators to resolve this issue. There have been different indices to measure and gauge women empowerment. In 1995, the Gender-Related Development Index (GDI) made its debut in the Human Development Report. Similar to HDI, it measured economic, health and education levels of population yet, centered on gender only, through comparative per capita income, life expectancy and percentage of literate and in-school levels of population respectively. Same year, Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) was also introduced in Human Development Report to measure gender equality through comparative participation of women in the improvement process. In contrast to GDI, it measured the

comparative levels of economic participation through per capita income and percentage in technical and professional jobs, and political participation of women through percentage of administrative jobs and seats in national parliament held by women. In 2010, UNDP introduced Gender Inequality Index (GII) in Human Development Report as a composite measure of loss of a country's achievement due to gender disparity in three dimensions: labour market participation, empowerment and reproductive health; it did not include income level. Gender Parity Index (GPI) was introduced by UNESCO, initially meant for gender parity in education, and is now generally taken for any indicator of parity by taking ratio of female to male representation in the particular indicator. There are other indicators, as indicated by Pereznieto & Marcus (2015), covering different dimensions such as the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) measures the role of formal and informal social institutions in affecting the lives of women in different countries and the Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI) indicates the gender gaps in access to resources of basic rights- health, education, political empowerment and economic participation. There are other indices specific to African continent such as the Africa Gender Equality Index (AGEI) and the African Gender Development Index (AGDI). These indicators have utility in keeping track of general progress of women empowerment in a country, yet individual-level progress and issues faced are not addressed by these (Ewerling et al., 2017; Pereznieto & Marcus, 2015).

To gauge individual-level differences, several studies have utilized different methods that usually include quantitative methods such as surveys through questionnaires (Asad et al., 2020; Sharaunga et al., 2019). A major portion of studies focused on health-related empowerment that includes use of contraceptives, nutritional intake, antenatal care

etc. (Pereznieto & Marcus, 2015). Meanwhile, researchers like (Ewerling et al., 2017) introduced the Survey-Based Women's Empowerment (SWPER) Index, designed to evaluate three dimensions of women empowerment: their attitudes towards violence, social independence, and decision-making. The literature has emphasized the multifaceted and context-dependent nature of women empowerment by identifying various metrics, including autonomy, the ability to take action, self-determination, and self-confidence. Thus, literature (Asaolu et al., 2018; Ewerling et al., 2017) points the empowerment, rather than just a phenomenon, as a process of change requiring awareness at individual and collective levels in the context of society and culture.

According to McCarthy (2017), while economic empowerment, encompassing aspects such as wealth accumulation and financial control, certainly constitutes a facet of empowerment and is reflected in economic resources like equal pay, it should not be misconstrued as a comprehensive measure of empowerment as a whole. Evaluating women empowerment presents challenges, as numerous indicators tend to excessively rely on economic metrics or the mere representation of women across various roles and occupations. This issue parallels concerns raised in assessments of organizational diversity. To illustrate, consider a recent report ostensibly examining how women can thrive in workplace environments, which ultimately assesses women's presence in various top management positions. Concentrating solely on headcounts of women represents just a rudimentary aspect of assessing gender dynamics within organizations and does little justice to the broader and more holistic concept of empowerment (Kabeer, 2019).

2.5. Role of Organizations

Organizations, whether governmental or non-governmental, play a pivotal role in

shaping the landscape of women empowerment initiatives. They serve as conduits for policy implementation, capacity building, advocacy, and service delivery. Neoliberalism as an ideology is grounded in the notion that human well-being is best served by the withdrawal of the state from welfare-oriented policies. Expanding on this economic definition, Ong (2006) characterizes neoliberalism as a mode of governance in which "governing relies on calculative choices and techniques in the domain of citizenship and of governing" (p. 4). It compels citizens to align their actions with the principles of the market, such as discipline, efficiency, and competitiveness (Ong, 2006). Neoliberalism involves imposing specific rules that shape and regulate behavior on targeted populations. In many postcolonial countries with weak sovereign governments, the traditional concept of citizenship tied to a nation-state guaranteeing certain rights is often absent. Instead, we observe the emergence of postcolonial governance authorized by non-state actors like NGOs, which require their constituents to adhere to the values of discipline, efficiency, and competitiveness. When referring to postcolonial governance, I'm alluding to the subjection of targeted populations by non-state entities, such as NGOs, to new mechanisms rooted in market-oriented discipline. It also encompasses governance by NGOs that have adopted characteristics akin to those of a state, a concept Ong calls "graduated sovereignties." These NGOs engage in implementing social engineering programs, including population control, HIV/AIDS management, primary education, voter education, and more, which were once within the purview of the state (Karim, 2008). It is conceivable that NGOs are transforming rural individuals into fresh participants in a democratization process that is propelled by market forces. Nevertheless, what remains to be fully understood is the precise nature and manner in which this transformation occurs. As Ong aptly highlighted,

"Neoliberalism can also be conceived as a novel connection between governance and knowledge, wherein governing processes are reconceived as non-political and non-ideological challenges necessitating technical resolutions." (Ong, 2006, p. 3). There have been corporate organizations working for empowerment while collaborating with UN (e.g. Nike's *Girl Effect*) and other NGOs (e.g. Coca-Cola's *5by20*) to unleash women potential of entrepreneurship for the prosperity of their families and communities through sustainable businesses (McCarthy, 2017). However, corporate-driven initiatives for women empowerment, notably exemplified by Nike's *Girl Effect* advertisements, have faced substantial criticism for portraying women and girls as mere workers in colonial enterprises, detached from historical and political contexts and redefined as individual entrepreneurial figures (McCarthy, 2017). This neoliberal narrative conveniently disregards the enduring structural and institutional barriers that contribute to women's ongoing economic, social, and political inequalities. Over the past four decades, as highlighted by McCarthy (2017), a substantial body of research has exposed how women have been treated as expendable resources for businesses, sustaining industries by creating an illusion of personal economic choice while addressing the economic needs of women and girls. Corporate Social Responsibility programs for women empowerment typically concentrate on individual women as entrepreneurs, emphasizing economic empowerment and the accumulation of wealth as the primary goal. These programs often involve interventions led by NGOs or companies, providing training or microfinance opportunities. Consequently, power is seen as something that can be bestowed upon individuals, and women empowerment is depicted as the extraction of their inherent 'power within,' closely linked to their identity as women, by external entities such as businesses or NGOs

(McCarthy, 2017).

2.5.1. Government Organizations

Government organizations play a crucial role in promoting women empowerment both globally and in Pakistan. They are responsible for formulating policies, implementing programs, and providing support to advance gender equality and women's rights. Despite efforts to improve access to education and healthcare, women in certain regions or marginalized communities may still face barriers to accessing quality education and healthcare services. Despite having progressive policies, governments may fail to effectively implement and enforce measures that promote women empowerment. Lack of resources, political will, or capacity can result in policy implementation gaps, leading to limited improvements in the lives of women.

2.5.2. Women NGOs

Since government bodies alone cannot achieve women empowerment and capability development, private entities and voluntary organizations, including NGOs, play a crucial role. Based on her 18-month-long research on Bangladesh's Grameen bank and three notable NGOs, Lamia Karim (2008) saw the emergence of NGOs as shadow states in postcolonial nation-states which due to lack of economic sovereignty heavily rely upon western aid. Because of this weakness in economy, their populations are exploited for corporate and political gains by International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank and other developed western nations. This is further exacerbated by the entrance of NGOs economically linked to western capital that provides the population with needed services, in the absence of social movements, become "*the progressive voice*" (p. 8) and affect their behaviours through the modernist discourse of women empowerment through micro-

credit. Later in her book, Karim (2011) cautions against oversimplified positive impacts of women empowerment through microfinance NGOs. In her article on Bangladesh garment factory tragedy, Karim (2014) highlights that while feminist groups have been vocal about women's rights and gender oppression, their "NGO-ization" and dependency on Western donors have led to a focus on issues that align with donor agendas (Karim, 2014). This has sometimes resulted in a disconnect from working-class women facing exploitative working conditions. While the trade union workers show agency for standing up for their rights, she questions the potential for an alliance between working class women and urban feminists due to the disconnect in their approaches and priorities.

2.6. Cultural Context of Pakistan

Pakistan is a society that presents an intermingling of capitalist, feudal and tribal social systems on one hand and premodern, modern and new arrivals of postmodern trends. The patriarchal norms in Pakistan influenced women's roles keeping them confined mostly to household and unpaid labor in agriculture and other activities (Agboatwalla, 2000; Akbar, 2010). With approximately 49.5% of the population in Pakistan being female (*Population, Female (% of Total Population) - Pakistan | Data*, 2023), nearly half of the total populace is comprised of women. This demographic fact underscores the significant role that women play in the country's progress and development. Ensuring their access to healthcare facilities is crucial. The maternal mortality ratio (number of maternal deaths per 100,000 live births) is 140 (*Data Warehouse*, n.d.). Statistics from UN Women (*Country Fact Sheet | UN Women Data Hub*, n.d.) show that the birth rate per 1000 women in adolescents was 54 in 2017 compared to 46 in 2016, and 20.2% of seats were held by women in parliament in 2021.

Data gaps are present in areas relating to gender and poverty, harassment, access to assets and that relating to gender and environment that also contribute to analyze the situation of women in ground. Poor analysis can take us towards poor policy making which is not addressing to the required needs of women empowerment. The literacy rate of women is 46.5% compared to men's 59.1%. Women usually have to deal with low literacy rates and low socioeconomic status (Jabeen et al., 2020). Many suffer from health issues and malnutrition, others with physical and sexual violence (Ahmed et al., 2021). To raise awareness and take practical measures for healthcare of women, especially mothers; a number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been working through community-based programs (Bilal et al., 2022). Since health infrastructure and accessibility is insufficient to provide for the basic necessities of population as a whole, improvement of health care system as a whole is the need of hour. The utilization of shame as a tool for social control, particularly targeting impoverished individuals, especially women, has a deep-rooted history in rural Bangladesh. Traditionally, women have held the responsibility for safeguarding family honor. The practice of shaming men through their female relatives (mothers, wives, daughters) has long been established in this society. In a closely-knit community, one's capacity to uphold honor, which involves preserving one's reputation, safeguarding the dignity of female family members, and protecting the patrilineal lineage, significantly shapes one's social acceptance. Losing face represents the utmost disgrace. Rural discussions revolve around the concept of honor, and any behavior considered transgressive (such as a woman conversing with a non-relative man) is framed in terms of upholding the code of honor, emphasizing that "our women do not engage in X because we are people of honor." For impoverished individuals, the

concept of honor represents a symbolic pact with the divine. It serves as a moral foundation through which they perceive themselves as morally superior to wealthier urban counterparts (Karim, 2008).

2.7. Legal and Policy Framework for Women Empowerment in Pakistan

Several NGOs are also working on family planning and contraceptive use with the objective of reducing the burden of repeated pregnancies on mothers (Kamran et al., 2019). Women's education is seen as one of the prerequisites for development as it can lead to reduced fertility, better child health and increased productivity (Agboatwalla, 2000). With the low women's literacy rate, it is generally believed that there is less relative investment in girls in this sector by Pakistani society to develop their potential (Halai & Durrani, 2020). Women's roles are restricted to household activities. A very small part of Pakistan's GNP is for education; hence the condition is futile for the entire population. There have been some initiatives by the government and NGOs at community level for informal education of girls through Voluntary Education Committees (VECs) and Family Education Committees (FECs). Ministry of Human Rights also works for women rights through its National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) (*Ministry of Human Rights*, n.d.). There are a number of laws that have been developed at the federal and provincial levels in Pakistan for empowering women. The Constitution of Pakistan guarantees the right to education for all citizens, regardless of gender. The government has also enacted a number of laws to promote girls' education (*Laws for Women's Rights*, n.d.; *List of Pro Women Laws*, n.d.), such as the Compulsory Primary Education Act (1991) and the National Education Policy (2009). The Employment of Women Act (2010) prohibits discrimination against women in employment. It also sets out a number of measures to

protect women's rights at work, such as the right to equal pay and the right to maternity leave. The Muslim Family Laws Ordinance (1961) gives women equal rights to property ownership. The Women's Property Rights Act (2006) further strengthens these rights by giving women the right to inherit property from their parents and husbands. The Constitution of Pakistan guarantees equal rights for men and women to participate in political life. The Political Parties Order (2002) requires all political parties to reserve 33% of seats for women in their decision-making bodies. The Protection of Women Against Violence Act (2010) criminalizes a range of acts of violence against women, including rape, acid attacks, and domestic violence. The law also provides for the establishment of special courts to deal with cases of violence against women. The government has taken a number of steps to promote gender equality, such as ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and developing a National Action Plan for Women (NAPW).

2.8. Role of religion

Islam, the majority population (96%) religion in Pakistan, ensures equal basic human rights for both men and women; and stresses the self-development and growth of women on the same grounds as men yet the cultural practices not provided women with their basic rights such as rights to freedom, education, decision making, property and are subjected to violence and sometimes to the extent of snatching the right to life in the name of honor killing (Naseer, 2019). The feminists' endeavors and NGOs receive significant backlash from society on allegations of being agents of west and Jews, and their goals as being un-Islamic and a threat to indigenous culture (Jamal & Baldwin, 2019).

2.9. Theoretical Approaches

2.9.1. Reevaluating Women's Empowerment Through the Lens of Agency

Since 1980s, neoliberal ideas of self-making have emerged on the ideoscape of development and empowerment. These ideas focus mainly on individual agency and self-reliance and have influenced the policies and practices in the development arena. Yet it has been criticized for potential marketization of social services resulting in decreased state provision of social services to vulnerable populations including women and children (Walters & Tazzioli, 2023). Current research takes Linda Alcoff perspective as critique to certain prevalent empowerment approaches. Alcoff (1988) observes that cultural feminists aim to revalidate and celebrate traditionally undervalued female attributes but may inadvertently perpetuate restrictive gender norms. Poststructuralist feminists, she further says, reject the possibility of defining women altogether and focus on the deconstruction of gender categories. Much as Alcoff, I also found both positions inadequate and proposed exploring women's experiences of subjectivity without reducing or undermining the significance of gender. For Alcoff (Yip, 2021), women's identity and empowerment are interconnected through the recognition of diverse subjectivities, the rejection of essentialism, and the promotion of agency and inclusivity. Women empowerment is about challenging dominant norms and structures that constrain women's identities, allowing them to define themselves on their terms and participate fully in social, political, and cultural spheres. Sehlkoglu (2018) argues that women agency is no longer viewed as an inherent quality within individuals but is understood as emerging from the interplay between individuals and the broader social structures influencing them. Patriarchal ideologies serve as one of these influential mechanisms, taking various forms.

She recommends, that the focus in ethnographic research should remain adaptable to capture the dynamic nature of agency, which may not always directly resist patriarchal ideologies but can find alternative means of escaping from their influence. Hence this study aims to focus the women empowerment from the dimension of agency.

2.9.2. Evolution of Women Empowerment Approaches in Development Policies

Several theories and approaches have emerged over the years to address the imperative of women empowerment and gender equality within mainstream development policies. Awuku and Ampah (2022) observe that one of the early approaches in the 1960s was the Women and Development (WAD) perspective, influenced by modernization and liberal feminism. Conversely, in the 1970s, the Women in Development (WID) and the more recent Gender and Development (GAD) movements gained prominence, emphasizing women's rights and inclusion. The WID approach aimed to increase development aid directed toward women but faced criticism for not addressing the root causes of discrimination and gender inequalities (Kabeer, 2019). Similarly, the WAD approach sought equitable participation of women in various facets of society but was criticized for not conducting in-depth analyses of patriarchal societies, oppression, and modes of production (Whitelaw, 2022). In contrast, the GAD approach takes a more comprehensive approach, focusing on gender and addressing socially prescribed roles that limit women in various aspects (Awuku & Ampah, 2022; Kabeer, 2005). One such approach that developed under GAD was Amartya Sen's capability approach (1985). This research took on the development of agency and capabilities in women for their development through organizations' role.

2.9.3. Amartya Sen's Capability Approach

Amartya Sen's (1985, 2009) Capability Approach (CA) is one of the mainstream theories advocating for women empowerment that includes the agency aspect along with the organizational facilitations for it. The CA provides a unique perspective on human well-being and development, challenging traditional welfare economics and utility-based notions of well-being. It emphasizes human functioning, capabilities, and the intrinsic value of freedom and choice (MacKenzie et al., 2022). Sen argues that traditional measures such as income and commodities do not adequately capture the complexity of human well-being. In Sen's framework, "functioning" represents what individuals can do or be in their lives. "Capability" refers to an individual's ability to achieve a specific functioning, recognizing that personal circumstances may affect this ability. The "capability set" reflects the range of attainable functioning combinations available to a person, indicating their real opportunities and freedom to choose different paths. Sen underscores that endeavors aimed at enhancing women's capabilities should encompass not only equipping them with the aptitude to attain proficiency but also granting them the liberty and opportunity to exercise it. This entails empowering women through education, skill development, employment opportunities, financial independence, and active involvement in decision-making procedures (Sen, 2009). CA emphasizes that policies and development efforts should focus on enhancing people's capabilities rather than just providing material resources. It assesses policies based on their impact on individuals' capabilities, which encompass various aspects, including financial resources, political participation, social practices, and cultural norms (Kimhur, 2020). This approach offers a comprehensive perspective on human well-being for organizations working for women

empowerment, by integrating economic, social, political, and cultural dimensions. Sen's CA is adaptable and flexible, allowing for diverse applications. It has been praised for its focus on agency, participation, addressing group disparities, and accommodating different values and aspirations (MacKenzie et al., 2022). In this research, I focused on agency keeping in view the capability approach while also focusing on how organizational approaches to women empowerment are affected by western discourses and approaches in Pakistan. It also explored the need for development of indigenous theorizations in this domain in Pakistan.

2.9.4. Reframing Women Empowerment Discourse: Post-Colonial Perspectives, Ethical Agency, and Indigenous Insights

From the vantage point of highlighting the significance of indigenous theories and the influence of Western discourses, scholars in post-colonial feminism, such as Mohanty Chandra (2003, 1991) made substantial contributions by actively questioning and deconstructing narratives that are rooted in colonialism and Western perspectives. It also paved the way for a more nuanced, contextually sensitive, and ethical feminist discourse that seeks to dismantle oppressive structures and devise an inclusive feminist approach that reflects the agency of women from different cultural contexts. Mahmood's (2006) groundbreaking research delved into the agency of Muslim women, acknowledging their profound self-cultivation and the feminist agency embedded in devout Muslim women. In her analysis, she explored the Islamic concept of "*al-haya*," signifying shyness and modesty, as a virtue that demanded continuous, deliberate investment in a specific ethical self-development. Mahmood contended that the failure to recognize such agency in prior studies on Muslim women stemmed from a particular (liberal) interpretation of agency,

which could only acknowledge agency when met with resistance. Her work offered a deep understanding of the agency of pious Muslim women. Her research, particularly her examination of the "liberal subject," gained recognition in the field of anthropology. Mahmood's examination of human agency extends beyond conventional notions of resistance, power, and domination, wherein agency is typically regarded as the ability to act within particular contexts of subordination (Sehlikoglu, 2018). Challenging the traditional boundaries of feminist thought and broadening the understanding of agency in religious contexts, her work prompted a post-secular shift in feminist thinking about agency, forcing theorists to consider the complexities of piety and contributing to post-colonial feminist theory. Sehlikoglu (2018) notes that starting in the 2000s, there has been a shift in the perception of Muslim women's subjectivity, with an increasing emphasis on their role as agents involved in ethical self-formation. This agency does not necessarily align with liberal expectations. There have been other researchers as well who brought forward the subjectivity of Muslim women such as Edward Said and Joseph Massad.

Following Edward Said's criticism of western misrepresentation of the orient while taking themselves as cultural standards to be emulated, Joseph Massad in his book "*Islam in Liberalism*" (Massad, 2016) offers a critical perspective on Western liberal discourse and feminism, contending that it is marred by hypocrisy and condescending attitudes. He scrutinizes its efforts, often in conjunction with neo-liberalism, to impose Western experiences as universal. Massad contends that when development agencies and human rights organizations employ the rhetoric of 'global sisterhood' and emphasize shared experiences of violence against women across different cultures, they are essentially promoting Western liberal conceptions of rights as universally applicable

standards. He also points out how, at times, women's rights activists, scholars, and writers in Muslim and Arab contexts unintentionally perpetuate an orientalist narrative that portrays 'backward Muslim women' as trapped within enduring patriarchal religious traditions. This narrative suggests that these women can only be 'rescued' through Western liberal rights and reforms. Massad astutely observes that such political rhetoric often leaves little room for critiquing the instances of sexism and gender discrimination that can occur under the banners of secularism and liberalism. Other researchers have broadened this perspective to global south and third-world women.

Mohanty Chandra questions the methods and criteria for charting third-world women self and agency (Mohanty et al., 1991). In her attempts at decolonizing feminism, she challenges the assumptions and biases of western feminism against the women of Global South. The tendency to homogenize the experiences of third-world women having diverse social, economic and cultural backgrounds and their consequent portrayals as passive victims of oppression and patriarchy perpetuates the patronizing and colonialist perspective. This eventually leads to the formulation of policies and interventions that do not align with these women's needs and aspirations and reinforce power dynamics of dominance and subordination, perpetuating a Western-centric perspective. Mohanty (2003) calls for a more ethical and responsible approach to feminist scholarship that centers on the voices and experiences of Third World women themselves. She argues for collaborative and empowering feminist politics that respects the agency and self-representation of women in the Global South. Badri (2018) emphasizes that western interventions are based on their assumptions of human nature that do not align with that of Islam hence there is a need for muslims to devise their own theories that align with

their religious and cultural context. For him, women empowerment is not just economic and political one, but it should also include their social and spiritual empowerment whereby they exercise their full potential in all areas of life. Along with provision of equal rights and opportunities, they should be facilitated in developing their intellect, social and emotional wellbeing (Badri, 2005). Hence taking background from the mentioned perspectives, this research included the indigenous perspective of Allama Iqbal, a muslim reformist philosopher, to the perspective of women empowerment in Pakistan.

2.10. Iqbal's Philosophy: Women Empowerment through Self-Empowerment

Allama Muhammad Iqbal is regarded as the ideological father and “architect” of Pakistan (Shafi, 2018), owing to his presentation and efforts for the idea of a separate Muslim state for Muslims of India. He is revered as the national poet in Pakistan and is virtually accepted by most segments such as the various religious sects and liberal groups in the society (Razak, 2014; Satti et al., 2021). The main topic of his philosophy is the development of self and through it, the development of a nation which, according to him, he idealized from Islamic teachings - mainly Quran (Elahi, 2021; Iqbal, 1923). He is a progressive poet; hence his philosophy relates to the contemporary temporal conditions of society (Popp, 2019).

Iqbal looks at human nature and personality through his philosophy of *Khudi* or Self. Iqbal places humans at the center stage of this creation and wants to bring them to the actual status as the Subordinate (*Naib*) of the Creator. In this position, he sees humans with potential only next to the Creator Himself. His philosophy has a major thrust on the concept of self-development through self-realization, where each individual has to realize

its potential both conceptually as well as practically as he believes that we have been most appropriately designed to play our defined roles. Since Iqbal's focus is not just on the individual but the community at large, he tries to locate both men and women at the positions as ordained by the Creator Himself to be fully effective as His vicegerent. Iqbal believes each gender has been fully equipped by the Creator to play their role for the civilization to be at the position which has been ordained by the Creator, and historically demonstrated by the Muslim civilization. For Iqbal individuals collectively make a community and each individual plays a vital part in the development of an effective community.

Taking women as equal individuals with vital roles in community, Iqbal observes that both the East and the West have failed to recognize the role and significance of women in the universe design. In both societies, she has to face the same crisis- the crisis of identity (Tahir, 2019). He identified the flaws in the feminist movements of his times and likened them to serving the interests of capitalists by exploiting women. He stood for equal rights of men and women but could see the differences in their roles in society and highlighted the dilemma created as a result of deviance of society from these roles (Ashraf, 2011). He opined that the western women emancipatory movements that were result of capitalistic ideals of individualism were generating an unhealthy competition that would very likely fail along with causing incalculable harm and social problems. He envisaged women as having the role of nation builders and hence stressed the self-development of women, for it's their cradle where any nation or community's future is designed (Iqbal, 1923). As such, women's role is pivotal in society and so is her self-development. The women, just as men, can be emancipated and empowered through development of their

individuality and self. The literature indicated the research work on Iqbal's philosophy's comparison with that of west and feminist movements, yet there was a significant lack of literature on relevance of Iqbal's model of *Khudi* (self) to women empowerment.

Iqbal's philosophy is considered to be derived from Quran. He is among the very few Islamic scholars who have defined the role of human beings in society/community exhaustively (Satti et al., 2021). In doing so he has clearly elaborated the role of human male and female in this life according to his understanding of Quran (Ashraf, 2011). He holds women equally responsible for playing their creative role. Iqbal's comparison of west and Islam gives us direction in which we can clearly define a woman's important role in development of Islamic nation and civilization. Since Iqbal holds each person independently responsible for their conduct on day of judgement, women enjoy equal rights and responsibility in playing their nominated individual creative role. Iqbal clearly defines the boundaries for both men and women but this in no way degrades the women's status rather it clearly elaborates on the responsibilities of women in bringing up/mentoring generations (Tahir, 2019).

Iqbal presented his philosophy of *Khudi* and development of self through his Urdu and Persian poetry. In Urdu poetry it is presented in a mosaic fashion in different poems while in Persian it is fairly organized into his two anthologies- *Asrar e Khudi* (The Secrets of Self) and *Ramooz e Bekhudi* (The Secrets of Selflessness) and his speeches and writings. In the former, he describes the stages of self-development from a Quranic perspective. In the latter anthology, he then describes how a nation is developed by the voluntary submission of one's Self for the higher objectives of a nation's/community development (Khan, 2022). Here he has highlighted the pivotal role a woman has in

nation's/community development. His philosophy hence moves from individualism to individuality that leading to better community development and role of women in directing a culture's objectives.

The literature is rich in researches on women empowerment strategies (Akbar, 2010), measurement techniques (Richardson, 2018) and perceptions of people about organizations working for women empowerment (Aghazamani et al., 2020; Jamal & Baldwin, 2019), their challenges (Akbar, 2010) yet how the managers and administrators of organizations working for women empowerment perceive the concept of women empowerment, especially in cultural context of Pakistan, that claims to be based on Islamic ideology, has rarely been explored. Most researches have focused on comparison of Iqbal's thoughts about women with those of prevalent feminist paradigms (e.g. Ashraf, 2011; Tahir, 2019). How do the organizations working for women empowerment perceive and subsequently practice achieving the SDGs and/or MDGs developed by UNDP, also how Iqbal's philosophy of self-development guides in women empowerment has not been explored qualitatively through analysis of his writings. This research analysed through interviews and observations the perceptions and practices of managers and administrators of organizations working for women empowerment and compares it to the Iqbal's philosophy of *Khudi*.

In essence, Iqbal's contributions go beyond being a mere critic; he emerges as a transformative thinker and a guiding light, urging the ummah to take charge of their destiny and strive towards the renaissance of the Ummah as a harmonious, prosperous, and enlightened community (Ali 2017). From what has been construed above it is but logical to conclude that for Muslim nations it is imperative to revert back to the Qur'anic teachings

regarding gender roles in order to primarily be successful on the day of judgment and generally to attain back our position in this God created universe. Iqbal focuses on the renaissance of Muslim ummah through Qur'anic teachings and has very wide acceptability at all strata of Muslim society and has its implication in the development of an effective community. In conclusion, it can be said that Iqbal is one of the intellectuals whose philosophy of human development through self-realization is most appropriate for indigenous solutions to important issues like women empowerment.

2.11. Summary

This chapter undertook a comprehensive exploration of the multifaceted landscape of women empowerment through literature review, with a particular focus on the role of organizations in advancing this critical social agenda. It also delved into the theoretical underpinnings of women empowerment, incorporating the capability approach, insights from postcolonial theorists, and Allama Iqbal's concept of *Khudi* to enrich the understanding of this complex and context-specific phenomenon. Women empowerment, as a global concern, transcends geographical boundaries and socio-cultural contexts. It is deeply intertwined with the prevailing gender norms and cultural conventions that shape the lives of women in diverse societies. Despite the concerted efforts of numerous organizations worldwide, there remains a pressing need for a more cohesive and culturally grounded framework to guide women empowerment initiatives.

The capability approach, championed by Amartya Sen has emerged as a powerful theoretical lens through which to understand and evaluate women empowerment. This approach highlights the importance of enhancing women's capabilities and freedoms, enabling them to make meaningful choices and lead lives in accordance with their own

values and aspirations. By shifting the focus from mere access to resources to the actual realization of well-being and agency, the capability approach offers a nuanced perspective on women's empowerment that goes beyond economic and material considerations. Incorporating insights from postcolonial theorists into the discourse on women's empowerment is vital for recognizing the complex interplay of power dynamics, and colonial legacies. Postcolonial perspectives shed light on how historical injustices and inequalities continue to shape the lives of women in former colonial contexts and inform contemporary empowerment efforts. Allama Iqbal's concept of *Khudi*, deeply rooted in Islamic philosophy, offers a culturally resonant framework for understanding women's empowerment in regions like Pakistan, where Islam plays a central role in society. Iqbal's philosophy emphasizes the development of individual selfhood and agency, aligning with the broader goals of empowerment.

The next chapter will describe in detail the research design and methodology adopted for this research. It also contains details about the data collection methods and analysis of research data gathered through different sources.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

The previous chapters served as an introduction, providing the study's rationale, and included a review of relevant literature. Methodology constitutes the foundational framework of any research endeavor, directing the processes of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. This chapter is dedicated to elucidating the specifics of research methodology. It does so by detailing the research design, outlining strategies for data collection and analysis, and meticulously describing the data collection procedures. This attention to detail is essential to ensure that the research adheres to proper protocols, thereby guaranteeing the study's validity and reliability. The chapter is structured with headings that initially expound on the research design, followed by a profile of the research locale, an explanation of the sampling procedures and data collection methods and tools, a brief overview of participant organizations, and an examination of fieldwork-related considerations. Additionally, the chapter addresses the study's limitations, ethical considerations, and concludes by outlining the data analysis methods.

3.2. Formulation of Research Topic

I switched my field from Psychology to Anthropology due to my interest in the study of social domain of human beings and gained in-depth knowledge on the domain of women empowerment in MS courses and classroom discussions. I realized the confusion of the West on this issue due to their secular drift and not appreciating God pronounced role for the two genders. Since being Muslims, we firmly believe that our Creator has not created us purposeless, and only his indicts are the perfect ones which are enunciated in

Qur'an a sunnah. This coupled with the absence of indigenous strong theories on women empowerment created the urge to look into the matter. To my privilege, I am associated with Iqbal Chair and actively involved in research on the practical aspect of Iqbal's philosophy and teachings through arranging conferences, seminars and being managing editor of a research journal on Iqbal created to realizations in me: firstly, the global acceptance of Iqbal as an appropriate source of Islamic teachings for the modern times and, secondly the inclusiveness of Iqbal's Qur'anic guidance. This realization was further reinforced by my association with Dr. Muhammad Abid Ali whose prime focus is on practical implementation of Iqbal's directives. Due to extensive stress from my teachers on the required indigenous approach to anthropological issues and my supervisor's guidance and encouragement, I found the most conducive environment to launch my present research and develop the research question.

3.3. Research Design

This study was qualitative research. Handwerker (2006) opines that qualitative research aims to understand and explain the experiences and interpretations of a given set of people about their social and cultural environments. Such a study involves analysis of data collected from informal and semi-structured observations, interviews and written texts. According to Bryman (2012), research design lays the framework for the data collection and analysis in research, highlighting the priorities of researcher among different dimensions within the research. The role of causal relation between the variables, the scope of generalizability of findings and the understanding of the behaviour in its social context are also central to the research design chosen (Flick, 2022). Contrary to the static research designs definition, Ragin & Amoroso (2019) take a more process and

planning-oriented definition by taking it as a plan for data collection and analysis to answer the research questions of the investigator. For them, it touches all the aspects of research in addition to control of research biases. For Cheek (2008), research design also involves theoretical, methodological and ethical considerations along with some degree of researcher's reflexivity with regard to research focus and process.

The current research was conducted in two phases to answer the research questions: the first one through conduction of an ethnographic study of the organizations working for women empowerment in Pakistan. This was necessary to understand the present paradigm of women empowerment. The second phase was the extraction of themes and recommendations of Iqbal's concept of *Khudi* and development of self from the perspective of women empowerment. I carried out the content analysis of Persian and Urdu poetry from a philosophical and self-empowerment point of view and reflected on his content in the areas of human nature, individuality, and development of personality and their implications on the concept of women empowerment. As Iqbal's poetical philosophical verses are rich with allegories and metaphors, hermeneutics were used to exegetically decipher the actual connotations as expressed by Iqbal.

3.4. Research Locale

The research locale for the study was Islamabad, the federal capital of Pakistan. Situated on eastern fringe of Potohar Plateau, it lies towards northern center of Pakistan, 14 Km miles towards north-east of Rawalpindi. It lies at the northern latitudes 33° 49' and longitudes 72° 24' east of Greenwich. It was developed during 1960s on modern patterns and requirements blended with Islamic architecture. The name Islamabad ("City of Islam," or "City of Peace") was chosen to reflect the country's ideology. Its area is around 906.50

square kilometers at altitudes ranging between 457 to 610 meters. A further 3626 square kilometers area is known as the Specified Area, with the Margalla Hills in the north and northeast as depicted in the information displayed on Capital Development Authority (CDA) website (*Facts & Statistics - Islamabad, n.d.*).

Figure 1.

Location of Islamabad



Note. Source: Website Capital Development Authority (CDA) Government of Pakistan (*Facts & Statistics - Islamabad, n.d.*)

Being federal capital, Islamabad includes the secretariat, President and Prime minister houses, National Assembly, embassies and Atomic Research Institute. Islamabad is organized into distinct sectors catering to various functions such as administration, diplomacy, residential living, industries, and commerce. Additionally, it encompasses a greenbelt, institutional areas, and a national park. The city is partitioned into five key zones: Zone I, Zone II, Zone III, Zone IV, and Zone V. Among these, Zone IV holds the distinction of being the largest in terms of area, while Zone I boasts the most extensively

developed residential region. Within Zone I, residential sectors are designated by alphanumeric characters, each covering approximately 2 km × 2 km of space.

Islamabad presents a unique interpretation of a subtropical climate, characterized by a moderate humidity level of approximately 55%. The city experiences warm and humid summers, marked by a monsoon period, which gives way to mild winters. The annual average precipitation stands at 1143 millimeters.

Islamabad stands out as Pakistan's most diverse urban center, distinguished by its cosmopolitan populace. The city boasts the largest concentration of expatriates and foreigners, drawn by its appealing and moderately temperate climate, verdant landscapes, and robust foundational infrastructure. Moreover, Islamabad serves as a pivotal juncture for travelers on route to the Northern Areas, sought after for trekking, hiking, adventure sports, and mountaineering. As the city evolved into a central hub for business and commerce, it magnetizes a proficient workforce from major cities like Karachi, Lahore, and Quetta.

Notably, Islamabad carries the weight of the nation's diplomatic engagements, housing significant embassies, consulates, and missions, along with the Foreign Office, which collectively underpins the nation's international relationships. Being the federal capital, all the main decisions trickle down from here to the whole country. Every major strike against government is done here. I have been enjoying various unexpected respites during my school, college and current employment days as well due to sudden holidays that occur as a result of strikes, protests, sit-ins etc.

Islamabad is home to a number of universities, including the National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST), the Quaid-i-Azam University, Bahria University and

the International Islamic University. A number of NGOs and INGOs have set up their offices here and the federal government offices involved in planning various social work including those related to women and girls are situated here. This made it a perfect locale for my study on women empowerment perceptions and practices in Pakistan.

3.5. Sampling

Sampling refers to selection of some individuals from a given population for the research to make an estimate about it (Thompson, 2012). According to Bernard (2011), for the in-depth and labour-intensive study of a few cases nonprobability sampling which involves purposive rather than random selection is always appropriate. Cultural data collection needs non-probability while individual attribute data collection requires probability (random) sampling. This research may take fieldwork participant observations for extended periods of time. The informants need to be selected purposely; that is, they should be informed or expert, not just responsive respondents, when collecting cultural data in contrast with data regarding individuals. This is because the required information could be provided by a well-informed or an expert in the desired field of research.

Sampling selection for ethnography was purposive selective sampling. In this sampling, the researcher decides the purpose of the informant and/or communities to serve in the research. Purposive sampling is required for cultural data as it is shared, unlike data regarding individuals. Therefore it requires informed informants willing to share the data that researcher selects based on the objectives of the study (Etikan, 2017).

A total of four ethnographic studies were conducted of organizations working for women empowerment in Islamabad, one was a private organization and others were government organizations.

The selection of organizations for this study was guided by several general criteria. Firstly, the chosen organizations needed to have a minimum of three years of experience in the field of women's empowerment. Secondly, their focus should extend to the broader population of women, as opposed to catering exclusively to specific groups. Thirdly, the organizations selected had to maintain a non-controversial reputation. Lastly, to ensure a comprehensive and diverse perspective on women's empowerment efforts in Pakistan, the selection included both a governmental and a non-governmental organization. These criteria were instrumental in shaping the final choice of organizations for this research.

The selected organizations were well-reputed in Pakistan and had been working for more than two decades. During the course of data collection, a governmental organization working for the empowerment and development of young women and girls was also included with the rationale that their work is foundational in the field of women empowerment. The other two governmental organizations selected are working for women empowerment through planning of policies and legislations in the country at federal level, one organization does the planning for women empowerment while the second implements and is mostly involved in the fieldwork for women empowerment. The Non-governmental organization selected had been working for women empowerment in Pakistan since 1949 with its branches in several cities of Pakistan. While website and correspondence through emails with main headquarters were maintained, their Islamabad branch was selected for study only for it being existing within the research locale.

This purposeful sampling was adopted to cover a wider spectrum of women empowerment efforts in Pakistan's both private and public sector covering the aspects of development of empowerment from basic levels of childhood to adulthood. The

participants' selection for in-depth interviews was also purposive. A total of six participants for in-depth interviews were selected from the organizations. The interviewees were selected from active participants among the heads and administrators of selected organizations. These six respondents were selected from those carrying the vision of their respective organization and actively involved in implementing the organization's ideological agenda of women empowerment. The selection of respondents for the in-depth interviews was a critical aspect of this research. Four key individuals were identified and chosen based on their roles and expertise in the field of women's empowerment. Firstly, the National Commissioner and Deputy Director Training from the Pakistan Girls Guide Association were included as respondents. Secondly, the Deputy Chief of the Gender Unit within the Social Welfare Section of the Ministry of Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives was selected. Thirdly, the Program Officer from Organization X was included in the interviews. Lastly, the Chairperson of the Islamabad office and the Educational & Training Coordinator from APWA were also part of the group of respondents. These individuals were strategically selected to provide diverse insights and perspectives on women's empowerment initiatives in Pakistan.

3.6. Brief profile of Participant Organizations

3.6.1. Pakistan Girl Guides Association

Girl Guiding in Pakistan became functional shortly after independence. Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah the Patron of the Guide movement: an office she held as long as she lived. Begum G.A. Khan was elected as the first Chief Commissioner (now called National Commissioner) of the Association. It has been a Single Unit Full Member of the WAGGGS (World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts) since 1948. Its current

National Commissioner is Ms. Maria Maud. Pakistan Girl Guides Association has the status of a national organization. The Association is protected and incorporated by Ordinance No. XLIV of 1960 by the Government of Pakistan. It is the largest voluntary movement for girls and young women in Pakistan.

3.6.2. Social Welfare Section, Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives (Gender Unit)

The Planning Commission, housing the Gender Unit within its Social Welfare section, functions as a financial and public policy development entity within the Government of Pakistan. This commission operates under the purview of the Ministry of Planning, Development, and Reforms and is primarily responsible for conducting research studies and developing state policies aimed at fostering the growth of the national economy and the expansion of the country's public infrastructure. It closely collaborates with the Ministry of Finance in these endeavors. Since 1952, the commission has played a pivotal role in crafting centralized and comprehensive five-year plans for Pakistan's national economy, a role it has continued for the majority of the 20th century. Additionally, the commission oversees the management of the Public Sector Development Programmes (PSDP).

3.6.3. Government Organization X

It is a statutory body established in early months of 21st century. It was established by the Government of Pakistan as a result of its national and international commitments to gender. It is working to implement the planning done by the Social Welfare Section, Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives (Gender Unit) through legislation, projects and fieldwork although it also does the independent planning itself.

3.6.4. All Pakistan Women's Association (APWA)

It is a Pakistani organization that operates on a voluntary, non-profit, and non-political basis. Its core mission is to advance the moral, social, and economic well-being of women in Pakistan. APWA was established in 1949 by the prominent women's rights advocate Begum Ra'ana Liaquat Ali Khan, who firmly asserted that women's roles are equally significant to those of men. Since its inception, APWA has been exceptionally active and has established branches in 56 districts across Pakistan, including both rural and urban areas. This charitable organization relies on donations to sustain its activities and initiatives.

3.7. Data Collection Methods

Handwerker (2001) considers having clear questions and limiting the study to a few clearly defined variables to be the key to produce quality and short-span ethnographic data. In applied research, which usually requires rapid assessment due to time limitations, using the long-term studies done earlier, to narrow the focus of one's research. Keeping this in view, to answer research questions 1 and 2 of this study, ethnographic research was conducted that included in-depth interviews of the heads and administrators of organizations, participant observations and focus group discussion. In his *Quick Ethnography*, W. P. Handwerker defines ethnography as consisting of "processes and products of research that document what people know, feel and do in a way that situates the phenomenon at specific points in time in the history of individual lives, including pertinent global events and processes" (Handwerker, 2001, p. 7). Pelto (2016) considers applied ethnography as a scientific activity that is made useful by adding as much rigor to the data collection and analysis as permitted by time and resources.

Engaging in concentrated participant observation research in one's native language facilitates the swift exploration of particular cultural inquiries within a limited timeframe (Bernard, 2011). The in-depth interviews with the interviewees had open-ended questions with guided conversations to explore the research questions. The interviews were conducted in mixed English and Urdu languages that were later transcribed directly into English. The interviews with the organizations' managers/administrators were generated to explore their perception of women empowerment, the need for organizational efforts and the difficulties they are facing in this endeavor. This was further reinforced by other methods such as photography, document review, website review and informal interviews for triangulation purposes.

The answer to research question 3 was explored through the second phase of research which involved theoretical analysis. This second phase of research that involved exploring Iqbal's concept of *Khudi* as relevant to women empowerment was basically a critical exploratory library research where both recent as well as historical literature were viewed to find the answer to the research questions. It also included Hermeneutic approach where Quran and Hadith are used for reliable interpretation of the relevant texts. The historical literature was studied for the issues of change of methods as demanded by the change of time and environment, the reason behind the continuity of the old styles existing today, and to some extent contestation among the different groups on the issue of women empowerment and practices were explored and interpreted.

The methodology also included an Argumentative Philosophical approach for discussion and findings, which was based on the exploratory literature review and the findings from ethnographic study of the four organizations working for women

empowerment. These interviews and focus group discussions were based on a general interview guide approach, reinforced with my arguments based on my knowledge developed due to my studies at Bahria University Islamabad. Mostly an inductive method was used to draw conclusions and in the presentation of the findings. Following table summarizes the methodology used in the research.

Table 1.

Research methodology

Sr. No.	Method: Phase I Ethnography	Sources	Pattern
1.	Participant Observation	Four Organizations working for women empowerment in Islamabad	setup, their training workshops, programs, funding methods, technological aspects, currently running programs, skill generation initiatives
2.	In-depth Interview	heads/administrators of organizations	Open-ended questions / Interview Guide
3.	Focus Group Discussion	Organizations' stakeholders and beneficiaries	6 – 7 participants
Sr. No.	Method: Phase II Content Analysis of Iqbal's Philosophy	Sources	Pattern
1.	Iqbal's primary text	Iqbal's Persian and Urdu poetry and prose (speeches, letters, essays and books)	exegetically decipher the actual connotations from Iqbal's poetical philosophical verses
2.	Secondary text	recent as well as historical Research on Iqbal's philosophy	Argumentative Philosophical approach based on exploratory literature review and ethnographic findings

3.8. Data Collection Tools

Following is the detail of data collection tools that were used in this qualitative study presented as per the research phases. The whole intention was to adopt rigor in research for the reliability of findings.

3.8.1. Phase I: Tools of Ethnographic Research

3.8.1.1. Rapport Building

In the context of research, Glesne (1989) defines rapport as a relationship marked by harmony, conformity, and trust. It embodies the subject's confidence in the researcher and their willingness to cooperate. Ethnographers actively establish and maintain rapport to fulfill their research objectives. Rapport-building involves carefully managing one's appearance and behavior to create an atmosphere conducive to obtaining information. Cultural appropriateness is a key consideration in this process. Maintaining continuous awareness of our speech and actions is essential for engendering trust among research participants. In traditional ethnographic research, rapport functions as a mechanism to reduce distance, alleviate anxiety, and build trust, primarily serving the researcher's interests. Trust is the essential component in this endeavor, and its required level may evolve as the research unfolds (Glesne, 1989). Since I was new to all of the sample organizations, I first developed rapport with the organizational members and staff through my frequent visits and telephonic contacts. This helped me develop trust with the respondents of formal and informal interviews. Informed consent was taken for the research through emails and telephonic contacts at the initial stages.

3.8.1.2. Participant Observation

Participant observation is typically conducted through immersive fieldwork and is a

strategic method, according to Bernard (2011), that positions researchers within the midst of dynamic activities to facilitate firsthand data collection. A substantial portion of the data acquired through participant observation adopts a qualitative nature. This encompasses a range of sources, including descriptive field notes capturing sensory observations in natural contexts, photographs offering insights into domestic settings, audio and videos documenting interviews and environment respectively. It involves seamlessly blending in, establishing rapport, and assimilating to the extent that individuals continue their routine activities unaltered in the researcher's presence. Indeed, participant observation transforms researchers into active instruments of both data collection and subsequent analysis, solidifying their integral role in the research process. Bernard (2011) argues that participant observation increases validity as it helps in collecting various kinds of data, reduces reactivity, provides intuitive understanding to derive meaning out of data, asking sensible questions and understanding the research problems that cannot be addressed well by other methods. My research question was about the perception and practices of organizations about women empowerment, hence participant observation provided me with rich, in-depth and reliable relevant data.

For the participant observation, I made frequent visits to the participant organizations from March to July 2023. I also actively participated in certain activities of the organizations such as their meetings, and workshops. For this purpose, I undertook a 6-week internship at the Social Welfare section of Planning Commission and wrote concept paper and an event report with recommendations for them. I observed, interacted with, and tried to experience the organizational culture firsthand to gain a deep understanding of their social behaviors, perceptions, and practices for women empowerment. My frequent

visits and sitting there at their offices with informal conversations helped me observe activities and ordinary way of organizations' working (Bernard, 2011). One such example was the observation of a conflict where the head scolded her subordinates despite my presence. In another organization, the employees were leaving early before their official closing time.

3.8.1.3. Field Notes

Eriksson et al. (2012) observe field notes encompass both descriptive portrayals of the physical environment, individuals, and their activities, as well as dialogues that capture the interactions taking place. They, at least to some extent, bear on the research findings and results due to their involvement in sense-making and interpretation by the researcher. I maintained detailed field notes during my observations. These notes recorded observations, conversations, behaviors, and other relevant information about my visits, participant observations and informal interviews. Field notes helped me in capturing real-time data and providing insights into the context of the research. The field notes had usually been taken down right after and sometimes during the visit. Whenever I was free at the field, I started jotting down the events to ensure I didn't forget the main events. I also noted what my first impressions and feelings had been regarding certain observations.

3.8.1.4. In-depth Interviews

It is a scheduled activity where the questions are open-ended, yet follow a general script covering a range of topics as relevant to the research (Bernard, 2011). The in-depth interview gets the freewheeling of an unstructured interview yet it is accompanied by an interview guide that carries the topics and questions to be covered in a logical order. An interview guide is a requirement for valid and comparable qualitative research data. These

interviews are most common type of research interviews. I conducted in-depth interviews to gather in-depth information from key and specialized informants. My interviewees were the heads and administrators of organizations. Bernard (2011) opines that semi-structured in-depth interviews are best for the elite members of a community as they allow efficient use of time along with allowing both the researcher and interviewee to follow new leads. Semi-structured interview guide and protocol allowed for open-ended exploration of research topics about the perceptions and practices of participant organizations. I developed the interview guide at an earlier stage during my research after repeated reviews from my supervisor. For the questions related to Iqbal's philosophy, I consulted the expert on Iqbal for validity and increased comprehensibility for the interviewees. The interviews duration ranged from half to one hour, and all of them were taken within the offices of respective respondents. From Social Welfare Unit and Organization X, the interviewees were males and from APWA and Pakistan Girl Guides Association, the interviewees were females so the male-to-female ratio of interviewees was 2:4.

3.8.1.5. Informal Interviews

According to Bernard (2011), informal interviews lack the total structure and control on part of researcher, they are method of choice at the initial stages of participant observations as well as used throughout ethnographic research. The researcher has to retrieve them from the memory by jotting down and maintaining field notes at the end of day. I conducted several informal interviews with the visitors, officers and staff members of the participant organizations to get access to rich data and validate the information gained from in-depth interviews. They also meant to establish rapport with the respondents through in-depth interviews.

3.8.1.6. Focus Group Discussions

Bernard (2011) highlights that focus groups serve as a method for gathering qualitative data on a specific topic by engaging participants in open discussions. Focus groups are particularly valuable for understanding the "why" behind people's sentiments, behaviors, and decision-making processes. They excel in revealing nuanced details, contextual insights, and depth of understanding. Two focus group discussions were conducted and moderated by me to bring together members of the organization to discuss the research topic. This focus group discussion could only be conducted for Pakistan Girl Guides Association and APWA as other organizations did not permit to conduct it. This method allowed for the exploration of group dynamics and shared beliefs within the subject organizations. Focus groups produce ethnographically rich data. For Bernard (2011), 6-11 people is the suitable common size of a focus group. For my focus groups, the size was 6 and 7 for Girl Guides and APWA respectively. All the participants of both focus group discussions were females and included the trainees, beneficiaries and one from administration of organization. There was no hierarchy in these focus groups as this is not conducive to openness in discussion (Bernard, 2011).

3.8.1.7. Audio and Video Recordings

I used audio and video recordings to document conversations, interactions, and the overall environment of the organizations. These recordings helped in accurate transcription and analysis of the data.

3.8.1.8. Photography

Visual documentation through photographs was another useful tool in this ethnographic research. Photos captured the notice boards, overall aesthetic development of

the organizations, and visual representations of their practices.

3.8.1.9. Documents and Archives

I accessed the introductory pamphlets, annual reports and official records to complement my fieldwork findings and understand the historical context of the organization's work for women empowerment.

3.8.1.10. Website and Facebook pages

I also observed the websites and Facebook pages of the organizations to view their past activities, vision and mission statements and other relevant details.

3.8.2. Phase II: Tools for Analysis of Iqbal's Philosophy

3.8.2.1. Iqbal's Urdu and Persian Poetry

I used Allama Iqbal's Urdu and Persian poems relevant to development of self through fortification of Khudi, women empowerment and nation-building. The books consulted were *Bang e Dra* (2014a), *Zarb-e-Kaleem* (2014b), *Armaghan e Hijaz* (2021) and *Bal-e-Jibril* (1979) from Iqbal's Urdu anthologies. From Persian poetry books were *Asrar e Khudi* (1944), *Ramoz e Bey-khudi* (1944), *Armughan e Hijaz* (2021) and *Javed Nama* (2011). Since I am not literate in Persian language, the analysis was conducted using translations by Nicholson and Arberry (Iqbal, 1944, 1953).

3.8.2.2. Iqbal's Prose Work

Iqbal's articles and speeches relevant to the concept of self-development, women, gender roles and nation-building were consulted. The speech referred to was "*Shariat E Islam Main Mard Aur Aurat Ka Rutba*" and the essay "*Qaumi Zindagi, Millat E Baiza Per Aik Emrani Nazar*" from *Maqalaat e Iqbal* (2011b), relevant chapters from his books *Reconstruction of Religious thought in Islam* (2010) and *Speeches, Writings and*

Statements of Iqbal (2015).

3.8.2.3. Books and Research Articles

Books and articles written on Iqbal's philosophy about self-development, women empowerment and nation-building by renowned intellectuals were specially referred, along with many others, to gain a deeper, more diverse and better understanding of his philosophy. These include the book *Wajud e Zan* (Ambreen, 2019) by former director Iqbal Academy, an exhaustive article "*Tarbiyat-e-Khudi: A Model of Self-Development from Poems of Muhammad Iqbal in Asrar-i-Khudi*" by Dr Fahad Khan (2021), *Shakhsiyat* by Abul A'la Maudoodi (1979), *Glory of Iqbal* by Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi (2007), and Thesis and articles of Dr Abid Ali (2011, 2018, 2020) on Iqbal's Educational thought.

3.9. Issue of Reflexivity

I am an MS scholar of Applied Anthropology from Bahria University Islamabad. I did my Master of Science (M.Sc.) in Applied Psychology and have been a distinguished student throughout my academic career. Presently, I have been working in Iqbal Chair Bahria University for around four years, my primary focus is on understanding and exploring the work and philosophy of Allama Iqbal. I am actively engaged in promoting Iqbal's Qur'anic philosophy both within and outside the University through organizing national and international conferences, seminars, panel discussions and publication of a research journal on Iqbal studies. Belonging to a religious family, I try to be a devout Muslim with the approach to participate in social sphere while conforming to the religion. Despite having experience organizing national and international conferences in the three cities (Islamabad, Karachi and Lahore) of Pakistan, before this research, I had no interaction with any organization working for women empowerment directly. The research

topic was selected partly to develop my knowledge in this field of work that is playing a significant role and has been a topic of debates and controversies in Pakistan.

From my experience in the field of psychology through my academic knowledge and field experience, I opine that any change in human condition is not possible unless the concerned individuals themselves take the initiative and struggle as an agency. Any change or progress provided externally without the input of the individual agency results in only superficial effects if any and eventually fails to last in the long run. External aid, without internal agency, will then only create progressive dependency in the individual. I believe from my academic background in Anthropology and my Islamic paradigm that any social endeavor and community action needs to be designed as per the cultural context and perceptual framework of the concerned people. Hence for Muslim societies, the theories and systems need to be designed as such. Moreover, as a Muslim, I believe Qur'an to be the ultimate and perfect source of guidance hence Muslim societies should endeavour to develop their theories from it only. From my professional work and personal study, I have found Iqbal's philosophy and especially his human model to be derived from Qur'an and it can be beneficial in endeavors of Islamization of Muslim societies.

3.10. Fieldwork Issues

During the fieldwork phase of the research, I encountered several challenges while trying to establish contact with organizations working for women empowerment. Being new to this field, I lacked prior experience and contacts with governmental or nongovernmental women's organizations, which posed significant difficulties in obtaining relevant contacts. Despite reaching out to 23 different organizations for data collection, many did not respond, while others showed initial interest but did not follow through when

informed about the research purpose. One notable NGO even declined my entry to their office and only discussed matters at the gate. Additionally, officials from one organization requested me to work as a full-time volunteer, which I politely declined due to time constraints caused by my job and academic commitments. Some organizations responded positively, but I struggled to find potentially rich data as their work span was short and no activities were available for me to participate in within the designated data collection period.

The organizations that finally became part of the research sample cooperated well. However, arranging in-depth interviews with the respondents was challenging due to their busy schedules. Efforts to contact the head of Organization X were hindered by her busy schedule and frequent out-of-town tours. Moreover, the key informant from this organization was not very responsive due to his busyness and once he went out for a meeting when I reached for his interview regardless of my prior appointment that had been confirmed an hour ago as well. The organizations also hesitated to permit focus group discussions, and I had to put in significant effort to convince them to participate.

Throughout the data collection period, I faced time constraints due to academic and employment responsibilities. My frequent weekly visits to the organizations had to be discontinued by the end of April and the beginning of May due to my final exams. Moreover, the country's deteriorating law and order situation in May affected my ability to visit organizations regularly. Additionally, I incurred substantial travel costs to reach the organizations. Adhering to family traditions, I engaged a male family member (my brothers) to accompany me during the visits. This also added an additional burden to my job responsibilities, which I managed through overtime. In conclusion, the research faced

numerous challenges during the fieldwork phase, from establishing contacts and scheduling interviews to overcoming time constraints and financial burdens. Despite these obstacles, I made considerable efforts to gather valuable data for the study.

3.11. Limitations

Following were the limitations in the research during the course of data collection:

1. There had been time and funding constraints as the research was self-sponsored and had to be managed along with job and academic responsibilities.
2. Despite my diligent efforts to arrange four focus group discussions, only two could be conducted out of the four respondent organizations. This limitation arose due to the organizations' reluctance to permit me to conduct focus group discussions of their organization.
3. As I was not proficient in the Persian language, I relied on English and Urdu translations to comprehend and analyze Iqbal's Persian poetry.

3.12. Ethical Considerations

The qualitative data collection process adheres to a set of ethical guidelines to ensure the confidentiality, safety, and informed consent of all participants. Permission to conduct ethnographic study of the sample organizations working for women empowerment was obtained from the organizations' administrator or in-charge. Consent forms were presented to the interviewee prior to the recording of the interview and collection of data through observation. The consent form included permission to use organizations' names in my research. Only one out of four organizations did not allow the use of its name, so a pseudonym has been used in the entire study for it.

3.13. Methods of Analysis

For Bernard (2011), method of analysis serves as a form of measurement intricately woven into the multifaceted fabric of scientific research. From the research questions, the themes for the analysis were pre-derived. After the transcription of interviews and focus group discussion, the main ideas were identified through color coding. The main ideas from the primary data were converted into my understanding of the respondents' ideas/claims, which were shown to subject experts for the correctness of my understanding. These were then matched against the pre-derived themes which were then grouped into clusters for writeup. The same was done for the data gathered through other sources such as photographs, participant observations, website and document content. This approach allows for the identification of recurrent themes, patterns, and meanings within the data.

For the theoretical analysis of Iqbal's concept of Khudi for development of self through self-realization as relevant to women empowerment and his concepts regarding the role and status of women in society, content analysis was done through his poetry and prose. According to Stemler (2001), content analysis is a systematic and replicable method used to condense extensive textual content into fewer content categories. It is a comprehensive approach that involves objectively and systematically identifying specific message characteristics. This technique enables researchers to efficiently navigate through substantial amounts of data in an organized manner. It proves valuable in uncovering and describing the subjects drawing the focus of individuals, groups, institutions, or society. Moreover, content analysis facilitates the generation of inferences that can later be substantiated through alternative data collection methods (Stemler, 2001). For this

research, the repeated critical review of Iqbal's Persian (through English and Urdu translations) and Urdu poetry was conducted along with his speeches and essays on the subject. To probe into Iqbal's views on women and women empowerment, extensive Library research was conducted both for primary and secondary material. Latest books and articles on the subject were reviewed and analyzed directly against Iqbal's own philosophical writings and poetic verses. Relevant verses were exegetically analyzed. Hermeneutics was used where required to reach the closest possible interpretation of Iqbal's thought and philosophy. Iqbal's relevant poetic verses were equated and compared with relevant Qur'anic verses for triangulation to develop a comprehensive understanding of the issue. These ideas and concepts were contextually analysed. To maintain the validity and credibility of interpretations, an expert Dr Muhammad Abid Ali who has a Ph.D. in Iqbal's philosophy and a recognized specialist in Iqbal, was consulted at each stage of working and analysis. The process of deliberations and review with the expert was repeated in writing down the findings after analysis of Iqbal's work.

3.14. Summary

In this chapter, I delved into the research design, locale, sampling methods, data collection tools, limitations, ethical considerations, and methods of analysis used in my qualitative research study centered on women's empowerment in Pakistan. This research was distinctly qualitative in nature, with the primary goal of unravelling and elucidating the experiences and perceptions of women within the complex social and cultural milieu of Pakistan. This research was conducted in two distinct phases to comprehensively address the research questions. The first phase involved an ethnographic study of organizations dedicated to women's empowerment in Islamabad, Pakistan. Islamabad, the federal capital

of Pakistan, was chosen as research locale due to its diverse population and its central role in the nation's diplomatic and administrative affairs. I adopted a purposive sampling method to select organizations and participants based on specific criteria. Four organizations, including both government and non-government entities, were chosen for this study. Data collection methods in this research encompassed a wide array of ethnographic research tools. These included participant observation, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, informal interviews, audio and video recordings, photography, and document review. These tools allowed me to gather rich, contextually relevant data during my fieldwork. In the second phase of our research, I focused on the theoretical analysis of Allama Iqbal's philosophy. The methods of analysis employed in this research included thematic coding for ethnographic data and content analysis for Iqbal's philosophy. To ensure the validity and credibility of my interpretations of Iqbal's works, I sought the expertise of a specialist in Iqbal studies. Hence research rigor was assured for the validity and reliability of this research. This chapter provided a comprehensive overview of the research design, data collection methods, and analytical approaches that guided this study on women's empowerment in Pakistan. In the subsequent chapters, I will delve into the findings and discussions emanating from this robust methodological approach.

CHAPTER 4
PERCEPTIONS OF ORGANIZATIONS WORKING FOR WOMEN
EMPOWERMENT

4.1. Introduction

This chapter answers research question 1 on the perceptions of participant organizations working for women empowerment in Pakistan about the concept of women empowerment. The chapter deals with their general perceptions of organizations followed by its analytical summary. When dealing with the practices of women empowerment, it is important to explore the conceptions and vision these organizations embrace behind the establishment of their respective institutions. As Rafiuddin (1961, p. i) elaborates: “Man is so made that he must have a philosophy to precede every action that he performs, and the greater the clearness and correctness of his philosophy, the greater is the fruitfulness of his action.” Vision leads to the evolution of aims, aims and objectives are the basis of practices. When the aims are selected, objectives are drawn for planning of how to materialize them, the milestones that lead to the destined aims, the methodologies and the planning needed to adopt for carving the way to the desired outcome. For a better development of respondent organizations’ perceptual model, a brief profile of the four organizations is given at the start of the chapter. It is followed by thematic presentation of their perceptions regarding women empowerment through the themes of conceptions, vision, aim and objectives. The data presented was extracted from in-depth interviews, participant observations, focus group discussions and analysis of the organization’s websites and certain documents.

4.2. Profile of Participant Organizations

In order to enhance clarity in understanding the approaches of selected organizations, a profile of each participant organization is presented. It is important to note that the respondents selected for in-depth interviews from the respondent organizations were well grounded in the vision of their organization's projects. The objective in selection of the respondents was to ensure that these personnel were either at the visionary status of the organization or their decision mattered as far as aspect of women empowerment is concerned or were involved in the implementation of organizations' vision and mission.

4.2.1. Pakistan Girl Guides Association (PGGA)

The Pakistan Girl Guides Association (PGGA) is a national organization that has been a part of the global Girl Guide and Girl Scout movement since its establishment in 1911. It holds the distinction of being one of Pakistan's oldest girls' and women organizations, with its commitment to empowering and nurturing the development of girls and young women through a rich array of educational and recreational programs. Notably, the esteemed Fatima Jinnah, Pakistan's "Mother of the Nation," served as the Patron-in-Chief of the Pakistan Girl Guides Association. It served as an inspiration for countless girls and young women, emphasizing the pivotal role of women in nation-building and societal development. I had read about Girl Guides in my primary textbooks and have seen the guides in uniform during national day programs organized by the government as volunteers. I contacted them through my university junior who is also a member. My key informant was their director training who appreciated my research on PGGA. She gave me their guidebooks and other things for my research.

The PGGA office is situated in H-9/4, behind the NUML university in a quiet locality along with some other government offices. The office area is very wide encompassing the grounds for camping, a hostel and lawns with rich vegetation and lush green grass which is its prominent feature. The building itself is very spacious. The noticeboards contain photographs of event activities. The employees are predominantly females from young to middle adulthood. The association is headed by National Commissioner who is elected for a tenure of three years and works on a voluntary basis with no salary. With branches called chapters spanning all four provinces of Pakistan, as well as in Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan, the PGGA has effectively reached girls and women throughout the country, making a lasting impact on their lives and communities. Within the same building, along with National Headquarter (NHQ) exist their Islamabad Capital Territory chapter yet they operate separately. I could observe the connectivity among all the employees at the NHQ, as they all knew about me when I had only met with the chairperson and director training. A young employee who observed *niqab* talked about her plan to propose of developing a kitchen garden within their office area to the National Commissioner.

From its inception, the PGGA has been dedicated to fostering leadership, character development, and community service among girls and young women across Pakistan. Its extensive program offerings cater to various age groups and encompass a diverse range of activities, including leadership training, outdoor adventures, community service initiatives, and skill development programs. The organization also prioritizes health and hygiene education, promoting the holistic growth of its members as evident in the workshops I participated. They primarily work through schools by training the appointed teachers also

called guiders, who in turn train the participants. Each such school is called a guide company. Open guide companies for out-of-school children and some communities like Ismaili community also exist. Recently, they have also started their programs for university students whose sphere is limited for now to Islamabad and its nearby areas. There existed a friendly relationship among the employees, and they worked there while chatting, caring for each other and enjoying with the training participants. The PGGA, much like Girl Guide and Girl Scout associations worldwide, features a distinct uniform for its members. I met with some university guides who were preparing to leave for a program. They appreciated the flexibility of PGGA for volunteers.

Internationally, the PGGA maintains strong connections through its affiliation with the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS), a global network encompassing girl guide worldwide. This affiliation provides Pakistani Girl Guides with opportunities to participate in international events, engage in enriching exchanges, and collaborate with peers from diverse backgrounds, fostering a profound sense of global citizenship. During my research, they participated in a competition organized by WHO. Crucially, the PGGA is steadfast in its commitment to providing leadership opportunities for girls and young women. These opportunities extend to assuming leadership roles within the organization at various levels. Their National Commissioner, who was now in her sixties, had been a Girl guide since her childhood. Guided by core values of honesty, integrity, respect for others, and an unwavering dedication to creating a better world, the PGGA aims to instil these principles in its members from a young age. This character-building aspect constitutes a fundamental component of the organization's overarching mission. They endeavor to motivate personal growth, the cultivation of self-confidence,

and the nurturing of a profound sense of social responsibility among members. Community service occupies a central place within the PGGA's activities. These initiatives encompass a broad spectrum of areas, ranging from environmental conservation and health awareness campaigns to providing essential assistance to those in need. I could see their booklets for role of guiding in flood relief and other community activities.

4.2.2. Social Welfare Section (Gender Unit) Under Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives

Situated within the Planning Commission is a dedicated Gender Unit, operating under the umbrella of the Social Welfare Section. It was established in 2022. This specialized unit plays a crucial role in integrating considerations related to women's empowerment into policy planning, with a primary objective of mainstreaming gender perspectives throughout the planning process. The Gender Unit is led by the chairperson, who also serves as a member of the social sector and devolution. During my research, I had the opportunity to interact with the Deputy Chief of this unit, who provided valuable insights. The office of this section is located in the PPMI Complex in sector H-8/1, within an area characterized by the presence of various government offices. The building itself is a testament to architectural craftsmanship, boasting a spacious and open design, complete with a well-stocked library. During my time there, I observed that the number of individuals present in the vicinity was relatively limited, with a noticeable predominance of male members. I completed a six-week internship there that required me to write a report on the organization, concept paper and report of events in which I participated. The deputy chief's office was crowded with different files. I was permitted to see their working documents and annual reports. Additionally, I was granted access to their library, where I

could peruse annual reports relevant to my research on this organization.

The Gender Unit within the Planning Commission plays a pivotal role in scrutinizing and evaluating development documents, such as Project Component 1(s), from a gender-sensitive perspective. This extensive review encompasses a wide range of projects, interventions, policies, and review documents, all geared towards advancing women's empowerment. The primary focus of the Gender Unit is to assess policy documents and projects that pass through the Planning Commission, ensuring they align with gender-friendly principles and effectively address gender-related requirements. As part of the annual planning process, the Gender Unit actively participates in proposing, reviewing, and fine-tuning specific plans, interventions, and projects aimed at promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. Their meticulous assessment of development documents results in valuable recommendations and reviews, ensuring that gender considerations are thoughtfully integrated into policy and project initiatives.

In performing its critical role, the Gender Unit collaborates closely with key entities, including the Ministry of Human Rights, the Directorate General of Special Education, the National Commission for the Status of Women, the National Commission for Human Rights, and the Poverty Division of the Ministry of Poverty Alleviation's Social Sector Division. These collaborative efforts collectively oversee a diverse array of projects and initiatives, reinforcing the commitment to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. Moreover, numerous NGOs play a significant role in promoting gender equality. These NGOs regularly organize various events, seminars, and workshops. Often, they seek expert opinions for informed policy planning. The Gender Unit actively engages with these organizations, participating in discussions, reviews, knowledge-sharing

sessions, and experience exchanges. In one such round table conference, I also participated and developed a report for recommendations. There had been participation from different government departments, NGOs and INGOs. Although, the in-person participation of women was significantly below men's, yet many participated in it through online platform. Such interactions contribute to the development of comprehensive reports. Furthermore, the insights gathered from these discussions lead to valuable recommendations that are presented to the government. The annual planning process is a critical juncture where these recommendations find their place. They are thoughtfully incorporated into the annual plan, ensuring their integration into various policy reviews and document assessments. This collaborative approach serves to advance gender considerations and women empowerment throughout the planning and policy implementation processes.

I could not find their website or much information from online sources. My key informant had served in government service for around 15 years. He said that they see women's empowerment as a multifaceted endeavor, spanning areas like entrepreneurship, rural women's empowerment, addressing various women's issues, and tackling human rights concerns related to women. Collaborations with the Ministry of Human Rights play a crucial role in this regard, with numerous projects addressing women's issues. For instance, the Ministry of Human Rights often handles projects primarily benefiting women. This includes initiatives related to poverty alleviation within the Social Sector Division. Programs like the Benazir Income Support Program specifically target increasing the number of female beneficiaries. These initiatives collectively serve the needs of women, encompassing issues ranging from workplace harassment policies to creating conducive and women-friendly work environments.

4.2.3. Government Organization X

According to its website and interviews with its members, Organization X which was established in early 2000s, stands as a pivotal institution dedicated to promoting and safeguarding women's rights in Pakistan. This statutory body emerged as a direct response to Pakistan's national and international commitments, notably including the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of 1995 and the National Plan of Action (NPA) for Women in 1998. With a central presence in Islamabad, Organization X extends its reach across the nation through regional offices established in all four provinces. During my initial visit to their office, I encountered a rather tall building with up to 18 floors. The narrow passageways within were quite confusing, making it easy to lose one's sense of direction amidst the similarities. However, the employees and staff were extremely cooperative despite the labyrinthine layout. Unfortunately, I was unable to receive a response to my application addressed to the chairperson, who happened to be out of the country at the time. Exercising patience for about a month, I decided to approach the organization through Gender Unit. Fortunately, my request was granted, and I was allowed to access it as a sample. However, the key respondent insisted that I refrain from using the organization's name, as obtaining official approval for such usage would involve a lengthy procedure. I faced most communication issues with this organization owing to the busyness of my key respondent.

Collaboration lies at the heart of Organization X's approach. The organization partners with government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and international entities to collectively drive progress toward gender equality. Funding for its initiatives is derived from both the government of Pakistan and international donors. By providing

resources to women's organizations groups, the organization empowers them to become catalysts for positive change within their communities. Additionally, Organization X assumes the vital role of monitoring the implementation of laws and policies impacting women in Pakistan, ensuring that these regulations align with international commitments and standards. To amplify its impact, Organization X actively engages in awareness-raising activities such as 16 days of activism along with many other NGOs and INGOs. Conferences, workshops, and public awareness campaigns provide platforms for critical discussions and the dissemination of information related to women's rights. Leveraging media outreach, the organization ensures that the public remains informed about gender equality issues. The Facebook page of their chairperson showed regular collaborative events with other organizations including different UN specialized agencies.

Upon my inquiry about differentiation between role of Organization X and Planning commission Social Welfare section (Gender Unit), the respondent said that this organization serves a unique and specialized role distinct from the broader responsibilities of the Planning Commission. While the planning commission encompasses various facets of policy formulation, development projects, and economic planning spanning multiple sectors, this dedicated organization focuses exclusively on addressing gender-related issues and advancing women's empowerment. Its primary objective revolves around ensuring the integration of gender perspectives into policies, projects, and initiatives across diverse sectors. The organization offers valuable insights, recommendations, and expertise to promote gender sensitivity and inclusivity within the planning commission's activities. This role extends beyond consultation; the organization actively advocates for women's rights, equality, and increased representation in decision-making processes. Furthermore, it

works diligently to bridge legislative, policy, and societal gaps that may impede women's progress. The organization closely monitors the implementation of gender-focused laws and regulations, while also spearheading initiatives to combat violence against women and enhance women's economic and political empowerment.

The organization consist of a chairperson and board comprising of members who have been actively involved in women rights. The board operates on a three-year term, guiding the organization's strategic direction and initiatives. They set the organization's priority areas, for instance, the previous board laid importance on violence against women, while current board specified the thematic area of political empowerment. Within the organization's structure, three key wings operate: the program wing, administrative wing, and financial wing. Each of these wings has its own distinct responsibilities. The program wing, which serves as the public face of the organization, oversees all activities, from planning to coordination and briefings. The chief council section, responsible for addressing questions posed to the assembly, plays a pivotal role within this wing, gathering critical inputs. Additionally, coordination and a dedicated complaints cell fall under the purview of the program wing. The administrative wing focuses on internal affairs and handles various administrative matters, ensuring the smooth functioning of the organization. Meanwhile, the financial wing manages financial aspects, safeguarding the fiscal health of the organization. This organizational structure ensures efficiency and effectiveness in pursuing its mission. I also had a detailed meeting with their fiancé director, who was a kind person with rich experience and insights.

Throughout my observations, I noticed a culture of respect among the organization's members, both between superiors and subordinates. Attired in traditional

shalwar kameez, they conversed fluently in both Urdu and English. The organization's workforce predominantly comprised of young individuals, with men slightly outnumbering women. Notably, various standees and wall charts were on display throughout the office, addressing a range of women-related issues such as violence against women, femicide, property rights, child marriage, and more. Additionally, just outside the chairperson's office, there were photographs of distinguished Pakistani women who had made a name for themselves in various fields.

4.2.4. All Pakistan Women's Association (APWA)

All Pakistan Women's Association (APWA) is a renowned non-profit organization deeply committed to women's empowerment and welfare in Pakistan. With a rich history dating back to its establishment in February 1949 by Begum Ra'ana Liaquat Ali Khan, the organization has emerged as a pioneering force in the women's movement within the country. APWA's significance lies in its status as Pakistan's oldest non-governmental organization (NGO), making it a foundational institution in the realm of women's rights and social development. APWA's mission revolves around the empowerment, education, and overall well-being of women in Pakistan. Begum Ra'ana Liaquat Ali Khan's vision for APWA encompassed a wide range of objectives, with a particular focus on providing education and vocational training to uplift women. The organization has consistently advocated for gender equality and justice, addressing issues related to gender discrimination and the limited participation of women in decision-making processes.

They were the first non-governmental organization (NGO) that responded positively and promptly to my email request for participation as a respondent organization in my research. Later on as well their email response, generally, was prompt. I had come

across information about APWA in my primary school textbooks, particularly regarding its significant role during the early days of Pakistan's formation. I had some doubts about whether it still existed, but my supervisor confirmed its continued presence and mentioned about their *Meena Bazaars* (women's markets). The Islamabad branch of APWA is located in the G7-2 area, nestled among residential houses on a peaceful street. The office's front area is adorned with lush green plants and serves as a pleasant spot to wait for a taxi. The school building itself was originally a house that has been repurposed for use as a primary school. The classrooms are relatively small but typically have a moderate number of students.

According to online sources, APWA is actively involved in community engagement efforts, addressing issues such as HIV, AIDS, and drug abuse. Additionally, it has played a pivotal role in disaster relief efforts, exemplified by its extensive engagement in the response to the 2005 earthquake. APWA advocacy efforts have also been instrumental in contributing to policy changes, including its role in the passage of the Family Laws Ordinance of 1961. The organization maintains a consultative status with the United Nations (Category B) and collaborates with the Government of Pakistan on various projects. They have various branches throughout the country among which notable are the Karachi head office which has the largest setup, then is Lahore's.

Within the framework of APWA, the Islamabad branch stands as a significant hub for its activities. Situated in the capital city, the Islamabad branch serves as the central administrative office for APWA's operations in the region. The staff composition predominantly consists of women, except for roles such as drivers, guards, and computer operators. Direct beneficiaries of the Islamabad branch's initiatives are primarily women

and primary school children. To support its mission, the branch is equipped with essential infrastructure, including a primary school building, a parlor, a daycare facility, and a counselling section. Funding for the branch, like other APWA branches, primarily relies on donations, with financial support coming from the organization's Karachi-based head office. It engages in a diverse array of activities aimed at empowering women and promoting their welfare. These activities encompass education through a primary school, vocational training programs in areas like computer skills and sewing, and support services like a day-care center and counselling.

I was informed that APWA used to organize annual Meena Bazaars, as recalled by a professor who mentioned that his sisters used to participate in these events during Ayub Khan's era. These bazaars primarily served the purposes of promoting the organization, fundraising, and providing opportunities for women. According to the staff at their Islamabad office, the Islamabad branch of APWA used to have three buildings in different sectors. One of these buildings housed a school up to the matric level where their Meena Bazaar was traditionally organized. Unfortunately, this building suffered damage during the 2005 earthquake, leading to its closure and the discontinuation of Meena Bazaars. Currently, only their G7 office is operational, and as of last December, they have resumed organizing Meena Bazaars. The December Meena Bazaar featured stalls by their teachers offering various food and clothing items, as well as swings for children. Families of the school children and residents from nearby areas visited the event. My key informant had joined around 2007-8 so she did not know when the Islamabad branch opened and not much about activities before her time.

4.3. Exploring Organizational Perceptions of Women's Empowerment: Thematic Analysis

4.3.1. Conceptions of Women Empowerment

4.3.1.1. Pakistan Girl Guides Association

The concept of women's empowerment, as presented by the National Commissioner and trainer of PGGA, revolves around fostering the comprehensive growth of its members and is a holistic approach to nurturing women's development. It centers on "character building and personality development". By focusing on diverse aspects of their personality, cultivating leadership skills, and acknowledging the influence of culture and challenges, they aim to create empowered individuals capable of making meaningful contributions to society. A central tenet of this concept is the development of leadership qualities. Thoughtful decision-making is highlighted as a crucial skill that contributes to their empowerment. The chairperson, an aged lady who had been a girl guide since her childhood, elaborated "Leadership in a sense that in any situation where there is a need to work, they take initiative, they don't keep sitting, they take initiative and that they take thoughtful decisions. They develop decision-making power. This is the biggest thing of women empowerment." Through fostering these attributes, women become self-assured individuals who can navigate life's challenges with confidence. In her opinion,

"The girl who has all these skills, some have more, some have less, but whatsoever is the level of these skills they are required in adult life very much because when a girl is self-confident her dealing with others is different and she herself can understand her circumstances and take decisions accordingly and then in whichever role of life she goes, she will Insha'Allah serve it better."

They acknowledge the influence of cultural contexts and available resources on the needs of women. The chairperson added that while the fundamental empowerment goals remain consistent, strategies and approaches may need to be adapted to respect and accommodate diverse cultural backgrounds. The chairperson described the role of challenges in personal growth saying, “Life does not pass without them” and overcoming obstacles is an integral part of the journey towards empowerment, that develops resilience and the capacity to excel in various aspects of life. The trainer, an energetic young lady, opined that in a male-dominated society like Pakistan, empowerment signifies a woman's ability to exercise her rights, express her thoughts, and assert her viewpoints within her household. She said, “...in that, I say if a woman is in her house, and she is getting all her rights and she is capable of putting her thoughts (*apni baat ko kar sakay*) and convey her point of view then she is an empowered woman.” The vision of women's empowerment acknowledges the historical influence of various legal systems, including Islamic law and British law, as well as cultural factors inherited from the subcontinent's history. She said, “If Pakistan...were that Pakistan had Islamic rule of law, then we were empowered...like the concept Islam has given us of empowered women is clear if it was then applied and implemented. But Islamic law is not there we are confused between some British law and some our Islamic law and then since we lived together with Hindus in the subcontinent....” Women's lack of awareness about their rights is identified as a key challenge, hindering their capacity to demand and assert these rights. This lack of information and education can lead to women conforming to societal norms and expectations, akin to programmed behavior. Empowerment, in this context, emerges as a means of enabling women to possess the knowledge, information, and education necessary to effect personal and

societal change. Importantly, the concept of empowerment extends beyond physical presence and encompasses an intrinsic transformation of character and inner strength, which holds significant qualitative value. They emphasized long-term impact of the empowerment endeavours directed at self-growth and self-confidence development accompanied by self and character development. The transformation in one's personality may not be immediately apparent, but they believe that the qualities and skills instilled through them will positively influence her ability to understand her circumstances, make informed decisions, and contribute effectively to her roles in adulthood.

4.3.1.2. Social Welfare Section (Gender Unit) under Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives

It work has a direct impact on policing regarding gender in the country. For its deputy chief, the concept of women's empowerment encompasses various dimensions and areas of focus. It involves initiatives aimed at fostering entrepreneurship, enhancing rural women's empowerment, addressing women's issues and human rights concerns, alleviating poverty, ensuring child protection, and implementing harassment-related policies in workplaces. He stressed that

“Women employment is the women empowerment and is contingent upon the creation of a conducive environment at workplace, ... with satisfaction (they) can work at workplace when she gets good environment, the employment she gets ...so they will automatically have empowerment”.

This environment encompasses not only workplace conditions but also societal factors that enable women's autonomy and agency. The essence of women's empowerment extends beyond institutional efforts and underscores the crucial role of families and broader

society. The involvement of spouses, siblings, and communities is integral to facilitating women's empowerment. Gender-sensitive practices and awareness are pivotal in shaping a secure and supportive environment for women to thrive. The respondent told that,

“Factors such as accessible transportation, gender-sensitive training, and public awareness contribute to a context where women feel safe and confident to participate actively. This will help them to contribute with mental satisfaction for empowerment ...socio-economic development of country, society and their family as well.”

He said that education is a cornerstone of women's empowerment, enabling them to participate in decision-making processes and “contribute to socioeconomic development of society”. The utilization of their educational skills, particularly in professions like medicine and engineering, is crucial in realizing “the government investment made in their education”. He proposed that a compulsory service requirement following professional education could incentivize women to contribute their expertise to the nation, thereby aligning with the initial intention of their education and benefiting society at large. He also recognizes the unique roles that women play, encompassing both productive and reproductive responsibilities. This dual role underscores the necessity of providing comprehensive support, including facilities and affirmative measures, to alleviate the burdens and challenges faced by women.

4.3.1.3. Organization X

The program officer from Organization X views concept of women empowerment to be deeply rooted in Islamic values, tracing back to the era of Hazrat Khadija. Women empowerment is an inherent aspect of Islam, and it is reflected in Article 25 of Pakistan's

constitution which guarantees equal rights for every citizen, including women who constitute a significant portion of the population. He stressed the fact that “If we don’t give them equal rights then we set aside half of our Pakistan.” He acknowledges the historical challenges that women faced in the past but notes that with the advent of digital platforms, women have found new avenues for economic contribution. These platforms enable them to engage in financial activities, from home-based businesses to online commerce and handicrafts. He also highlights that “women empowerment in last 5 years has grown significantly” as “digital platforms have given them resources to grow their empowerment, this is a main thing”, citing increased registrations in women's chambers and active participation in various sectors. Education plays a pivotal role in this progress, as more women are pursuing education and accessing opportunities that contribute to their empowerment. While obstacles remain, he recognizes that women's empowerment has gained momentum through digital platforms, education, and increased participation in various economic sectors hence “empowerment sources and resources have significantly increased”.

4.3.1.4. All Pakistan Women's Association

APWA’s Islamabad Chairperson considers concept of women empowerment to be revolving around the idea of enhancing financial independence and autonomy for women. She acknowledges that “a woman can’t be so independent with her finances but this that much..eh.. improvement can be there”. Financial independence plays a crucial role in empowering women by enabling them to make choices for themselves and their families, granting women the ability to meet their needs, make decisions, and command respect otherwise

“If one has not two paisas in her pocket then that woman will automatically bow down to her husband otherwise from Allah, women have an existence, a respectability, a status”.

Financial autonomy is seen as a means for women to elevate their status and assert their existence and dignity, both within their households and society at large. She also underscores the transformative impact of education and social interactions on women empowerment. When women participate in educational activities, such as “attending school or interacting with peers”, they experience a “shift in mindset and gain confidence”. These experiences foster a sense of solidarity and shared identity among women, leading to the recognition that they share common needs, emotions, and aspirations. This sense of unity and mutual support encourages women to empower each other and work collectively to overcome societal obstacles. She further acknowledges the existence of significant challenges and hurdles that hinder women's empowerment. Women are sometimes “compelled to conceal their endeavors from men” due to fear of backlash or disapproval. For the APWA’s education coordinator, women empowerment encompasses multifaceted dimensions aimed at fostering independence and self-reliance. For her education is most important for women empowerment “those little girls that people get them married and they get exploited by their husband as well as in-laws so parents should think about it” and educate them. It is envisioned through cognitive, economic, and socio-cultural avenues, all of which collectively contribute to elevating the status and agency of women. Firstly, cognitive empowerment emphasizes the importance of education and intellectual development for women. It signifies the ability of women to think critically, make informed decisions, and exercise autonomy over their choices. They should be “mentally

empowered so much that can take a stand for themselves at their homes, with their husbands, with their mothers-in-law, and in their household in that they can also take a stand for themselves.” Secondly, economic empowerment emerges as a pivotal component, entailing financial self-sufficiency and the acquisition of practical skills. This aspect reflects a broader perspective that financial independence empowers women to assert control over their lives, enabling them to contribute to household decisions, pursue careers, and allocate resources according to their own preferences. Furthermore, socio-cultural empowerment underscores the need to address deeply ingrained societal norms that restrict women's agency. She critiques the notion of women's submissiveness as a product of cultural conditioning rather than inherent religious doctrine. Commenting on the condition of women in Pakistan she said,

“You look out of Islamabad and see what is the condition? They are considered sheep and goats! She is property. She can neither marry with her choice nor wear clothes of her liking, these basic things...”

4.3.2. Vision

4.3.2.1. Pakistan Girl Guides Association

According to PGGA’s website, their vision is stated as “We are a National Movement of empowered girls and young women working as the agents of change to build a better world” (Pakistan Girl Guides Association, *n.d.*). Their chairperson elaborated they envision empowering girls and young women to become exemplary citizens, compassionate mothers, confident women, and dedicated students. Overall, their vision is to cultivate well-rounded individuals who positively impact society while excelling in their diverse roles. This vision encompasses the aspiration to create a platform where members

are equipped with the tools, knowledge, and resources needed to cultivate self-awareness, assert their rights, and develop into strong, capable individuals. The mission as displayed on the website is “to provide opportunities for the development of girls and young women so that they become confident, patriotic and law-abiding citizens, capable of performing their duties in the home as well as community and the country.” The vision encapsulates the creation of a dynamic and nurturing environment where members are empowered to shape their lives, contribute to their communities, and lead with confidence.

4.3.2.2. Social Welfare Section (Gender Unit) under Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives

The vision of Social Welfare Section (Gender Unit) under Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives is to promote and ensure women's empowerment through the facilitation of women's employment and the creation of a conducive work environment. As elaborated by its deputy chief, this vision encompasses the belief that women's empowerment is intrinsically tied to their active participation in the workforce, which contributes to their own growth, as well as the socioeconomic development of the country and society at large. The organization envisions a future where women have access to employment opportunities that provide not only financial independence but also mental satisfaction, enabling them to make meaningful contributions to their families, communities, and the overall progress of the nation.

4.3.2.3. Organization X

The vision of the organization X as displayed on their website, is to establish a democratic, just, peaceful, and tolerant society that celebrates diversity. As elaborated by its program officer, in this vision women are recognized as equal participants in decision-

making processes, ranging from household matters to national and international levels. The goal is to enable women to lead lives free from violence and exploitation. This comprehensive vision encompasses all aspects of life, ensuring that women's equality and participation are upheld in every sphere. Their mission is to secure women's rights and ensure their equality. The organization is specifically dedicated to focusing on gender and women's issues, aiming to address lapses in legislation and policies that may hinder the realization of women's rights. They are committed to fostering a society where women's equality is not only acknowledged but actively promoted and upheld.

4.3.2.4. All Pakistan Women's Association

According to the website of APWA, their vision is “to create a just and equitable society where women enjoy equal rights and opportunities, free from all forms of discrimination and violence”(Apwapakistan.Com, *n.d.*). APWA believes that women's empowerment is essential for the development of any society. They work to promote women's rights and to ensure that women have access to education, health care, and employment opportunities. APWA also works to combat violence against women and to promote gender equality in all spheres of life. Their Islamabad branch is mainly working on the financial and education side of their vision.

4.3.3. Aims & Objectives

4.3.3.1. Pakistan Girl Guides Association

The primary overarching objective of PGGA is the comprehensive development of girls and young women and facilitating their character-building and personality development. Their initiatives have evolved over time, including changes in project names and the integration of international elements. The program currently encompasses eight

focus areas: “wider horizon, home management. Personal development, outdoor activities, vocational skill, community development, fun and games and empowerment of women”. Through a mix of activities within these focus areas, the organization seeks to bring about behavioral changes, enhancing qualities such as discipline, patience, and a sense of cooperation. It rejects competition in favor of fostering cooperation. They aim to address multiple dimensions of a women’s character, encompassing areas such as intelligence, social relations, conflict resolution, and decision-making skills. By instilling confidence and promoting self-awareness, it seeks to empower its members to take initiative and exhibit leadership qualities, enabling them to navigate various situations effectively. The principles of " learning is fun" and " learning by doing" underscore its approach, which focuses on building self-confidence and nurturing virtues without confining participants to specific career training. It emphasizes the importance of spirituality and self-transcendence, encouraging its members to develop a broader perspective by connecting with nature and the universe. Adapting a "My path, My pace" approach, it values each member’s unique journey and progress, emphasizing personal growth rather than uniform benchmarks. Through this, it aims to enable its members to become self-assured individuals capable of understanding their circumstances and making well-informed decisions. While rooted in religious values, the organization respects individual differences in religious practices. It aims to create a balanced atmosphere that integrates religion without imposing practices on individuals, embracing diversity while adhering to societal values. This approach is grounded in the aspiration to help young ladies develop themselves and make positive contributions to their lives and communities. Currently, it is also incorporating contemporary needs such as STEM education, technology proficiency,

entrepreneurship, and active citizenship. The curriculum is continually updated to align with evolving requirements and insights into the women's needs and interests. PGGGA ensures that its program adheres to principles vetted by the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS), emphasizing contextual adaptations while maintaining thematic congruence across 154 member countries. Open-mindedness and inclusivity are core tenets, as the organization welcomes diverse participants and harmonious activities that transcend cultural, religious, and ethnic boundaries. A significant aspect of their program objectives is to provide a safe environment for guides, ensuring activities are women-focused and conducted within secure "guide houses." The organization endeavors to impart awareness of both rights and responsibilities to children, fostering conflict resolution skills, social relationships and self-confidence. Distinct from "external agendas", it remains focused on its unique objectives, garnering "trust from parents" and upholding its commitment to women's holistic growth and empowerment. Additionally, there is a focus on physical and mental well-being, encouraging outdoor activities and interests like crafts. This multifaceted approach strives to create a "harmonious and attractive personality". The program seeks to instill a sense of leadership and initiative in guides, enabling them to take proactive roles in different situations. A significant target group for this program is girls and young women between the ages of 6 and 21. This age range is recognized as crucial for laying the groundwork for females' development. While acknowledging that growth continues beyond this age bracket, the program's primary focus remains on providing support and guidance during these formative years.

4.3.3.2. Social Welfare Section (Gender Unit) under Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives

The aim of Social Welfare section (Gender Unit) under Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives is to integrate and promote women's empowerment within policy planning and the “broader framework of gender mainstreaming”. This involves ensuring that gender considerations and equality are central to the planning process, policies, and initiatives, with a specific focus on advancing the empowerment of women. It seeks to create a holistic approach where gender perspectives are systematically incorporated into various aspects of planning, thereby contributing to the overall advancement of women's rights, opportunities, and participation in society. The deputy chief told “whatever development documents we receive we see them from gender lens up to a ---- extent, the projects, interventions, policies, review documents, all those for contributing to the empowerment of women.” The organization's objectives encompass a comprehensive approach to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. Through the integration of a gender lens into development documents and projects, the organization strives to ensure that these initiatives actively contribute to advancing the status of women, they are “gender friendly, addressing gender necessities.” This involves adopting gender-friendly strategies that address the distinct needs and necessities of women, thus creating an environment that is conducive to their empowerment. It further commits to gender mainstreaming across policies, strategies, programming, and development plans, including the Public Sector Development Program and annual development plans. By providing guidance on policies, plans, and strategies, it aims to ensure the seamless integration of gender considerations. This is underpinned by evidence-

based policy and program formulation, supported by “the collection and analysis of gender-disaggregated data”. It emphasizes “gender-responsive budgeting”, with a focus on calculating necessary expenditures to achieve “targets outlined in Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5)”. Additionally, capacity development for relevant agencies and the development of additional gender-focused targets and indicators under SDG 5 are paramount. It endeavours “effective and timely supporting, monitoring and evaluation on key indicators.”. The organization places importance on reviewing existing gender commitments and policies to assess progress and ensure alignment with national expenditure plans. Facilitating women's active participation and engagement becomes pivotal in ensuring tangible benefits and effective monitoring and evaluation related to gender equality targets. The organization's overarching aim is to create a planning system that considers gender dimensions comprehensively, from local needs to international commitments. This involves nurturing a gender-sensitive environment, fostering gender-responsive policies, and championing the empowerment of women throughout various sectors and levels of society.

4.3.3.3. Organization X

The aims of this organization X are to establish itself as an autonomous body capable of shaping its own vision, aligning the government's actions with that vision, and advocating for women's rights. The primary focus is on “promoting women's empowerment and advancing it further”. According to their website, their primary objective revolves around advancing gender equality and enhancing the empowerment of women, encompassing the safeguarding of their rights. This entails the systematic observation of women's legal, socio-cultural, and economic rights, within the framework of

ongoing research efforts. The organization aims to safeguard and uphold legal rights, those enshrined in the constitution of Pakistan while also considering Islamic values. It addresses various aspects of women's lives, including “violence against women, women's political participation and representation, economic empowerment, the rights of women with special needs, and health and reproductive rights”. These thematic areas were identified and defined by the organization's board. Since its formation, the organization has given top priority to “combating violence against women”, followed by emphasizing women's participation in diverse spheres of life. Its efforts include providing direction, raising voices, and ensuring focused action within these thematic areas to promote women's rights and empowerment. The organization's objectives encompass a range of crucial areas aimed at advancing women's rights and empowerment. One of its primary focuses lies in “ensuring compliance with various international commitments”. Through meticulous efforts, the organization compiles and submits inputs and reports aligned with international agreements such as “ICCPR, CEDAW, UPR, and the Beijing plans”. By engaging in these reporting mechanisms, the organization plays a pivotal role in advocating for women's rights on a global scale. Equally significant is the organization's commitment to upholding equal rights for women in accordance with the Constitution. This dedication is reflected in its multifaceted efforts to promote women's equal participation and representation across diverse spheres of society. From “homes to the national and international levels”, the organization strives to create an environment where women are empowered to make decisions and lead lives free from violence and exploitation. By actively fostering gender equality and inclusivity, the organization envisions a just and peaceful society where diversity is celebrated. Collaboration and coordination are central components of the

organization's approach. It engages closely “with government ministries and NGOs”, forging partnerships to drive positive change in women's empowerment. Moreover, the organization extends its reach beyond national boundaries, establishing ties with international non-governmental organizations (INGOs). This collaborative spirit amplifies the impact of initiatives and underscores the global commitment to women's rights. Monitoring and follow-up are pivotal to the organization's endeavors. By regularly assessing the progress of various women empowerment initiatives, the organization ensures that its efforts yield tangible results. This meticulous tracking of outcomes allows for timely adjustments and improvements, ensuring that initiatives are effectively aligned with the intended objectives.

4.3.3.4. All Pakistan Women's Association

The aim of APWA is to equip women with practical skills that empower them to achieve self-sufficiency and autonomy. According to their online resources, APWA is dedicated to promoting informed and intelligent participation of Pakistani women in the country's development, advancing the welfare of women by improving their legal, political, social, and economic status. It also focuses on fostering educational and cultural programs nationwide, enhancing the health and well-being of individuals in Pakistani households and communities, and fostering international goodwill and a sense of global brotherhood. According to their education coordinator at Islamabad, the organization's focus is on providing women with the means to develop competencies that enable them to engage in productive activities and generate income for themselves. She puts it as “women get at least some skills so that they can do something for themselves when they get out of here (association).” By imparting these skills, the association seeks to enable women to

become capable and self-reliant individuals who can contribute to their own well-being and make meaningful contributions to society upon leaving the organization's sphere of influence. Their Islamabad branch is currently focusing on primary education of children and provision of vocational training and opportunities to women. The major setup is at Karachi and Lahore with other setups in some other areas of Pakistan.

4.4. Analytical Summary

The chapter presented a thematic exploration of organizations' perspectives on women's empowerment, their conceptions, visions, aims and objectives. The PGGA emphasizes a holistic approach to nurturing women's development through character building and personality development, aiming to create empowered individuals capable of meaningful contributions. Leadership skills, cultural influences, and decision-making abilities are central to their vision. They acknowledge the role of challenges in personal growth and underscore the transformative aspect of character development. For PGGA, empowerment involves a deep intrinsic transformation, extending beyond physical presence. The PGGA envisions empowering girls and women to become well-rounded individuals who positively impact society while excelling in various roles. Their aim encompasses character development, leadership skills, and adaptability to changing needs. They emphasize a ladies-centered safe environment and the importance of instilling awareness of rights and responsibilities.

The Social Welfare Section (Gender Unit) within the Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives focuses on integrating women's empowerment into policy planning and gender mainstreaming. Their vision encompasses women's active participation in the workforce and creating an environment that enables their autonomy and

agency. This involves embedding gender considerations into policies, planning documents, and initiatives. The organization recognizes the role of accessible transportation, gender-sensitive training, and public awareness in shaping a secure and supportive environment for women. They view education as pivotal, particularly in fields like medicine and engineering, aligning with government investment in education. The organization also highlights the importance of comprehensive support to address women's dual productive and reproductive roles. The Gender Unit aims to ensure gender mainstreaming, compliance with international commitments, and gender-responsive budgeting. They stress women's employment as pivotal to empowerment, striving for a gender-sensitive environment. The organization fosters partnerships for positive change and continuously monitors outcomes to align initiatives with objectives.

Organization X highlights the historical and Islamic basis of women's empowerment. The role of digital platforms is noted in expanding economic contributions by women, and catalyzing empowerment. Education and access to opportunities are emphasized, and a compulsory service requirement following professional education is proposed. They underscore the importance of women's equality in decision-making processes. Their mission centers on securing women's rights and ensuring their equality, advocating for gender-responsive policies and a just society. Organization X's vision is rooted in promoting women's empowerment and advocating for gender equality. They focus on women's participation and representation in diverse spheres, collaborating with various entities. Their approach emphasizes both local and global collaboration, ensuring tangible results through monitoring and follow-up.

The APWA focuses on enhancing women's financial independence and autonomy.

Financial empowerment is seen as pivotal for women to command respect and elevate their status. Education and social interactions are noted for shifting mindsets and fostering solidarity among women, enabling collective empowerment. Challenges include societal norms that restrict women and necessitate concealing endeavors from men. The APWA aims to equip women with practical skills for self-sufficiency and autonomy. Their focus extends to improving women's legal, political, social, and economic status, fostering educational and cultural programs, enhancing health and well-being, and promoting international goodwill. Their Islamabad branch emphasizes vocational training and primary education, seeking to empower women through competencies and meaningful contributions to society. It highlights the importance of fostering an environment in which women can exercise agency, gain confidence, and collaborate to overcome challenges and achieve greater equality.

Hence the chapter provides an insight into the respondent organizations' perceptions about the concept of women empowerment answering research question 1 of the study. It can be summarized from the data acquired through in-depth interviews, their website and certain document analyses that PGGA focuses on holistic development of girls and young women maintaining the balance between rights and responsibilities. It is actually working on developing the women agency in diverse dimensions of their development during the formative years of girls for better navigation through the world through self-awareness and self-confidence. On the other hand, the two government agencies basically deal with structural aspects of women empowerment, that is provision of facilities and removal of structural barriers for women to work in the country. For this, while keeping in view the domestic dimensions, the international commitments and SDGs

play a significant role in their policy making. Their major focus appears to be on economic empowerment of women and removing the associated barriers in this regard. APWA, while working on development of women's agency working in other diverse areas, their Islamabad branch is mainly focused on the economic independence of women through provision of vocational training and provision of such opportunities. Having cleared the perceptions and approach of respondent organizations towards women empowerment, the next chapter will dive deep into their methodology and practices.

CHAPTER 5
PRACTICES OF ORGANIZATIONS WORKING FOR WOMEN
EMPOWERMENT

5.1. Introduction

This chapter deals with research question 2 of the study to shed light on the practices of organizations working for women empowerment in Pakistan. After exploring perceptions of organizations working for women empowerment in Pakistan through the respondent organizations' in-depth interviews, website and document analysis in the previous chapter, this chapter will examine the practices of the respondent organizations along with successes they have observed in implementing their vision and objectives regarding their women empowerment endeavours. The premise here is that the respective organizations drew the implemented objectives around the conceived vision and hence translated them into practice. Each organization must have drawn certain criteria or benchmarks, against which they aspired to assess their success. Moreover, during their practices, the organizations must have faced a variety of obstacles and challenges from certain quarters, which affected or affects their expected outcomes which too will be explored.

5.2. Organizational Practices That Promote Women Empowerment: Thematic Analysis

5.2.1. Operational Framework

5.2.1.1. Pakistan Girl Guides Association

The PGGA's operational framework is centered around the comprehensive development of girls and young women aged 6 to 21, focusing on their eight focus areas,

including intelligence, social relations, conflict resolution, health, and interests such as crafts and outdoor activities in which the central tenant is leadership and initiative qualities. They primarily operate within school settings, often initiated by teachers who are guided and equipped with the program's framework. It emphasizes experiential nonformal learning through activities, aligning with the principles of "learning by doing". This approach is informed by a "My path, My pace" philosophy, allowing individual growth and progression. Spirituality, values and service to the community are integral to the program as evidenced by the oath taken by the members mentioned in guidebooks. Its diverse curriculum is designed to accommodate cultural contexts, with each country adapting the program accordingly as the chairperson puts it "guiding is a great example of simultaneous diversity and unity". The utilization of government grants and minimal membership fees sustains the program while maintaining a focus on safeguarding its guides' privacy and values within the cultural context. The methodology places importance on "earning badges and certificates", allowing each member to tailor her engagement according to her interests and resources. The organization plans, conducts, and reports trainings for trainers who then disseminate the knowledge and skills to girls and young women through "guide companies" across Pakistan through its collaboration with schools, colleges, government institutions, NGOs, and INGOs to reach its target audience. The "curriculum is continuously updated and vetted" by the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS). The organization fosters a safe environment for guides' development, ensuring activities are women-focused and secure. Badges and awards are earned through completion of activities, encouraging individual growth while "promoting cooperation over competition". The methodology extends to training teachers and

lecturers, applying the “same non-formal approach to adults for effective interaction with children”. Through its comprehensive and adaptable methodology, the organization aims to empower girls and young women across Pakistan.

5.2.1.2. The Social Welfare Section (Gender unit) under ministry of Planning and Special Initiatives

Its operational framework is grounded in a thorough and systematic approach to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment within the realm of policy planning and development. It entails a diligent examination of “various policy documents and projects, including Project Component 1 (PC1s)”, through a gender perspective to assess their alignment with gender-friendly principles and “responsiveness to gender necessities”. The organization actively engages in reviewing and analyzing development documents, offering recommendations, and providing reviews to ensure that gender considerations are adequately integrated. One of the key components of the organization's methodology involves the development of Terms of Reference (TORs) that outline the parameters for “policy planning, document review, and special events such as the celebration of International Women's Day”. Collaborative stakeholder consultations play a central role in the “formulation of the annual plan”, which sets forth targets and programs for the upcoming year. The organization places a strong emphasis on addressing women-related programs and initiatives aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within this annual plan. The methodology extends to “collaboration with various stakeholders”, including government entities, ministries (such as Ministry of Human Rights and Ministry of Poverty Alleviation), and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In planning commission, the tangible thing is that ministries prepare their development projects. The

development projects go to the forum, their “approving form is Departmental Development Working Party (DDWP)”. The project worth up to One thousand Million goes to that forum, the projects above it are in Central Development Working Party (CDWP). When a project is approved, its allocation stage comes, planning commission gives its budgeting through annual Public Sector Development Program (PSDP). When they get a budget, they implement it, when they implement it, its financial and physical process starts that is time-based. After two years usually the project is completed, and after that they submit Project Component 4 (PC4) which means a completion report that elaborates on the subject people or beneficiaries or target group for whom the project was designed highlighting the extent to which it serves or facilitates them.

5.2.1.3. Organization X

It operates with a comprehensive operational framework focused on various aspects of women's empowerment and rights. It actively engages in “legal and policy review”, playing a pivotal role in identifying gaps and formulating recommendations for legislative amendments. Additionally, the organization provides policy direction aligned with its vision, allowing for “informed decision-making in pursuit of women's rights” and empowerment. The organization maintains a dynamic approach that covers a wide spectrum of areas. From “economic empowerment to political participation and representation”, the organization's efforts span diverse sectors. Thematic areas are carefully chosen in “consultation with the board”, which comprises experienced individuals deeply engaged in women's rights activism. The organization's objectives are driven by these thematic areas, and it seeks to achieve them through strategic planning and collaboration with stakeholders. A significant part of the organization's methodology

involves collaboration and partnerships. It collaborates with government ministries, international organizations, NGOs, and educational institutions to ensure the effectiveness of its initiatives. The organization's strong partnership with UN Women and other international bodies reflects its commitment to harnessing global resources for women's empowerment. "Monitoring and follow-up" play a crucial role in the organization's approach. It actively monitors the implementation of laws and policies related to women's rights and gender equality. This monitoring includes tracking the "implementation of codes of conduct in various organizations", ensuring compliance with the law, and promoting a culture of respect and inclusivity. The organization's methodology emphasizes promotion alongside implementation. It takes pride in "promoting cultural elements", particularly those associated with "women's handicrafts, as a means of empowerment". Additionally, the organization strives to promote a culture of gender equality and women's empowerment within society. This is reflected in their efforts to tackle issues like child marriage through legal measures and advocacy.

5.2.1.4. All Pakistan Women's Association

The operational framework of APWA at their Islamabad branch, as described by the respondents, centers on providing accessible and affordable education, creating a supportive and adaptable learning environment, optimizing limited resources, ensuring teacher continuity and development, and maintaining a strong feedback loop with parents to enhance the overall educational experience for their learners. The organization leverages the experience and expertise of its members, such as "the current principal was previously the principal of city school", to guide and train other teachers. This guidance and training focus on enhancing the skills and capabilities of principals and teachers, ensuring a high

standard of education. A key aspect of the organization's methodology involves the creation of a supportive and empowering environment exclusively for women. Within their space, the organization promotes gender inclusivity by employing “predominantly female staff members across all roles, from janitors to principals”. This approach fosters an atmosphere where women can thrive, contribute, and lead without facing gender-based barriers. Its empowerment efforts extend beyond formal education to practical skill development. Through initiatives like the “beauty parlor and stitching classes”, the organization equips women with vocational skills that hold the potential for future self-employment and financial independence. By offering these courses, the organization enables women to explore alternative career paths and “generate income on their terms”. The organization's holistic approach to empowerment also addresses mental and physical well-being. It collaborates with certified professionals such as a psychiatrist and counselor to provide free psychiatric evaluations and counseling to women in the school and the surrounding community. Additionally, the organization aims to introduce gynecological services, which are currently unavailable due to a “lack of relevant volunteers”. The organization's presence is not limited to specific cities but is spread across Pakistan. It encompasses “schools, colleges, and vocational centers, indicating a widespread and comprehensive effort” to empower and educate women and girls throughout the country. The members at Islamabad branch could not inform me much about the activities of other branches of APWA across Pakistan.

5.2.2. Programs & Practices

5.2.2.1. Pakistan Girl Guides Association

For guiding, PGGA has divided its program into four parts based on age groups.

The Junior Guide (6-11 years), Girl Guide (11-16 years), Senior Guide (16-21 years) and adult volunteers (above 21 years). As noted from their website and guidebooks, all three groups have their own oath, motto and set of activities designed around the eight focus areas. Basically, PGGA operates through guide companies in schools, colleges and universities, yet community-based guiding such as for the “Ismaili community” and out-of-school children’s programs also contribute to the organization's outreach efforts. Additionally, the organization engages in projects like "Stay Safe," focusing on university students, to provide awareness and training on personal safety, online security, emotional well-being, and drug abuse. For the schools and colleges, the PGGA “trains the trainers” that is the appointed teachers are trained in NHQ who then train the guides in their respective schools and guide companies. Hence PGGA endeavours to develop capabilities in its members through its activities and projects. This is inline with the capability approach where they look beyond traditional welfare economics and utility-based notions of well-being. They are working on agency from Sen’s capability approach by enhancing women’s capabilities. Yet they provision of organizational facilitation doesnot come under their scope.

The organization evaluates the delivery of its objectives through a multifaceted approach. The program employs a program card to track milestones, with guiders marking ticks as participants (guides) complete tasks. An extensive award system further measures success, where completed tasks result in certificates of merit, annually evaluated by a committee to establish standards and recognize achievements. During the field visit, I could see the pile of certificates on the National Commissioner’s table to be signed by her. The badge system serves as another evaluative mechanism, with badges awarded for

specific activities, allowing quantification of accomplishments. Badges are not awarded to one or two guides only, they are awarded to each guide as soon as they complete the task, adhering to the principle of "My path, My pace," emphasizing individual progress over competition. Success is gauged by the extent of positive change and learning experienced by each child, rather than uniform benchmarks. This approach ensures that success is not confined to a select few, accommodating diverse interests and facilities while respecting individual preferences and capacities. Apart from this, they publish guidebooks, one set of books is general while others are according to the projects, such as about flood response, in both English and Urdu. Some are free while others are available at a nominal price. As I participated in their workshop for guiders (the trainers) from Gilgit Baltistan, they taught them to sing the WAGGGS song. The activities had been informal mostly, experiential and fun based. Their guidebooks and participant observations showed that they collaborate with UNICEF and WHO in their activities as well.

5.2.2.2. Social Welfare Section, Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives (Gender Unit)

According to the deputy chief of social welfare section (Gender Unit) within the ministry of Planning Commission, through different governmental reports they get an idea of what resources are required in certain areas and they plan accordingly to allocate the required resources. Different programs regarding women in general, "girl child, women with disabilities and transgenders are developed with stakeholders' consultation and international commitments while keeping in view the indigenous requirements" as well. Last year, they awarded research grants for projects in Pakistan in the range of 5 to 20 million rupees. They conduct round table conferences for stakeholder input. One of which

I attended and prepared report for, in which the Social Welfare section representatives were taking notes, commenting and acknowledging the inputs by the stakeholders. Yet I could see little involvement of women from government sector in the conference that is 4 out of 20 physical members. Other women participants from NGOs were taken online. The planning commission makes development plans and makes them gender friendly through its procedures and then those plans are implemented by relevant government ministries. They prepare concept papers on various relevant topics, one such was prepared by me regarding women entrepreneurship. They publish annual reports regarding their different activities “across different provinces and relevant gender data and progress”. They utilize planning and development manuals, which serve as reference points to assess incoming documents such as PC1s. Additionally, the organization employs checklists that are tailored to specific criteria, such as addressing the needs of Persons with Disabilities (PWD) or Women with Disabilities (WWD). These benchmarks are utilized to evaluate whether the presented projects align with the gender unit’s parameters. Expertise and insights are shared through participation in events, seminars, workshops, and discussions, contributing to the development of “comprehensive development reports and recommendations”. These recommendations are strategically incorporated into the annual plan and interwoven into policy reviews and document assessments. Hence gender unit deals with the organizational facilitation aspect of capability approach along with endeavours to provide women with liberty and opportunities to exercise their capabilities. Yet it directly doesnot deals with development of women’s agency.

5.2.2.3. Organization X

It runs different programs across its thematic areas. For instance, under the

economic empowerment theme, through “consultancies and strategic guidance” the organization empowers women entrepreneurs to navigate the financial landscape effectively. By linking these entrepreneurs with financial institutions, the organization fosters economic growth and self-sufficiency, thereby contributing to the overall empowerment of women. An essential role of the organization involves the “review of all Federal laws, rules, and regulations” that impact the status and rights of women. It proposes actions such as the repeal, amendment, or creation of new legislation to eradicate discrimination, ensuring that legal frameworks align with principles of gender equality. It actively engages in research efforts by sponsoring, guiding, and promoting research initiatives that generate crucial information. This information is compiled and maintained in a “national database”, which serves as a valuable resource for shaping national policies and strategic actions geared towards women's empowerment. Effective collaboration is a core aspect, as it establishes and nurtures interactions and dialogues with non-governmental organizations, experts, and individuals. International cooperation is also emphasized, as the organization “maintains active associations” with similar organizations and institutions in other countries. This collaboration extends to achieving gender equality on national, regional, and international levels, fostering collective action and shared expertise. It is also empowered to conduct inspections of correctional facilities, such as jails or sub-jails, with prior permission from provincial authorities. Additionally, it holds the authority to exercise powers similar to those of a Civil Court when investigating complaints related to violations of women's rights. Through advocacy, lobbying, coalition-building, networking, and catalyzing actions grounded in evidence, it works to promote women's interests and causes. Lastly, the organization maintains a crucial link with its

Provincial branches and relevant provincial organizations, fostering coordinated efforts and comprehensive action in the pursuit of gender equality and women's empowerment. Hence Organization X also provides organizational facilitation to women, liberty and freedom to women through its role in gender sensitive legislations if evaluated from Sen's capability approach.

5.2.2.4. All Pakistan Women's Association

APWA holds consultative status with various national and international bodies. It maintains consultative status with the Government of Pakistan and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The organization is closely connected with the United Nations (U.N.) and its specialized agencies both domestically and internationally. According to its online resources, APWA offers diverse programs spanning various areas. These encompass Mother and Child Health Services, Nutrition Programs at healthcare clinics, Montessori and Primary Education schools, Adult Education and Literacy initiatives, Social Education and Social Work to assist the needy, Population and Family Planning Programs, Legal Aid clinics, Skill Training and Handicrafts Retail Shops, programs for Adolescents, and the operation of Pharmacies and Dispensaries. Membership is open to all Pakistani women regardless of caste, creed, or color, with non-Pakistani women also welcome to join. The organization has been engaged in a multitude of projects both before and after the partition of East and West Pakistan. In the realm of Social Welfare, APWA has undertaken initiatives involving health volunteer training, educational programs, urban community development, clinics, and hospitals. It advocated for the Ministry of Social Welfare and has been involved in various activities with national and international welfare agencies. APWA's commitment to education is evident through the operation of primary

and secondary schools, the promotion of literacy, and the establishment of educational facilities. Advocacy for women's rights and responsibilities is another significant facet, involving educational seminars, meetings, and seeking legislative actions when necessary. APWA's initiatives encompass a wide range of activities, including relief distribution, cultural affairs, legal assistance, and youth engagement, all aligned with its commitment to women's welfare and empowerment. APWA's Islamabad branch work is mainly focused on vocational training and primary education (for both genders). The vocational training includes sewing courses, parlor courses and computer literacy. A lady, who had been a beneficiary of this organization was discussing with the administrator about her future endeavours. She seemed very energetic and passionate about learning new skills such as graphic designing from other institutions as they were not available at APWA. For its fundraising, provision of a venue for women crafts and exposition, APWA's Meena Bazaars have been famous in Pakistan's big cities. Yet after the 2005 earthquake, the Meena Bazaar had been discontinued due to damage to its building. After 2006, the Meena bazaar was organized in December 2022. Hence as seen through the lens of Sen's capability approach, APWA is endeavouring in providing women with developing their agency and also provides at some level the organizational facilitations to women.

5.2.3. Analyzing Success and Achievements of Organizations' Endeavors

The respondent organizations have been working for long time around their vision and objectives. the research aimed to find out their achievement and successes through in-depth and informal interviews, observations, documents and website analysis. the government organizations mostly have normal bureaucratic procedures of evaluation while the NGO at Islamabad assessed it through their turnout and beneficiaries' response

directly. Following is the detail of the organizational success and achievements in their efforts for women empowerment.

5.2.3.1. Pakistan Girl Guides Association

According to the trainer, the success of the PGGA's endeavors is reflected in “the profound behavioral changes and positive personality transformations” observed among its participants. While “quantifying these changes may be challenging”, the impact is evident in the “discipline, patience, and composed personalities” exhibited by the guides. Through interviews and testimonials from individuals who have been guides since childhood, it becomes apparent that guiding has played a significant role in “developing confidence, a can-do attitude, and effective problem-solving skills”. The organization's ability to instill such qualities in its members highlights a noteworthy achievement. Furthermore, the organization's wide-reaching influence is evidenced by its “extensive membership of 120,000 individuals”. Notably, many women who have been associated with the organization, including prominent figures like Fatima Jinnah and Senator Nuzhat Sadiq, have gone on to achieve remarkable success and prominence in various fields. Additionally, the organization's project "Stay Safe" has reached thousands of beneficiaries, both “directly through university training and indirectly” through cascading the knowledge to schools and colleges. This multi-level approach to training and replication demonstrates the organization's ability to expand its influence and create a ripple effect of positive change. The organization has achieved notable success as evidenced by the “feedback from teachers and principals who oversee the guide companies”. They consistently report that guides demonstrate “exceptional responsibility and capability in fulfilling assigned tasks”. This recognition of the distinctiveness and effectiveness of guides in handling

responsibilities highlights the positive impact of the organization's efforts in nurturing qualities such as leadership, reliability, and proficiency among the guides.

5.2.3.2. Social Welfare Section, Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives (Gender Unit)

According to deputy chief of social welfare section (Gender Unit), the success in the organization's endeavors within the context of the Planning Commission lies in its integral role in the developmental process of government projects and policies. The process involves a comprehensive and systematic approach, starting with the preparation of development projects by ministries. The success is further manifested through the effective implementation of projects, both financially and physically, to serve their intended purposes. The completion of projects within a two-year timeframe culminates in the submission of a PC4 completion report. This report signifies the achievement of delivering tangible benefits to the target beneficiaries, which often include women facing various forms of challenges, such as violence and violations of their rights. Notably, the “establishment of women crisis centers, like the one in H8 Islamabad under the Ministry of Human Rights”, highlights the organization's commitment to providing protection and support to women in need. He also mentioned the achievement of “gender empowerment through affirmative measures, such as the establishment of a 10% quota for females”. The evolution of university departments, once dominated by men, now witnessing an “increase in female representation”, exemplifies the success of women empowerment initiatives. Overall, the organization's success is marked by its contribution to the effective implementation of developmental projects, policy interventions, and affirmative measures that result in “tangible benefits and improved conditions for women and society” at large.

5.2.3.3. Organization X

It has been, according to its program officer, successful in its endeavors, actively engaging in impactful campaigns and initiatives. An exemplary achievement has been its participation in the "16 Days of Activism" campaign organized every December. Over the last two years, the organization has been involved in more than 100 campaign activities across Pakistan within the span of 32 days. This extensive involvement showcases a significant accomplishment on part of organization at a national level in collaboration with many other organizations involved in it. Focusing on “equality and advocating for necessary actions, the organization actively voices concerns where they are needed”. Notable successes include the organization's impactful contribution to the “nullification of a Jirga judgment by the Supreme Court in 2019”, which declared Jirgas null and void. This achievement was made possible through the organization's “active involvement and advocacy”, leading to the implementation of standard operating procedures in KPK, Punjab, and Islamabad Capital Territory. Furthermore, the organization's commitment to monitoring different laws, “particularly the Workplace Harassment Law of 2010”, showcases its dedication to ensuring that regulations are effectively implemented in various organizations, educational institutions, and vocational training centers. Another significant accomplishment is the establishment of the “National Gender Data Portal”, a response to the “lack of comprehensive gender-related data in Pakistan”. Through extensive efforts, the organization has successfully initiated the development and liaison stages of the portal. This initiative will enable the organization to gain insights into critical areas such as “women's workforce participation and incidents of violence against women”, eventually aiding evidence-based decision-making and policy formulation. In summary,

the organization's achievements are substantial and diverse, ranging from impactful campaign participation to active advocacy, legal reform, and the establishment of data infrastructure. Although the program officer time and again and in detail explained organization's priority in political participation and representation of women, yet I could not find it prominently on their website. Their social media pages showed frequent participation in conferences, talks, and events several of which included collaboration with UN specialized agencies.

5.2.3.4. All Pakistan Women's Association

For APWA's respondents, the Islamabad branch's achievements are notable within its educational initiatives, particularly its school environment. The transformative leadership of the principal, the involvement of qualified volunteers, and the dedication to inclusivity and improvement collectively contribute to the organization's success in advancing its educational endeavors. It provides "vocational training and job opportunities" to women through its school, parlor and vocational training courses. APWA, across Pakistan, is engaged in a range of impactful projects. The Jail Project, initiated in 1989, provides women prisoners with sewing machines and education, enabling them to earn money and support themselves upon release. The organization operates 32 schools and 5 adult literacy centers, promoting education through sports and trips, while also offering scholarships for further studies. APWA manages 3 women's colleges and hostels. It has established an orphanage, sewing center, and medical center in KPK, and operates a craft shop in Karachi for women to sell their handicrafts. Social and health centers in Karachi include mother and child healthcare, a career women's hostel, and children's daycare. Additionally, APWA runs legal centers, awareness campaigns, teacher

training, and health camps, reflecting its multifaceted approach to women's empowerment and community development.

5.2.4. Challenges and Problems of Organizations

5.2.4.1. Pakistan Girl Guides Association

PGGA faces several challenges primarily stemming from financial constraints. Dependency on government grants and a minimal annual member fee of Rs. 10 to 100 limit the available resources. This financial limitation hampers the execution of numerous programs and activities, impeding the organization's ability to offer a comprehensive range of initiatives. Moreover, the “payment of membership fees to the World Association” presents a significant financial challenge. The impact of challenges extends to the visibility of the organization's work, as its transformative focus on women’s personality development lacks immediate visibility, making it less recognized compared to more tangible efforts. Additionally, the organization's commitment to preserving its cultural context and safeguarding guides' values restricts its ability to garner increased visibility. Another obstacle stems from the “limited staff capacity” within the organization. With each staff member responsible for “overseeing multiple districts”, there is a strain on resources and human capital. While volunteers offer valuable assistance, their commitment level may vary, which poses a challenge in fully leveraging their contributions to augment the organization's efforts. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic posed a substantial challenge, disrupting traditional methods of engagement with children and participants. However, the organization managed to adapt by “transitioning to online platforms, such as WhatsApp groups”. While this adjustment proved effective, it required the organization to rethink its approach and overcome technological and logistical barriers. As a result of these

limitations, the organization's membership growth has not kept pace with the overall population growth, indicating a barrier to reaching a wider audience and maximizing its impact. Despite these challenges, the organization has “not faced significant problems created by external individuals or entities”. It has enjoyed supportive relationships with both the government and institutions, minimizing potential disruptions or conflicts that could hinder its operations. While these obstacles may impede certain aspects of its work, the organization remains resilient and adaptable in finding solutions to ensure the delivery of its objectives and the empowerment of girls and young women.

5.2.4.2. Social Welfare Section, Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives (Gender Unit)

The Social Welfare Section (Gender Unit) faces several challenges and problems in its operations. One significant challenge is the “availability of up-to-date and relevant population data” when reviewing documents. The scarcity of accurate and recent data poses difficulties in making informed decisions and conducting feasibility studies for various projects. Without access to comprehensive data, the organization's ability to assess the feasibility and impact of initiatives is hindered, and the development of well-informed strategies becomes challenging. Another challenge mentioned by the deputy chief is the “lack of basic assessments for some received documents”. This gap indicates that certain projects or proposals may lack a foundational analysis of their rationale and background. This necessitates additional efforts to conduct feasibility studies and gather essential information to ensure that projects are well-informed, logically justified, and aligned with the organization's objectives. Furthermore, the organization's engagement in consultative processes, such as CDWP (Central Development Working Party) and DDWP

(Departmental Development Working Party) meetings, indicates a need for collaborative decision-making. While this approach is valuable for enhancing project quality and alignment, it also brings challenges in terms of “coordinating discussions, obtaining consensus”, and ensuring that all relevant perspectives are considered. Overall, the challenges faced by the organization revolve around data availability, feasibility assessments, and the consultative nature of the planning process. Addressing these challenges is essential to ensuring the effectiveness and success of the organization's initiatives.

5.2.4.3. Organization X

For Organization X, time constraints are a significant challenge, as the government hierarchy and decision-making processes can be slow, leading to delays in implementing projects and policies. The organization also encounters “financial constraints”, requiring collaboration with stakeholders to secure necessary resources for its activities. Limited human resources pose a challenge, as government institutes, including institutions like Organization X, often have constrained staff capacities, which can affect the efficiency of their work. Additionally, navigating bureaucratic procedures and protocols within the government can be cumbersome and time-consuming, hindering swift actions and responses. Balancing the diverse range of thematic areas and objectives within the organization's mandate presents another challenge, requiring careful prioritization and resource allocation. Despite these challenges, the organization strives to overcome them by leveraging partnerships, advocating for necessary resources, streamlining processes, and effectively communicating its goals to various stakeholders. According to the program organizer, they “never face backlash from public” in their activities and enjoy support of

government and other organizations.

5.2.4.4. All Pakistan Women's Association

One notable challenge for APWA involves dealing with personal and family issues that impact the staff. For instance, an incident with a sweeper's daughter who experienced emotional distress and self-harm posed a complex situation, requiring medical attention and involvement of authorities. Balancing such situations, according to the chairperson, while maintaining the organization's focus on empowerment can be demanding. Women often face various issues within their households, and having a “legal expert available for consultation” could assist in resolving conflicts and offering guidance. However, the organization has not yet established this resource, indicating a need for further development in this area. The organization faces several significant challenges within its operational context. One of the prominent challenges pertains to the “scarcity of volunteers within society”. APWA often struggles to secure individuals willing to volunteer their services. For instance, recruiting retired professionals such as doctors who are willing to contribute their expertise without remuneration, or legal expert proves to be a challenge. Another noteworthy challenge revolves around “financial constraints and limited donor engagement in the Islamabad” region. Unlike Karachi and Lahore, where “industrialists and benefactors may contribute substantial donations”, the organization faces difficulties in garnering financial support and donations in Islamabad. As a voluntary non-governmental organization (NGO), the organization aims to “offer subsidized or free services”, yet the absence of significant “local donors” affects its financial sustainability and capacity to undertake various initiatives. Furthermore, operational costs associated with “essential utilities such as electricity and gas” pose ongoing challenges for it. The reliance on support

from the head office to cover such costs underscores the financial complexities faced by the organization. They also never have to face any public reaction to their endeavors as their work does not involve engagement with any conflicts or controversies.

5.3. Analytical Summary

The chapter delved into the methodologies, practices, successes, and challenges of respondent organizations working towards women's empowerment in Pakistan to answer research question 2 of the study. Each organization showcases a unique approach, reflecting their multifaceted strategies to address the multifarious facets of women's empowerment. These organizations exemplify Pakistan's multifaceted approaches to women's empowerment. Each organization's methodology is tailored to address specific aspects of empowerment, contributing to successes evident through transformed individuals, legal reforms, policy integration, and expansive campaigns. Despite facing various challenges, these organizations remain committed to fostering positive change and enhancing the status of women in the country.

PGGA employs a comprehensive approach, focusing on females' development across various age groups. The methodology is rooted in nonformal experiential learning, aligning with the principles of learning through play and personal growth. The organization's curriculum emphasizes individual progress through badges and certificates, promoting both cooperation and competition. PGGA's impact is evident through the positive behavioral changes observed in its participants, fostering qualities like confidence, patience, and effective problem-solving skills. Its extensive membership and notable individuals associated with the organization underscore its influence. The "Stay Safe" project's success is demonstrated through its multi-level reach and positive change

dissemination. PGGA faces challenges arising from financial constraints, limiting the execution of programs, and activities. Its intangible focus on personality development limits its immediate recognition compared to more tangible efforts. Staff capacity and volunteer commitment levels also present challenges.

The Social Welfare Section's methodology centers on gender-responsive policy planning and development. It ensures alignment with gender-friendly principles through systematic review and analysis of policy documents, fostering collaborations with various stakeholders. The Social Welfare Section's achievements lie in its role within the developmental process, achieving tangible benefits for women and promoting gender empowerment. The Social Welfare Section grapples with data scarcity impacting informed decision-making, feasibility assessments, and collaborative decision-making processes.

Organization X adopts a dynamic strategy, spanning economic empowerment, legal advocacy, policy direction, and collaboration with national and international bodies. Their methodology seeks to effect change through partnerships, research initiatives, and an active role in legal and policy reviews. Organization X's successes encompass impactful campaigns, legal reforms, and the establishment of the National Gender Data Portal, indicating a dedication to evidence-based decision-making and policy formulation. Organization X navigates challenges in time constraints, financial limitations, bureaucratic procedures, and thematic balance.

The APWA's Islamabad branch emphasizes accessible education, gender-inclusive staffing, vocational skill development, mental health support, and expansive geographical coverage as part of its holistic methodology. Notably, an environment of inclusivity and support empowers women across all roles, fostering an atmosphere where women can

thrive without gender-based barriers. The organization's efforts extend beyond education to practical skill development, mental health support, and promotion of gender equality within society. The branch's wide-reaching presence across Pakistan reflects a nationwide endeavor to uplift and educate women and girls, contributing to a comprehensive empowerment strategy. APWA faces personal and family issues impacting staff, difficulty in recruiting trained volunteers, financial constraints, and operational cost challenges.

All four respondent organizations at some level work in collaboration with other organizations, particularly UN. Importantly, their challenges do not include backlash or resistance from public or organizations. This can be attributed to the fact that the three of them are government organizations and APWA's work domain does not involve the confrontational versions. PGGA's trainer told that they deliberately avoid confrontational groups and stress on both rights and responsibilities. For government organizations, there can be seen significant role of SDGs and international commitments in their activities of women empowerment. APWA's Islamabad activities though including vocational training courses have become limited over time. Like the previous chapter, from the practices of respondent organizations as well the agency development takes priority in PGGA's efforts, while for the other three economic empowerment takes precedence with social welfare section and organization X's focus on development of a conducive environment for women through provision of structural resources. Except for PGGA, none among the respondents from respondent organizations could provide a satisfying answer of how they measure the success of their projects and practices. This can be partly attributed to the limited sphere of work at APWA's Islamabad branch and the mostly documentary and policy formulation function of the two government organizations. The next chapter

presents the content analysis of Iqbal's philosophy of *Khudi* and self-realization as relevant to women and women empowerment.

CHAPTER 6

IQBAL'S PHILOSOPHY OF *KHUDI* AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

6.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the answer to research question three. Its first part elaborates on Iqbal's philosophy of *Khudi* (Self) as relevant to self-empowerment for human beings in general and to women empowerment in particular. The rationale behind choosing Allama Muhammad Iqbal has been presented in detail. It then briefly yet comprehensively touches on his philosophy of *Khudi* and how it relates to women empowerment. The chapter then presents Iqbal's views through his poetry and prose on women and his contemporary women empowerment movements. At places I have used Iqbal's poetry in its original text along with translation owing to his impactful words that the translations fail to express. It is followed by the themes extracted and framework I have developed through the qualitative analysis of Iqbal's work. The second part of the chapter presents the ideas from in-depth interviews of respondents from respondent organizations about the relevance of Iqbal's philosophy to women empowerment endeavours. It also adds relevant data collected from participant observations, document analysis, informal interviews and focus group discussions. The chapter ends with providing an analytical summary of all that is presented in a comprehensive summary.

6.2. Iqbal: Rationale

The rationale behind selecting Iqbal's philosophical framework for the current research is multidimensional. The most significant is his being the cultural figure and his unanimous acceptance as the ideological father and architect of Pakistan by masses and various ideological groups in the Muslim world (Shafi, 2018). His philosophy conforms to

the cultural and religious perspective of the East and more particularly the Muslims of Indian subcontinent. Iqbal held conviction that Muslims who are the last ummah, will be called to lead the nations of the world and motivated the Muslims to assimilate courage, truth and justice demanded of the world leaders (Mir, 2006). His message was the message of Islam, and his goal was to establish Allah's world order on earth under the direct leadership of Muslim ummah. And this Iqbal explained is for the benefit of the world itself (Iqbal, 1953). Some acclaimed scholars like Dr. Ghulam Mustafa Khan (2007) have written books demonstrating the direct relevance of Iqbal's poetic verses with the Qur'an. Thus, it can be safely concluded that Iqbal's teachings enjoy the credibility of being Qur'anic interpretations, which makes them quite appropriate to be referred to, with greater confidence, as far as derivation of an indigenous and Islamic framework for women empowerment from his philosophy is concerned.

The main thrust of Iqbal's philosophy of *Khudi* (Iqbal, 1944) is empowerment of humans to play the role of Creator's representative or Naib in this world. Since human is next to the Creator in the hierarchy of creation in world, humans have been blessed with immeasurable potential to carry out their God-directed objectives in this life. The self-realization of this potential is of vital importance as we all will be adjudged individually for our actions on the Day of Judgment. As such Iqbal's focus is on individual's realization of this God-gifted potential, both at conscious level as well as through practical demonstration through actions.

Iqbal's philosophy on women empowerment has same implications. It is related to the Qur'anic stand on the status and function of women in this domain of life coupled with individual's accountability on the Day of Judgment (Iqbal, 1923). Implementing Creator's

world order calls for performing correct designated life role by each individual, male or female. Thus, Iqbal not only defines woman's role in domain of life as directed by God, but he also guides and motivates women to empower themselves as per these directives through realization of their role and the potential that they are blessed with (Tahir, 2019).

Iqbal's poetic message endeavours to cover two vital facets of individual development: the person, and their role and performance in community; that is the development of personality and being a useful member of the society and the world, they live in, in their respective roles for a harmonious community (Iqbal, 1923). As such, his message has great value for women empowerment. Iqbal's strategy was quite holistic and exhaustive, for he not only diagnoses the illnesses of ummah but also prescribes cure for each affliction; furthermore, he not only prescribes the cure but provides a rationale behind the recommended cure and then motivates us to take the helm of this world as vicegerent of the Creator (Ali & Hussien, 2018). His work as a poet, politician, philosopher, and public intellectual was widely recognized in his lifetime and plays a major role in contemporary narratives about Islam, modernity, and tradition (Faizi, 2021).

His poetry reflects Islamic teachings and is commensurate with the natural disposition of human being who has been designed by the Creator to play the role of His vicegerent and not just an animal in the higher taxonomic level of living things, which the West depicts (Khan, 2021). Further Iqbal elaborates that this role of Khalifa or vicegerent, was voluntarily accepted by human as narrated in the holy Qur'an. The responsibility of this vicegerent is to establish Creator's world order and for this specific role human has been inherently blessed with the required potential (Ali & Hussien, 2018). Iqbal (1953) looks at the human from Qur'anic perspective, and he presents an Islamic Human Model

according to which human is the most respectable creation that is created with a developed self and potential according to God's deputy, and the only requirement for humans is to realize this potential and actualize it during their lives. As such it can be claimed that his theories on human have been derived from Qur'an and are indigenous to Islamic societies (Iqbal, 1915). Given that theories form the bedrock of systems, it is undeniable that Iqbal's call is exceptionally comprehensive. It would be a regrettable omission for us to exclude his ideas from our theories, disregarding their holistic nature and their relevance to indigenous culture and religion. Iqbal himself highlighted the cultural and religious relevance and context for any social endeavours. Iqbal reminded Muslims that we should not mimic the west in their culture as Islam and secular western philosophy are not compatible. He elaborates,

“Judge not your nation on the criteria of Western nations

Special in composition is the Hashimi Prophet's nation” (Iqbal, 2014, p. 212)

Iqbal was well-versed both in Western as well as Eastern philosophies. His education in the west provided him with the opportunity for a comparative analysis of his Islamic understanding with the western prevalent ideologies and practices (Nadwi, 2007). This rendezvous with the west made him appreciate the weaknesses of western systems. Iqbal could see Islam as a practical system rather than just a philosophy that is superior to west in its philosophy of life. He had conviction that this God-given system was the only solution to the present ills and chaos in world societies. He also kept himself updated on contemporary intellectual, scientific and cultural developments in the world and elaborated on them (Mir, 2006). Further, his teachings are highly valued not only by the Muslims of Pakistan, but by the Muslim Ummah in general. This makes his directives on such

sensitive issues as women empowerment very pertinent to Muslim societies. The genesis of Iqbal's philosophy and teachings is his concept of *Khudi* which Iqbal elucidates is the germ of Human individual and collective development.

6.3. Iqbal's Philosophy of Self (*Khudi*)

The attribute of *Khudi* or Self-empowerment by reinforcement of Self for Iqbal is the basic ingredient that motivates a human to perform and achieve in this life. It is where God's design of actual or natural human as His representative and best of creation is instinctively manifested. Iqbal argued that it was the lack of self-realization that had led to Ummah's present dilapidating state. Iqbal (1915) metaphorically explains that it is *Khudi* that turns a coal into diamond and with weak *Khudi* a person is like a corpse. Below I will endeavor to elaborate on Iqbal's concept of *Khudi* using Iqbal's own quotes and verses as with any translation of philosophical and poetic ideas, nuances and subtleties may be lost or altered, so I have also added some original poetic verses of Iqbal along with translation to present the forceful style of his poetry.

In describing the status and basic inherent traits of human, Iqbal (Iqbal, 2010; Sherwani, 2015) uses following verses from the Qur'an:

Firstly, the Creator has himself chosen human as His representative and has accordingly designed him:

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً قَالُوا أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَن يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ وَنَحْنُ
نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ قَالَ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ (al-

Just think when your Lord said to the angels: "Lo! I am about to place a vicegerent on earth," they said: "Will You place on it one who will spread mischief and shed blood while we celebrate Your glory and extol Your holiness?" He said: "Surely I

know what you do not know.” (Quran, 2:30)

Secondly, this Human has taken this solemn responsibility of vicegerency themselves which indicates their challenge seeking nature and superiority over all other creations:

إِنَّا عَرَضْنَا الْأَمَانَةَ عَلَى السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالْجِبَالِ فَأَبَيْنَ أَنْ يَحْمِلْنَهَا وَأَشْفَقْنَ مِنْهَا وَحَمَلَهَا الْإِنْسَانُ إِنَّهُ
كَانَ ظَلُومًا جَهُولًا

“We offered the trust (of personality) to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to carry it and were afraid of doing so; but man carried it. Surely he is wrong-doing, ignorant.” (Quran, 33:72)

Thirdly each human is highly individualistic and has to fully bear the responsibility all alone for his failings to bear this trust:

وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ وَإِنْ تَدْعُ مُثْقَلَةٌ إِلَىٰ جِمْلِهَا لَا يَحْمِلُ مِنْهُ شَيْءٌ وَلَوْ كَانَ ذَا قُرْبَىٰ إِنَّمَا تُنذِرُ
الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُم بِالْغَيْبِ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَمَنْ تَرَكَىٰ فإِنَّمَا يَتَرَكَ لِنَفْسِهِ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ الْمَصِيرُ

No one can bear another’s burden. If a heavily laden one should call another to carry his load, none of it shall be carried by the other, even though he be a near of kin. (O Prophet), you can warn only those who fear their Lord without seeing Him and establish Prayer. Whoever purifies himself does so to his own good. To Allah is the final return. (Quran, 35:18)

As can be observed Iqbal (2010) derives his concept of ‘*Khudi*’ or ‘Self’ from Qur’an. This self has intentionally taken up the responsibility to play the role of Creator’s vicegerent with all their demands and responsibilities. This self is highly individualistic in nature and has been given the competence and capacity to perform the duty of a vicegerent and be fully responsible for their deeds in this respect, on the Day of Judgment.

Khudi can be defined as an inherent life force present within human existence,

cultivated through qualities such as self-reliance, self-respect, self-confidence, self-preservation, and even self-assertion in the pursuit of truth, justice, duty, and morality, as required by the Creator's vision for implementing a world-order on Earth (Khan & Malik, 2021). Iqbal believed that *Khudi* represents the genuine essence of an individual's inner self, serving as the effective core of a human being. A fully developed *Khudi* within a person will foster and embody the attributes of the Divine. Through this process of self-realization, the true meaning and purpose of human existence become more evident to the individual. In other words, *Khudi* is self-realization leading to self-actualization where a human finds itself on the stage of the desired performance to play their individual and collective role as Creator's representative, thus succeeding in the next everlasting life (Ali & Hussien, 2020).

For Iqbal (1915, 2010) every human is designed and programmed to play this role. Every single creation is by nature self-exposing. This self-exposition is evident in nature and reflects the perfection of its design. Throughout his Urdu and Persian poetry, he emphasized to his readers to actualize their potential with their inherent creativity and courage and venture in paths rarely taken.

ہر چیز ہے محو خود نمائی
 ہر ذرہ شہید کبریائی
 بے ذوق نمود زندگی ، موت
 تعمیر خودی میں ہے خدائی

Every atom pants for glory: greed

Of self-fruition earth's whole creed!

Life that thirsts for no flowering—death:

Self-creation—a godlike deed; (Iqbal, 1979, p. 266)

Without this exposition of human-self, human is like a blunt sword (Iqbal, 1979). This self in Iqbal's eyes, has to be strengthened through seeking challenges and surmounting the challenge practically through desire and passion. Avoiding struggles would, in fact, weaken one's *Khudi* and render it inert. The self evolves most profoundly when an individual actively engages with life while maintaining a connection with God, the community, and nature. Iqbal asserted that *Khudi* requires the fusion of willpower and belief, and it ultimately manifests itself as "*yaqeen*," signifying a profound inner conviction (Khan & Malik, 2021). Central to the development of the self is this unwavering resolve to respond to the sensual allurements of life. Thence, the individual holds the steering of one's own life and if developed to an extent, of their nation.

کانپتا ہے دل ترا اندیشہ طوفاں سے کیا
ناخدا تو، بحر تو، کشتی بھی تو، ساحل بھی تو

“Why is your heart trembling with the fear of the storm?

The sailor, the ocean, the boat, as well as the sea-shore you are” (Iqbal, 2014a, p.

191)

6.4. Iqbal on Women and Women Empowerment Approaches

Iqbal presented most of his philosophy through his Persian and Urdu poetry. If his poetic and prose work is seen in an organized manner for the concept of women empowerment, a complete picture is created which helps to open this “entangled Knot” of women empowerment. It is such a picture that beautifully encompasses all dimensions of femininity, including emotional, intellectual, and social dimensions, adorned with vibrant colors of romantic, aesthetic, cultural and logical aspects. This picture carries with it the agency, organizational facilitation and freedom aspects from Sen's (2009) capability

approach, postcolonial arguments and indigenous Islamic approach. This is quite elaborated by his following verses:

“The picture that this world presents
 From woman gets its tints and scents:
 She is the lyre that can impart
 Pathos and warmth to human heart.
 Her handful clay is superior far
 To Pleiades that so higher are” (Iqbal, 2014b, p. 320)

Iqbal's profound intellectual discussions encompassed critical themes such as Islam and Muslims, education, literature, art, and the political dynamics between the East and West, all aimed at shaping objectives, nurturing Self (*Khudi*), and fostering national strength. Iqbal also delved into the intricate topic of women's status and empowerment from the perspective of Islam, acknowledging the complexities that arose from social, cultural, and traditional frameworks (Ambreen, 2019). Since Quran is the source of human intellect, like his other discourses, Iqbal's concept of women is also derived from Quran which he has tried to analyse in light of Indian political and cultural context. He talks about women's rights and responsibilities and informs them of the positive and negative influences of contemporary societal developments on them (Iqbal, 1953, 2014b).

His philosophy includes three aspects of women's role: the aesthetic aspect, their role in nation and societal development as key players and their rights as individuals (Ambreen, 2019). Thus holistically covering the women empowerment issue while including the role of women as the agency in this process through their development of self (*Khudi*) and then their voluntary contribution in society through playing their inherent role

at the level of excellence. In *Asrar e Khudi* and *Ramooz e Bekhudi* (Iqbal, 1923), he narrates the reasons for the downfall of Muslim ummah and the weaknesses of Muslim ummah that underlie and created the surface-level symptoms and issues that Muslim world is facing contemporarily. He respected human beings as God's vicegerent with every individual created with the potential to serve this responsibility on God's earth. Iqbal further explains that since each and every human has been given full potential and ability to carry out this heavenly responsibility; now since humans live in communities essentially comprising male and female genders, each gender has been nominated to play its specific role in the grand scheme of establishing Creator's world order (Shariati, 1997; Sherwani, 2015). This specificity of role is important to realize, failing which the community or society lands into confusion and chaos, which is being observed contemporarily. Further Iqbal cautions that each human has to be answerable for the specific task to their Creator on the Day of Judgement. Accordingly, each human has been given the capability to perform as required and thus take his or her own individual responsibility on the Day of Judgment, which reflects the seriousness of the issue. Iqbal's whole poetry revolves around the development of such human and a dynamic Muslim community. He focuses on developing each single individual, since each individual has been intricately designed to perform its best in their domain of action, and these individuals institute a community. The performance of their specific task by each individual will reflect on the dynamicity and performance of that particular community he/she belongs to (Iqbal, 2021). Seeing women as individuals, Iqbal believes that they equally contribute to societal progress and a nation's uplift. To him, they are the preservers of a culture and traditions.

“Mothers preserve the clue of Brotherhood,
The strength of Scripture and Community” (Iqbal, 1953, p.55)

According to Tahir (2019), Iqbal observes that both East and west have failed to identify women’s status and role in scheme of universe leading them to face a crisis of identity. This crisis of identity trickles down to the core of societies leading to spiritual and moral disaster. Women are equally created and designed as per the role of God’s Khalifa yet they are usually confined to materialistic endeavours and/or denied of their basic rights in hides of traditions. He motivated women through his speeches and writings to be aware and stand for their rights with full force and fight legally if required. As a lawyer, he himself fought free cases for women rights (Ambreen, 2019). He had complaints with women, as with Indians as a whole, who remained unaware of their rights and remained submissive to oppression. This weakens the self (*Khudi*) and leads to exploitations by others. He complained further that both men and women are not realizing and actualizing their full potential.

تفاوت نہ دیکھا زن و شو میں میں نے
وہ خلوت نشیں ہے، یہ خلوت نشیں ہے
ابھی تک ہے پردے میں اولاد آدم
کسی کی خودی آشکارا نہیں ہے

In man and wife is no contrast, /They like seclusion and hold it fast./ The sons of
Adam still wear the mask, / But self hasn’t peeped out of the casque. (Iqbal, 2014b,
p. 320)

Women’s awareness and demand of their rights could lead to an increase in their society’s self-respect and sense of responsibility. He also stood for women rights to education, legal rights in domestic life, property rights, vote, political voice and intellectual development

mostly through his prose writings and law practice (Ambreen, 2019).

Despite Iqbal's stand for women rights, he warned Muslim women against the western emancipatory movements. He described western feminist movement in his Persian *magnum opus*, Javid Nama (Iqbal, 2011) where a European woman calls for women's liberation from men and motherhood. For him, the education and training of women on western philosophical basis are disastrous for two reasons: it leads to inevitable consequence of being unduly impressed and following West which damages the *Khudi* through its damaging impacts on individuals' own inherent creativity and potential leading to slave mentality. Secondly, the emancipation proclaimed by west is not suitable in the cultural and religious context hence leading to confusion in addition to their being inherently against nature.

کوئی پوچھے حکیم یورپ سے
ہند و یوناں ہیں جس کے حلقہ بگوش
کیا یہی ہے معاشرت کا کمال
مرد بے کار و زن تہی آغوش

“Ask the wise men of Europe, /who have hung Their ring in the nose of Greece and Hindostan:/ Is this their civilization's highest rung— /A childless woman and a jobless man?” (Iqbal, 2014b, p. 320)

He complained to his eastern fellows of finding an easy way out in becoming unduly impressed by western culture and considering their blind imitation as a way to development and modernity.

“The girls are learning English

The nation prosperity's way has found

The ways of the West are in view

Eastern ways sinful are found” (Iqbal, 2014a, p. 224)

Freedom and equality demanded for women are not without drastic effects on the family system that in turn causes a society to fall morally and be a threat to all individuals especially the vulnerable ones such as children, old, minorities and women (Sherwani, 2015). The then-contemporary movements of modernism in India, as Iqbal saw them, were not based on indigenous creativity and innovation but rather just an emulation of west without considering the difference in cultural context between the two (Iqbal, 2014b). He stressed preserving one’s religion and culture, without rendering one’s *Khudi* in impression, subjugation and followership of anyone. Iqbal was a strong proponent of scientific advancement and reason, yet he did not consider it a sufficient salvation for the human society. He considered economic independence as one of the most important tools of empowerment yet never took it as tantamount to meeting all human and national needs (Shariati, 1997). He could see women as protectors from western cultural imperialism through modernism on Muslims, provided they are aware of its damaging and hollow nature (Iqbal, 1953).

Answering the western critique of Islam for being oppressive for women, he held that these criticisms cannot be actually on Islam but on the interpretations of by various Islamic scholars in different historical eras, as Islam has granted wholesome rights to women and identified them as complete individuals with the same potential, rights and responsibility of Khalifa as men (Ambreen, 2019). Propriety, modesty and dignity are among highest values for human beings and he recommended women to develop their vision instead of being impressed by overt decorations (Iqbal, 2021). He held the

conviction that men and women are equal in Islam, yet the sphere of their responsibilities is separate that is in accordance with their inherent roles, hence both complementing each other in societal development. They are close to, support, and protect each other equally (Ambreen, 2019; Sherwani, 2015).

He especially highlights the pivotal role a mother plays and likened it to the role of prophets. For him, motherhood lays the foundation of strength and development for a nation.

If thou lookest well, Motherhood is a mercy, being linked

By close affinity to prophethood,

And her compassion is the prophet's own.

For mothers shape the way that men shall go;

Maturer, by the grace of Motherhood, The character of nations is,

the lines That score that brow determine our estate (Iqbal, 1953, p. 55)

He acknowledges the sacrifice of women who despite being underdeveloped in various regards still play their role as nation-builders. For Iqbal, if even a woman is not educated and carries the features that may be described as unattractive as per societal standards yet her efforts in upbringing of children who have traits of ardent Muslims, we should be respectful and appreciative of her role. She may not be directly contributing to economy, yet she is the source of developing the individuals who can effectively contribute to national development (Iqbal, 1953).

He opined that the responsibility of motherhood is a central pillar for a nation and diverting women from this role to others such as typists or clerks is not only against nature but also a tragic attempt to dismantle society. He stressed that a nation's strength is not

based on material wealth and capitalist endeavours but on its healthy individuals who are intelligent (*Tar dimagh*), hardworking (*sakht kosh*) and agile (*Chak o Chust*) as are result of a self-developed mother's training (Iqbal, 1953, p.55). Such individuals open endless venues for a society and culture for development. For him, this role of motherhood is so central that any education that is antagonistic to this role of women is an absolute disaster for humanity and intellectualism in the long run.

تہذیب فرنگی ہے اگر مرگ امومت
 ہے حضرت انساں کے لیے اس کا ثمر موت
 جس علم کی تاثیر سے زن ہوتی ہے نازن
 کہتے ہیں اسی علم کو ارباب نظر موت

“If Frankish culture blights the motherly urge, / For human race it means a funeral dirge. / The lore that makes a woman lose her rank / Is naught but death in eyes of wise and frank.”(Iqbal, 2014b, p. 321)

Since women play the major role in the survival of human species and nation, men also need to play their role as protectors and facilitators in their development. When they don't play this role, that nation is bound to face decline.

“What Muslim reckons her A servant, nothing more,
 no part has won Of the Book's wisdom” (Iqbal, 1953, p.55)

He presents examples of dynamic Muslim women from different spheres of life who not only played their role as mothers to raise courageous individuals capable of bringing positive change in society as well as those who participated in other walks of life to add their excellence to them. He presented various Muslim women from history as a role models of his concept of *Khudi*, for example, Fatima binte Muhammad (R.A) (Iqbal, 1953), Fatima binte Abdullah (Iqbal, 2014a), the Punjab's freedom-loving passionate

leader Sharf-un-Nissa Begum (Iqbal, 2011) and a passionate non-muslim Qurrat Al-‘ayn Ṭāhirah Bābī (Iqbal, 2011). Especially highlighting Fatima Binte Muhammad (R.A) role in formulating the personality of his son as great freedom fighter Hussain bin Ali in the way of Allah, he says

“High, high the cravings are That wrestle with thy soul;
 be conscious still And ever of thy model, Fatima,
 So that thy branch may bear a new Husain, Secrets & Mysteries
 Our garden blossom with the Golden Age.” (Iqbal, 1953, pp. 56-57)

Iqbal sees women as catalysts for inducing sublime qualities such as upbringing and civilization, religion and culture, knowledge and intellect, activism and devotion, the spirit of freedom, and purposefulness within the nation. He believes that if the advocacy of women's rights is aligned with the true and fundamental concept of women's freedom, Muslim women in India will be able to see social and cultural expressions of their rights embedded in legal and constitutional frameworks. Deriving practical recommendations from Iqbal's teachings can help us train our women to develop into dynamic individuals playing significant role in the societal development.

Following themes can be derived from Iqbal's philosophy of development of self (*Khudi*) as relevant to women empowerment.

Table 2.

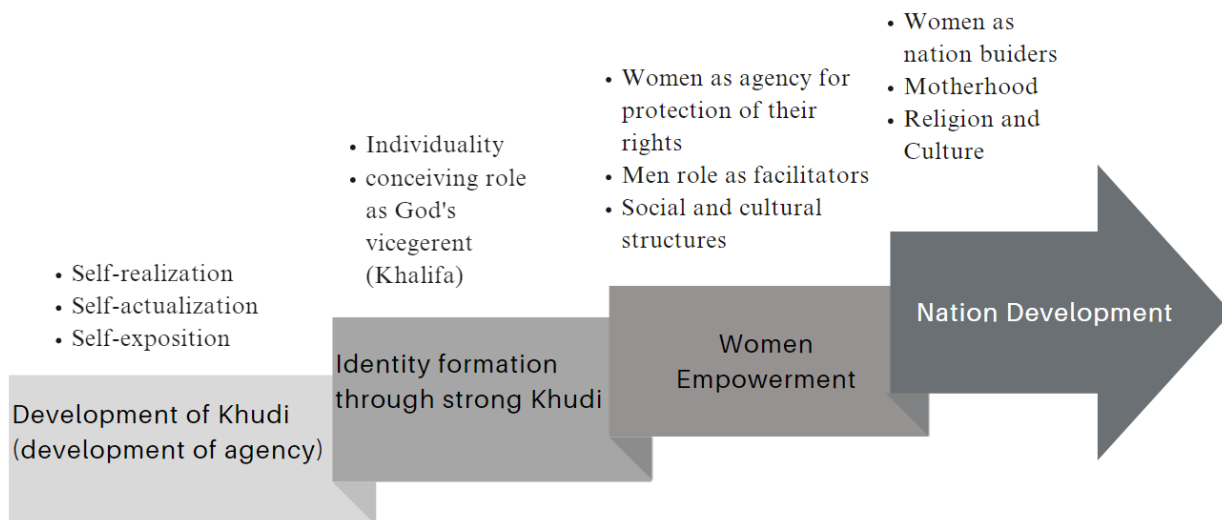
Themes For Concept of Women Empowerment from Iqbal's Philosophy

Personal	Relational	National
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of <i>Khudi</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Self-realization ○ Self-actualization ○ Self-exposition ○ Self-reliance • Sense of identity through fortification of individuality • Realization of responsibility as God's Vicegerent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determination of women's role in familial and social structure • Balance of rights and responsibilities • Men as collaborators and facilitators • Social and cultural structures as facilitators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of mothers • As trainers of generations • Preservers of religion and culture • Miscellaneous roles in nation building

6.5. Theoretical Model

As described above, following theoretical framework can be derived from Iqbal's approach to women empowerment through his philosophy of development of Self (*Khudi*).

Figure 2.

Iqbal's Theoretical Model for Women Empowerment**6.6. The Pertinence of Iqbal's Philosophy within Participating Organizations**

The PGGA respondents acknowledged Iqbal's role in creation of Pakistan. The National Commissioner stated that gist of Iqbal's message is to "develop yourself" and be "aware of yourself" and move towards "betterment and growth". The trainer admitted that she has not "read him much" yet his philosophy "sees human in a special way" and he has a special view about women. The national commissioner told that at PGGA they are working on the same principles as Iqbal's that is self-awareness and self-growth yet definitely they "do not delve into philosophy". The same was verified by an employee of PGGA in the FGD. Its aim aligns closely with his concept of "*Khudi ko kar buland itna*" (Elevate your selfhood to such an extent). The trainer said that she is sure that their program and its principles "do not conflict with Iqbal's philosophy". During participant observation of their workshops to guiders, they included celebration of Iqbal's day in their schedule of national day celebrations. They told the guiders that they can organize

competitions on that day although in an in-depth interview, I was told that they do not encourage competitions. Their guidebooks also included celebrations of Iqbal Day and there was also mention of holding competitions. Their guidebooks for all three levels (Junior, Girl and Senior Guides) included the mention of role and significance of mother in family and encouraged the guides to explore it further. Yet nowhere I could find its direct relevance to nation-building.

For the Deputy Chief Social Welfare Section (Gender Unit), Iqbal's philosophy is "about human development" and focuses on both men and women "equally ..without segregation (and) disbalance". He quoted Iqbal's poetic verse "*Khudi wo beher hai jiska koi kinara nahi/ Agar apni abju samjho to koi chara nahi*" (The human self is expansive like an ocean, unrestricted by depth or boundaries/ If you consider it just a stream then there is no way out). He defined *Khudi* that it's the human potential and will that when a person, be it man or woman whoever decides to achieve something and works for it passionately, the universe supports them. He presented examples of women who achieved greatness such as "Malala Yousaf Zai who worked in education sector although she received support as well" and others in politics, medicine, engineering etc. During my participation in the organization as an intern and from document and website analysis, I could not see any mention of Iqbal or his concepts directly. Their work is mostly focused on structural support to provide a conducive environment for women in Pakistani society.

Organization X's vision, according to the program officer, aligns with Iqbal's philosophy of *Khudi* and his ideas about "freedom and empowerment for all individuals". He said that "on the same grounds we are working". Just as Iqbal's thoughts encompassed the betterment of society as a whole, regardless of gender, the organization's focus on

women's empowerment is a reflection of Iqbal's broader message. The organization's efforts to promote gender equality and women's rights are in line with the principles of freedom and empowerment that Iqbal emphasized. Moreover, Iqbal's ideas are “directly or indirectly reflected in the constitution” through articles like “25A, which ensure equal rights, and articles 25-30, which outline fundamental rights for all citizens”. This alignment demonstrates that the organization's mission to empower women and promote their representation is rooted in values shared by Iqbal's philosophy of empowerment for the betterment of society as a whole. Similar to Social welfare unit, I could not find the mention of Iqbal or his philosophical ideas on any of their other platforms.

The chairperson and educational coordinator of APWA did not directly mention Iqbal's poetry or his philosophy when I asked them the question regarding it. Yet the chairperson stressed the need for development and focusing on values and civic sense among the children in schools saying that “much frustration is there” and that they are focusing on this factor in their school. She complained of the declining values of kindness and respect that are replaced by the “inconsiderate attitude” of people, opining that there is now just a “race for money”. The educational coordinator emphasized holistic education encompassing not only academic knowledge but also character and “personality development”. By placing a significant emphasis on cleanliness, behavior, and overall character development, she said that they are endeavouring to nurture individuals who possess not only intellectual acumen but also moral integrity and social responsibility. They are trying to empower their students to stand out and make meaningful contributions to society upon stepping out of its educational sphere. At the school they celebrate Iqbal days yet for the vocational training and parlor, I could not find any relevance regarding Iqbal's

philosophy directly except for economic empowerment.

6.7. Analytical Summary

The chapter offers an in-depth exploration of Allama Iqbal's philosophy and its relevance to women and women's empowerment. It begins by first presenting the rationale for using Iqbal's philosophical framework for the research study stressing Iqbal's relevance to Islamic teachings, to the indigenous culture of Pakistan particularly and Muslim world in general. The need to develop indigenous theoretical paradigms has also been elaborated. It then discusses the comprehensive nature of Iqbal's views on women, which encompass emotional, intellectual, and social dimensions. His poetic and prose work collectively portray women's multifaceted role in society, including their aesthetic, cultural, and logical aspects. Iqbal's approach to women's empowerment is deeply rooted in his interpretation of the Qur'an and the specific roles he envisions for women in societal development. He emphasizes their rights, responsibilities, and the impact of contemporary influences on them. Iqbal's philosophy comprises three key aspects: aesthetic, societal, and individual, where women play integral roles in preserving culture, contributing to nation-building, and asserting their rights.

The analysis proceeds to outline the themes derived from Iqbal's philosophy in relation to women's empowerment. These themes encompass personal, relational, and national dimensions. The development of *Khudi* (self) emerges as a central theme, fostering self-realization, identity, and a sense of responsibility as God's vicegerents. The interplay of rights, responsibilities, collaboration with men, and engagement with social and cultural structures underscores the relational dimension. At the national level, Iqbal views women as pivotal in roles such as mothers, trainers of generations, and preservers of

religion and culture. A theoretical model derived from Iqbal's philosophy has been presented visually representing how his concepts of *Khudi* and women's empowerment intersect. This model illustrates the interconnectedness of personal development, relational dynamics, and contributions to the nation.

Furthermore, the second part of the chapter explores the perceptions regarding Iqbal's philosophy and its practical application in respondent organizations. While not all organizations explicitly mention Iqbal, their respondents perceive that their endeavors align with at least some of his principles. PGGA integrates self-awareness and growth in their programs, and the Gender Unit emphasizes human development irrespective of gender. Organization X claims that their vision parallels Iqbal's ideas of empowerment and freedom APWA stresses holistic education and character development, resonating with Iqbal's emphasis on *Khudi*. On practical grounds, there is no direct reflection of Iqbal or his philosophy except for the celebration of Iqbal days, yet some of his principles are observed in practice such as self-awareness, self-actualization (expressed as self-growth and personality development), self-reliance (economic empowerment), equality of women rights, freedom and structural support for women.

The next chapter discusses the perceptions and practices of organizations working for women empowerment in Pakistan in light of data analysis with that of Iqbal's philosophy of *Khudi* as analysed by me through his work's thematic analysis and literature review. It then concludes the study with recommendations.

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study aimed to explore the perceptions and practices of organizations working for women empowerment in Pakistan and analyze it in light of Iqbal's philosophy of *Khudi* as relevant to women empowerment. The literature review identified the gap of scarcity in the study of organizational perceptions with regard to the work of women empowerment. There has been much work done on study of their practices, programs, public perceptions about them, and evaluation of their programs. Yet the philosophical grounding of their practices and endeavors with anthropological lens has not been explored yet. As Dr. Rafi-ud-Din (1961) stated every action of human beings needs to have its sound philosophical backing, the level of clearness and correctness of this philosophy affects the fruitfulness of the subject action. This issue can have serious implications for endeavors such as women's empowerment, particularly within ideological cultures like Pakistan. Notably, as women's empowerment and feminism gain traction in Pakistan, it becomes imperative to establish its relevance and cultural resonance. Moreover, a substantial portion of work conducted on this subject in Pakistan has been grounded in Western frameworks. Concerns surrounding cultural imperialism and post-colonialism, particularly pertaining to "foreign-funded NGOs", are prevalent among local populations. Consequently, the concept and implementation of women's empowerment initiatives are met with suspicion, viewed as the imposition of foreign doctrines and a breach of local cultural norms (Jamal & Baldwin, 2019). This issue points towards lack of indigenous theorizations about women empowerment.

Addressing this gap requires the development of indigenous perspectives and

theories specific to women's empowerment. This holds true not only for Pakistan but for the wider Muslim world, which lacks Islamic theories and corresponding systems. Confusion arises when we ground ourselves in the realm of secular epistemology while residing in the vast ocean of Islam, drawing sustenance from the stream of secular thought. To effectively define the goals of empowerment, it is imperative that we have a precise understanding of our intended destination. Once we have a clear understanding of our goals, we should shape our empowerment aims and activities in alignment with these objectives rather than in contradiction to them. The creation of effective theories and systems necessitates their emergence from the indigenous cultural and religious paradigms of the respective culture. The absence of such indigenous frameworks led to my inclusion of Iqbal's philosophy as an analytical framework. Iqbal, a seminal figure who contributed to the ideological underpinnings of Pakistan, holds a unique place in the Muslim world, enjoying acceptance across various denominations (Mir, 2006). He is considered a renowned Islamic philosopher both within Pakistan and globally (Khan, 2022). Iqbal's philosophy of *Khudi* (Self) is deeply rooted in Islamic teachings (Iqbal, 1923; Tahir, 2019) and serves as the foundational ideology of Pakistan. Deriving objectives, rationale, and a theoretical framework from his theory of *Khudi* or human-self holds significant relevance within the Pakistani cultural context.

7.1. Bridging Perspectives: Women Empowerment Initiatives, Ethnographic Insights, and Iqbal's Philosophical Constructs in Pakistan

Women's empowerment initiatives in Pakistan are primarily championed by civil society, NGOs, and INGOs, alongside government efforts (Awan, 2020). While aligned with the United Nations' SDGs or previous MDGs, these organizations have distinct aims

and perspectives on women's empowerment, even within the same nation-state (Shah, 2020). As empowerment directly influences societal outcomes, adapting and localizing such initiatives becomes essential. Examining the perceptions and practices of organizations engaged in women's empowerment in Pakistan is crucial to understanding how their approaches resonate with the cultural context. This study also represented a noteworthy effort to identify factors recommended by Iqbal for fostering a strong self within the context of women's empowerment. Iqbal's nuanced understanding of the human-self offers a potential solution to this predicament. Acknowledging the value of Western intellect while remaining cautious of its materialistic worldview (Mir, 2006), Iqbal's philosophy bridges Eastern and Western perspectives, making it pertinent for addressing contemporary challenges.

This was qualitative research that adopted a two-phase methodology: first phase involved ethnographic method to study four respondent organizations from Islamabad through in-depth interviews, participant observations, and focus group discussions, paired with informal interviews, websites and document reviews and photographs. The organizations included both governmental and non-governmental organizations. It also included a government organization working for girls and young women's empowerment with the rationale that their work is of formative significance. The second phase of the study involved the systematic extraction of themes and insights from Iqbal's concept of *Khudi* within the context of women's empowerment. To achieve this, a comprehensive analysis of Iqbal's primary and secondary texts was undertaken, aiming to identify recurring themes and formulate a theoretical model. The process encompassed a thematic exploration of Iqbal's Persian and Urdu poetry through content analysis, specifically

examining their relevance to the empowerment of women. Emphasis was placed on aspects of human nature, individuality, and the development of personality, all of which bear implications for women's empowerment. Given the allegorical and metaphorical nature of Iqbal's philosophical verses, a hermeneutic approach was employed to extract the underlying meanings and connotations. The analysis culminated in the identification of themes, which were subsequently organized into distinct clusters to form the thematic framework of perceptions, organizational practices, and Iqbal's *Khudi* concept as pertinent to women's empowerment. This analytical process extended to encompass the examination of organizations' perceptions and practices concerning Iqbal and his philosophical stance. The culmination of these two phases of analysis yielded a comprehensive exploration of the connections between Iqbal's philosophical constructs, women's empowerment, and the operational strategies of organizations. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of the alignment between Iqbal's ideas and contemporary initiatives focused on empowering women within the specific cultural and societal context.

7.2. Understanding Women Empowerment: Perceptions & Practices of Organizations

The research delved into the perceptions and perspectives of the respondent organizations concerning the concept of women's empowerment, addressing the first research question. Derived from in-depth interviews, website analysis, and document scrutiny, a comprehensive summary emerges. One of the respondent organizations' primary focus is on nurturing the holistic development of girls and young women, fostering a balance between rights and responsibilities. The organization endeavors to empower women through a multifaceted approach during their formative years, equipping

them with self-awareness and self-confidence for effective navigation in the world. In contrast, the two government agencies primarily tackle structural aspects of women's empowerment, aiming to provide facilities and eliminate systemic barriers to female participation in the country's workforce. The influence of international commitments and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is evident in their policies, while one organization out of four concentrates on women's economic independence via vocational training and opportunities.

The analysis also unveiled the operational practices related to women's empowerment within the respondent organizations. Collaboration with various entities, particularly the United Nations, features prominently across all four organizations. Remarkably, public resistance or backlash does not appear as a major challenge. This likely stems from the fact that three organizations are government-run, and the respondent NGO's focus does not involve confrontational approaches. The significance of SDGs and international commitments is evident in the activities of government organizations. One respondent organization, however, has experienced a narrowing scope in its vocational training offerings over time. Similar to the previous chapter, agency development takes precedence in one respondent organization's initiatives, while the other organizations prioritize economic empowerment, with the government organizations concentrating on providing structural resources to create an enabling environment for women. However, except for one out of four, interviewees from the respondent organizations struggled to provide a comprehensive measurement of their project and practice success, attributed partly to one organization's limited sphere of work and the predominantly policy-oriented nature of the two government organizations.

7.3. Bridging Iqbal's Philosophy and Women Empowerment: Insights, Perceptions, and Practical Application

The content analysis of Iqbal's philosophy through his primary and secondary text led me to undertake an exhaustive exploration of Allama Iqbal's philosophy and its relevance to women's empowerment. This analysis elucidates the all-encompassing nature of Iqbal's perspectives on women, encapsulating emotional, intellectual, and societal dimensions. His poetic and prose work jointly illustrate the multifaceted roles women play in society. Iqbal's conception of women's empowerment is deeply rooted in his interpretation of the Qur'an and his envisioned roles for women in societal progress. His philosophy embodies three crucial dimensions: aesthetic, societal, and individual, wherein women assume vital roles in preserving culture, contributing to nation-building, and asserting their rights. The analysis then outlined themes derived from Iqbal's philosophy relevant to women's empowerment, spanning personal, relational, and national aspects. Central to this is the development of *Khudi* (human-self), nurturing self-realization, identity, and the recognition of responsibilities as divine vicegerents. Within the relational dimension, the interplay of rights, responsibilities, collaboration with men, and engagement with social and cultural structures becomes evident. At the national level, Iqbal positions women as pivotal figures in roles like mothers, generational mentors, and custodians of religion and culture. A visually represented theoretical model emerges from Iqbal's concepts, illustrating the intersection of *Khudi* and women's empowerment and emphasizing the interlinked nature of personal growth, relational dynamics, and national contributions.

Moreover, the latter part of this analysis delved into perceptions regarding Iqbal's

philosophy and its practical application within the respondent organizations. While not all organizations explicitly mention Iqbal, their respondents perceive an alignment with at least some of his principles. One out of four organizations integrates self-awareness and growth into their programs, while one of the government organizations underscores human development regardless of gender. Other government organizations claim consonance between their vision and Iqbal's notions of empowerment and freedom. Another respondent organization prioritizes holistic education and character development, mirroring Iqbal's emphasis on *Khudi*. Practically, there is no direct reflection of Iqbal or his philosophy, aside from celebrating Iqbal days. However, several of his principles, such as self-awareness, self-actualization (manifested as self-growth and personality development), self-reliance (linked to economic empowerment), gender equality, freedom, and structural support for women, are observed in practice.

As the analysis shows, one out of four organizations seems to be in most close alliance with application of themes from Iqbal's philosophy. A few aspects from each of the three dimensions of Iqbal's philosophy: personal, relational and national can be observed in their perceptions and practices. These include the emphasis on self-realization, self-growth (personal dimension), acknowledgement of women's role in familial and social structure, balance between rights and responsibilities (relational dimension) and acknowledgement of miscellaneous roles of women at national level (national dimension). Moreover, the importance they give to the qualities of leadership and initiative, emphasis on collaboration rather than competition and alignment with Pakistani cultural context are its significant features. Yet their perceptions and practices do not reflect the national and ummah perspective of Iqbal's philosophy, it does not base its foundation on the Quranic

objective of serving as God's vicegerent whose purpose is the success of hereafter. The foundational perceptions are more secular based in contrast to the Iqbal's Islamic perspective of self-empowerment.

The two government organizations mainly focused on policy-making and legal reforms for facilitation of women in workplace, participation in different domains of society and providing them protection in society. Together they are collaborating with other national and international organizations to develop a safe environment for women. One of their main goals is to achieve international commitments and SDGs. As per the analysis, their endeavors reflect the relational dimension of Iqbal's philosophy which is the facilitation through social and cultural structures. To some extent, they are also supporting self-reliance through economic empowerment (personal) and increasing the miscellaneous roles of women in national development through political participation and representation. Yet their objective too is based on western secular ideology and mostly endeavors to achieve international commitments and SDGs. Another respondent organization works mainly for economic empowerment of women through vocational training and provision of employment and work opportunities to them with provision of counselling services as well. Their educational services are for children till primary level. They reflect self-reliance (personal dimension) and facilitation through social and cultural structures (relational dimension). Their work is based on neoliberal perspective of using women's agency for women empowerment.

7.4. Comparing Empowerment Frameworks: Capability Approach, Kabeer's Model, and Iqbal's Holistic Perspective

The Capability Approach, as advocated by Sen (1999, 2009), offers an alternative framework for assessing endeavours of women empowerment. It takes into account human functioning, capability, and freedom of choice, challenging traditional economic and utility-based methods by providing a more comprehensive perspective. These organizations are working to increase the capabilities of women through offering work on self-growth, facilitation through legal and policy frameworks and economic empowerment through vocational trainings. Similarly, Kabeer's three-dimensional model identifies three critical elements in empowering women: resources, agencies, and achievement. These organizations are at different levels working on these three elements for achieving women empowerment. Various other social development approaches, welfare policies, and anti-poverty strategies have frequently been based on the assumption that elevating household income or material wealth is the most effective way to alleviate poverty and, consequently, the central objective of social development. Similarly, neoliberal strategies oriented towards growth, capital accumulation, privatization, and investment in countries with inexpensive labor markets prioritize materialistic considerations, sometimes disregarding aspects of human well-being and human rights (Pyles, 2008).

Iqbal's perspective, on the other hand, draws from a philosophical and spiritual perspective that underscores the dignity and agency of individuals. It aligns with a more humanistic and ethical viewpoint that transcends secularism. It emphasizes a more holistic view of empowerment that encompasses individual self-realization and ethical choices. His perspective, being rooted in Islamic philosophy, may resonate more with cultures in

Muslim-majority countries. Post-colonial feminist scholars like Mohanty Chandra (1991, 2013), and Uma Narayan (2013), also have significantly contributed to challenging and deconstructing colonial and Western-centric narratives in global south. In his book "Islam in Liberalism," Joseph Massad (2015) critiques Western liberal discourse and feminism for attempting to universalize Western experiences and values. He highlights the hypocrisy and patronizing attitudes inherent in this approach, particularly in the context of women's rights. Massad argues that Western development agencies and human rights organizations often employ the rhetoric of 'global sisterhood' and emphasize commonalities in violence against women across cultures to promote Western liberal definitions of rights (Massad, 2015). He also points out how even some Muslim and Arab women's rights activists inadvertently reproduce orientalist stereotypes about Muslim women being trapped in patriarchal traditions and in need of Western-style reforms (Massad, 2015). Massad's critique underscores the need for a more nuanced and culturally sensitive approach to women's rights and gender equality that does not impose Western ideals on diverse societies.

Iqbal's perspective on women's empowerment through *Khudi* differs significantly from the contemporary ones such as capability approach and Kabeer's approach as it encompasses a holistic approach. His view not only encompasses the personal and relational dimensions but also acknowledges women's vital role in national development. His approach also provides a transcendental objective for empowerment of women than the capability approach while also including capability approach's aspects of freedom with more intricate dimensions. Nadwi (2007) emphasizes in his book on Iqbal that individuals should be educated and trained to lead society towards success and development. Iqbal's

analysis not only identifies weaknesses within the Muslim Ummah but also offers remedies. Notably, he aims to foster awareness of these weaknesses and their remedies. Hence his philosophy is more grounded and finds more applicability in Muslim world (Nadwi, 2007).

Iqbal's widespread respect within the Muslim Ummah adds weight to his directives for women's empowerment. His teachings align with the teachings of the Qur'an (Iqbal, 1953; Maudoodi, 1979; Popp, 2019), enhancing the credibility and validity of his philosophy for adoption by the Ummah seeking Islamic guidance in social endeavours like women empowerment. Islam at its foundation stands for equality of men and women in rights and responsibilities and does not consider any discrimination in them (Quran, 3:195, 75:36-39). Yet at societal level, the discrimination practice has been observed. Iqbal critically examines both Western and Eastern societies, contending that they have exploited women in their own ways, leading to a diminution of individuality and identity- the main facets of his philosophy of *Khudi*. He laments that this issue pertains not only to women but to humanity at large. About this lack of individuality and sense of identity which he refers to in his philosophy as *Khudi* in both men and women (Iqbal, 2014b).

5.4.1. Development of Khudi (Self)/Agency

In his philosophy, Iqbal emphasizes that realization of *Khudi*, or individuality, is the ultimate solution for humans, manifested through personal growth. He advocates for intellectual freedom, creativity, and self-awareness leading to self-actualization and exposition. Iqbal underscores the need for a strong self as an essential prerequisite for being a Khalifa (vicegerent) of God on Earth. He suggests that praxis—putting beliefs into practice—is vital for Muslims and underscores the development of the self in three stages:

obedience, self-control, and Divine Vicegerency. Iqbal maintains that harmony and stability can be achieved through obedience to God's laws, He asserts that since all things in this world follow Creator's laws, man, too, can acquire harmony and stability through obedience to God. He says:

Since Law makes everything strong within,

Why dost thou neglect this source of strength? (Iqbal, 1944, p. 74)

Badri (2018) emphasizes that western interventions are based on their assumptions of human nature that do not align with that of Islam hence there is a need for Muslims to devise their own theories that align with their religious and cultural context. Hence, Iqbal's message emphasizes that Muslims are the last Ummah, charged with establishing God's order on Earth. Muslims are expected to serve as God's vicegerents, representing Him on Earth, a responsibility applicable to both men and women. Iqbal calls for a return to the code of life brought by the Prophet (P.B.U.H.), recognizing it as the path to success in both worlds. This realization holds significant implications for women's empowerment, urging its incorporation into Muslim women's education and consciousness. Similar to Iqbal's concept of women's (and men's since his philosophy addresses both genders) agency development, Mahmood (2005) recognized pious self-making and ethical self-formation of Muslim women. Failure to identify such agency in earlier works regarding Muslim women, in Mahmood's assessment, was the result of liberal formulation of agency, that could only recognize agency in the presence of resistance. Challenging the traditional boundaries of feminist thought and broadening the understanding of agency in religious contexts, her work prompted a post-secular shift in feminist thinking about agency, forcing

theorists to consider the complexities of piety and contributing to post-colonial feminist theory.

5.4.2. Women Empowerment Leading to Nation (Community) Development

After addressing the development of the self, Iqbal goes further to turn his attention to the complex relationship and role of the individual within the community, or the "*millah*." In this context, his initial objective is to foster an understanding and readiness within each individual for their role in societal progress. This understanding is crucial, as it lays the foundation for motivation and practical implementation. Here, Muslim women role as mothers is seen with high respect and regard. In PGGA, their vision focuses on women's role as mother and trains girls accordingly, other government organizations are focussing on facilitation of mothers through provision of daycares etc. They are acknowledging and nurturing women's capabilities, enabling them to make more informed decisions and exercise greater self-determination in this role. Yet Iqbal's notions of motherhood extend beyond family and sees it as a pillar that strengthens the nation. He sees mother as preserver of religious and cultural traditions and a comprehensive training institute of nation. Hence women along with their other miscellaneous roles in nation-building, have this additional role that cannot be substituted by anyone other than them. Hence, they should be made aware and trained according to this responsibility. Contemporary women empowerment practices do not emphasize on the concept of motherhood with this respect and focus more on other miscellaneous areas of women's roles and empowerment. Iqbal elaborates that since Muslims are the final Ummah and no future Prophets are anticipated, the responsibility of establishing God's divine order rests upon this last community. Muslims are anticipated to serve as representatives and

vicegerents of the Creator on Earth. This implies that every individual, regardless of gender, within this Ummah must recognize their significant role and the considerable responsibility associated with it. They should cultivate their self for this collective mission of vicegerency. Iqbal rationalizes that the attainment of this collective mission necessitates unity and collaboration. The pursuit of this task must become an earnest desire and obsession for every Muslim. Iqbal laments that the Ummah has excessively adopted Western standards and drifted away from the essence of Islam. He advocates for a return to the Prophet's ﷺ teachings, the guiding code of life that ensures success in both worldly and spiritual domains. The realization of this principle holds profound implications for women's empowerment, particularly for cultivating it within the Muslim youth. Hence whole of Iqbal's approach focuses on inherent dignity of human beings, regardless of their gender, and their identity and crucial role in in their personal and communal lives. Hence women are seen as crucial members of Muslim ummah whose role is pivotal in defining its direction and should be regarded as such.

Given the context of the research focused on societal realities, delving into the profound poetic allusions found in Iqbal's works holds the potential to establish meaningful connections between these metaphors and the practical situations on the ground. By exploring the intricate layers of meaning and the implications embedded within Iqbal's symbolic language, we can bridge the gap between his poetic expressions and the tangible realities experienced within the cultural and religious framework. In this regard, it is anticipated that a deeper understanding of Iqbal's symbolism, contextualized within the cultural and religious landscape, will unveil a viable and comprehensive theoretical framework. Iqbal's symbols are not only culturally resonant but also multi-dimensional,

offering sustenance beyond their conventional interpretations. Take, for instance, the archetype of the potter's creation, such as a vase. Lacan's insight on this matter is intriguing - he proposes that the potter's act of crafting a vase creates a space around it, a space that promises fulfillment (Lacan, 1992). In parallel to Lacan's notion, Iqbal's poetic symbols can be likened to vessels that encapsulate profound meanings. These symbols not only signify cultural and religious ideals but also encompass the potential to shape and contain the evolving dynamics of women's empowerment within the societal context. Thus, by carefully examining these symbols, their cultural resonance, and the practical implications they carry, we can establish a bridge between the abstract poetic realm and the tangible empowerment efforts unfolding within the cultural fabric. This intricate interplay between symbolism and societal realities could potentially enrich the research's theoretical foundation and shed light on novel perspectives for women's empowerment.

7.5. Recommendations

It has been more than seventy years since most of the Muslim nations gained independence from the colonists; however, most of them are still following nearly all the systems that were developed and implemented by the colonists in their colonies. Yet as post-colonial scholars observe, there are ways in which the previously colonial states are still influenced by west through their theories, systems and development approaches. There has been a scarcity of indigenous theorizations and systems in Muslim world especially Pakistan according to their cultural context.

Another very important aspect is the suitability of contemporary women empowerment endeavors. For Muslims, Quran is a guidance and light that provides balance to human decisions that we sometimes lose due to overpowering emotions. It

addresses the matters from the roots, clarifying the principles on which the world has been established and the foundational principles of a society. Keeping the guidance from Quran in devising plan of action for social endeavors will provide goodness and blessing with the backing of God's book and religious passion. But if we do not give preference to this in our social endeavors like women empowerment, then there are strong apprehensions as evidenced by historical experiences that in the long run there can be confusion and chaos in society especially affecting the foundational institution of any society- the family. For this purpose, Iqbal's philosophy of *Khudi* is the one that interprets guidance from Quran into a theory that can be plausible in formulation of our relevant organizational systems.

The work on women empowerment catering the indigenous theories and cultural context of Pakistan in particular and Muslim world in general should be encompassed and worked upon in domains of knowledge, politics and society.

Given the foundational nature of my research on Iqbal, I highly recommend that future studies delve deeper into the practical facets of his *Khudi* theory concerning women's empowerment. It is crucial to conduct further exploration and elaborate on this concept, potentially creating a comprehensive model for better understanding and application.

7.6. Conclusion

This study sought to look thoroughly into the many facets of womanhood, recognizing that their autonomy, societal roles, cultural perspectives, and individual experiences all contribute to the concept of women empowerment. Within this concept, women's empowerment consists of five interconnected components. First, it included a woman's inherent sense of self-worth, emphasizing her understanding of her own worth in

society. Second, it was about her fundamental right to make independent decisions that shape her life, both emotionally and professionally. Thirdly, it addressed her right to equal access to resources and opportunities that would allow women to fully engage in social and economic life. Fourthly, it represented her right to exercise authority over her life, both at home and elsewhere. Finally, it demonstrated her ability to have an impact on larger social reforms, aiming to create a more just and equitable societal and economic order, both nationally and internationally. This complex approach was in line with Kabeer's three-dimensional model of empowerment, which takes into account its environmental, relational, and personal components. Enhancing self-esteem is a component of personal empowerment, negotiating power structures within close networks is a component of relational empowerment, and confronting social norms and belief systems is a component of environmental empowerment.

My research intended to investigate the complexity and dynamics of women empowerment in many contexts, explaining its varied character and significance as a fundamental human right through this thorough operationalization. Women empowerment and gender equality have emerged as critical components of the development situation. They are an important developmental aim and a significant component of both the Millennium Development Goals (MDG3) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG5). Women empowerment is regarded as a necessary step towards gender equality. It not only symbolizes a fundamental human right, but it also has positive implications for long-term economic development. Because of the comprehensively crucial role that women play in the home and society, women empowerment is related to the wellbeing of the population as a whole. The concept of women's empowerment is wide, multifaceted,

and context-dependent, in contrast to gender equality, which is simpler to comprehend. It has been linked to a variety of definitions, the terminologies that are linked to it change, and there is little consensus over the measurement techniques. This study discovered that the magnitude and purpose of participating organizations can vary widely, embracing a spectrum that includes companies, non-profit groups, government bodies, educational institutions, and more. A defined structure, duties and responsibilities for its members, established processes and procedures, and a clear mission or vision that gives the overarching purpose are all important characteristics of organizations. Furthermore, organizations frequently have different cultures, conventions, and values that influence their operations, influencing how employees within the organization interact and work towards common goals. For this study, I chose organizations in Pakistan that work on both the governmental and non-governmental levels to empower women. This study looked at how organizations engage in women empowerment, as well as their beliefs and practices for achieving the vision of women empowerment.

Many of the participating organizations viewed self-development as a transforming journey that individuals embark on through their own intentional and purposeful efforts to progress and polish various elements of themselves, including personal, professional, and intellectual dimensions. It entails making a deliberate commitment to lifelong learning, reflection, and skill development, with the ultimate goal of realizing one's full potential and purpose in life. They were discovered to be very focused on their talents and self-realization, developing leadership traits in them, and providing them with economic empowerment, which appears to be the underpinning for achieving women empowerment. As capitalist countries assess development through economic empowerment, it appears to

be a Western perspective to attain empowerment. Considering the anthropological perspective to gain a complete understanding of women empowerment, the study also looked into the problems that organizations experienced when implementing women empowerment programs.

Women's lack of information about their rights had been cited as a major barrier to their ability to seek and express their rights. Women subscribing to society's norms and expectations, analogous to programmed behavior, were found to be accountable for this lack of information and education. In this context, empowerment is defined as the ability of women to acquire the knowledge, information, and education required to influence personal and societal change. This environment includes not only working conditions but also societal aspects that promote women's autonomy and agency. The essence of women empowerment goes beyond institutional initiatives and emphasizes the critical role of families and society as a whole. Women's empowerment requires the participation of husbands, siblings, and communities. Gender-sensitive practices and understanding were found to be critical for creating a safe and supportive workplace in which women can thrive. The organizations were discovered to be extremely motivated by the mandatory professional education for women to provide their expertise to the nation, thereby aligning with the original aim of their study and helping society at large.

It is crucial to note that many contemporary approaches in this realm have predominantly emerged from Western societies, driven by secular objectives. Consequently, a notable deficiency persists in formulating a suitable women's empowerment model rooted in an Islamic perspective. This anthropological inquiry reveals that the majority of organizations within the Muslim world lack a holistic vision or goal for

women's empowerment. Instead, their conceived aims and objectives often emphasize self-development, economic empowerment, and the creation of safe environments for women to thrive. While these are undeniably important goals for the growth and agency development of women, they may fall short of cultivating a coherent philosophy of women's empowerment with comprehensive objectives that nurture individuals as vicegerents of the Creator, possessing transcendental objectives beyond material gains. Nonetheless, despite these challenges, some positive outcomes have been observed as a result of planned programs and practices within these organizations. Nevertheless, given the shortcomings within the system, it would be unrealistic to expect an ideal outcome where women play a substantial role in strengthening the nation. This deficiency extends across various fields of social work endeavors within the Muslim world. A state of ambivalence emerges in such case for organizations working for women empowerment regarding the ideological and conceptual sources of their perceptions and practices and the desire to develop and prosper. This ambivalence is largely due to the colonial and modern secular narratives that create dissonance between the local cultural imperatives and the womenfolk (mostly Muslim).

Under this ideologically ambivalence condition, Iqbal's philosophy provides an indigenous alternative, rather an antidote to the secular liberal colonization of women's agency. Moreover, a lingering thought centers on the *Ummah's* apparent inability to formulate theories of women's empowerment for the Muslim world, while other ideological groups have developed their own theories and approaches based on their aspirations and understandings of the world and social systems. Iqbal's concept of "*Khudi*," as articulated in his philosophical writings and poetry, provides a valuable cultural

perspective on self-empowerment and development. Here "*Khudi*" represents an individual's intrinsic and spiritual selfhood. It emphasizes the realization of one's inner potential and the actualization of personal agency that firstly empowers the individuals themselves and develops further to empower their whole community and nation. It highlights the pivotal role each individual plays in their community and provides them with transcendental objective of being God's Vicegerent in line with Islamic teachings. This approach broadens the perspective of empowerment for women beyond economic independence only.

Through this anthropological research, a profoundly inspirational and intellectually rigorous philosophy of women's empowerment within the Ummah emerges from Iqbal's literary works. Iqbal's perspective, while not constituting a formal empowerment theory, provides a philosophical foundation that places paramount emphasis on the dignity and agency of individuals. This comparative analysis highlights the philosophical and cultural nuances inherent in approaches to women's empowerment, underscoring the necessity for context-specific strategies that respect diverse cultural perspectives while advancing gender equality and human agency. Furthermore, it underscores the critical importance of engaging with local philosophies and cultural contexts in empowerment endeavors. This meticulous philosophy of women's empowerment requires development into workable models and systems, tailored to the contemporary Muslim societies. It demands serious consideration from the Ummah's philosophers and researchers. The urgency of this task cannot be overstated or ignored, particularly given the adverse effects of Western thought. For a considerable period, post-colonial scholars have asserted that Western approaches are

ill-suited to meet the requirements and cultural contexts of the global south and, from an Islamic perspective, the Muslim world.

I firmly believe that Allah *Subhanahu Wa ta'alla* does not forsake sincere endeavors. As Iqbal asserts, this Ummah, this community, can never perish. Therefore, I hold onto the hope that we can emerge from our current unfavorable circumstances. The key to our salvation lies in our intelligent and diligent efforts.

May Allah Almighty illuminate our path in every facet of life. Each one of us will be held accountable for our efforts on the Day of Judgment.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

CONSENT FORM

Subject of Research: Perception and Practices of Organizations Engaged in Women Empowerment in Pakistan: An Analysis in Light of Iqbal's Philosophy of Self-development

Name of Researcher: Moeena Kausar Satti **Phone:** 03365498073

***Invitation to Participate:** You are invited to participate in this research study. The following information is provided to help you make an informed decision whether or not to participate. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.*

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions and practices of organizations working in women empowerment in Pakistan and its analysis in light of Iqbal's philosophy of self-development.

Benefits of this research: This research is first of its type in Pakistan and will benefit further research for the formulation of a dynamic women empowerment initiatives centered around the Pakistani cultural context through Iqbal's philosophy.

Procedures: If you decide to participate in this research project, I will go over this consent form, ask your permission to tape the interview, and then go through a series of interview questions about the perceptions and practices of women empowerment in your organization. If you give permission for the interview to be taped, please sign here: _____

If you allow the mention of your organization by name in the research, please sign here: _____

The research methods also include researcher's participant observation of organization and the organization's activities to develop a better understanding of your efforts for the women empowerment in Pakistan, which may include taking a few camera still shots. If you are permitting me to carry out the observations as indicated, kindly sign here: _____

Confidentiality Any information obtained during this study which could identify you will be kept strictly confidential. The information may be published in educational journals or presented at educational meetings but your identity will be kept strictly confidential. Audiotapes will not be labeled. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law.

Right to Decline: You will hold the right to decline from any of the above-mentioned activities at any time of the researcher's engagement in the collection of data at your premises.

If you have any questions, please ask me. If you have any additional questions later, I will be happy to answer them at any time.

My (participant's) signature below indicates that I have voluntarily decided to participate in this research project as a subject and that I have read and do understand the information provided above.

Participant's Signature
Date

Participants name

In my judgment, the subject is voluntarily and knowingly giving informed consent to participate in this research study.

Researcher's Signature

Date

Moeena Kausar Satti.
Researcher

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Time of Interview:

Date:

Place/Organization:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Setting:

Introduction for Interviewee's knowledge:

- i) Purpose of research.
- ii) Sources of data collection
- iii) How will confidentiality be maintained?
- iv) The approximate duration of Interview.
- v) Consent form and any guidance/restriction from the interviewee's side for data collection.

Demographics

Name:

Age:

Gender:

Designation:

Educational Qualification:

Marital Status:

Questions:

1. What is the vision behind the establishment of this organization?
2. What do you think is the most important aim of your organization?
3. How do you see women empowerment is significant in Pakistani context?
4. What objectives do you think are required to achieve the above-mentioned aims at organizational level? (What should be an ideal planning to achieve these aims through your organization?)
5. How the organization is working to achieve the goals of women empowerment? (How are you implementing your organization's aims into practice? What different programs this organization is running – what is perspective of women empowerment each of the mentioned program is covering?)
6. For how long have you been working on these set objectives in your organization and how much you think you have been able to implement your vision, the aims and objectives of women empowerment in your organization?
7. Do you think your aims align with the Pakistani cultural context taking into account the religion and cultural norms?
8. How you assess the delivery of women empowerment in the beneficiaries?
9. What results do you believe you have achieved so far by these efforts?
10. What benchmarks have you set for measuring the results of your efforts? (How do you assess your achievements?)
11. What problems or obstacles have you so far faced in achieving your objectives?

12. Since Iqbal talk about human freedom and empowerment, what do you think can we learn from his philosophy for social endeavors like women empowerment?
13. Have you read Iqbal or his Philosophy or the relevancy of his philosophy to human being/women and what do you think how much can his philosophy contribute to women empowerment if you agree with him?