

# Empowering Female Labour within Islamic Framework

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**Abstract:** Female labour contributes to household welfare and economic development. In view of the inequity in labour markets, female labour empowerment enhances the participation and competitiveness of women in both general and niche labour markets. There are numerous effective approaches in empowering female labour that include technological, vocational, educational, entrepreneurial, psychological and religious approaches. The religious approach suggests a comprehensive training ranks among effective ways to improve employee productivity. It equips labour with knowledge, skills and satisfaction. This study proposes a concept of female labour empowerment within Islamic approach based on several studies. This literature review study used qualitative method by reviewing and elaborating literature resources of related topics. Findings show that Islam gives dignity, respect, protection, and an appropriate place to women. Islamic values embedded in a comprehensive process of empowering female labour by providing inner and outer skill trainings are expected to increase business performance eventually. The study enriches knowledge and broadens the horizons of the role of religious factors in economics development. Findings also lend further support to a holistic approach in crafting human resource development and support systems in firms.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Female labour plays a significant contribution in the process of economic growth and development (Ederveen, Nahuis and Parikh, 2007). Female's empowerment and economic development are mutually related (Duflo, 2012). Over the past few decades, many developing countries have been experiencing an increase in the labour force participation of women. Gender equality provides access for women to work and have significant economic role in various ways. Attention to gender equality is essential to sound development practice and at the heart of economic and social progress (CIDA, 1999). This implies an important economic dimension is that an increase in the female contribution to formal production leads to higher economic growth (Euwals, Knoef and van Vuuren, 2011). In this respect, effective labour market policies are needed particularly in developing countries to promote female's labour market participation in the interest of comprehensive economic growth (Lucis, 2009).

The contribution of female labour does matter for development, therefore understanding its causes and motivations becomes important (Minniti, 2010). In

this respect, it is essential to empower female labour as an economic asset in achieving economic security among all peoples. Women empowerment is defined as some efforts of educating and supporting women in such a way that enable them to manage and make decision for their life, improving their skill and gaining self-confidence. It is essential to combine character development, intellectuality, and physical health to achieve better quality of human resources in the challenge of global world.

Some effective approaches in empowering female labour include technological, vocational, educational, entrepreneurial, micro finance, psychological and religious approaches. Several

Studies pointed to the importance of social and cultural structures in determining an individual's level of empowerment or social value (Cheston and Kuhn, 2002). Education and employment are termed enabling factors since they can be instrumental in enabling women to gain the knowledge, confidence, skills, and opportunities that they need to increase their social and economic status and power in the household and in society.

A great number of studies relating to the discussion of empowering female labour have been emerged prevalently. The existing literatures promote the importance of female empowerment from various

perspectives such as psychological aspect, educational, entrepreneurial and micro finance. However, there is not much work by researchers on female empowerment from Islamic perspective. This current work aims to contribute in this field of study by proposing a new insight on how the concept of empowering female labour within Islamic framework. Islamic values embedded in a comprehensive process of empowering female

## 2 METHOD AND DATA

This literature review study used qualitative method by identifying, reviewing and elaborating literature resources of related topics. Primary data was collected by gathering recent journal articles regarding female labour empowerment. The data collected was then overviewed, resumed and analysed to get an idea of general purpose and the content of the articles. The study elaborated the ideas and findings of some previous findings to construct a concept of female labour empowerment within Islamic values.

## 3 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In simple terms, the concept of empowerment would appear to be the process of enabling or imparting power transfer from one individual or group to another. It includes the elements of power, authority, choice and permission. Empowerment may also be viewed as the result or product of the process of empowering concepts (Rodwell, 1996). Empowerment is therefore seen as a process of transferring power and includes the development of a positive self-esteem and recognition of the worth of self and others. Empowerment is a helping process whereby groups or individuals are enabled to change a situation given skills, resources, opportunities and authority to do so.

A study by (Rahman, 2013) stated that empowerment is not merely a question of rearrangement of power both economic and political; it is also a matter of change of values. Thus, empowerment is a process of awareness and capacity building leading to greater participation, to greater decision-making power and control, and to transformative action. In addition, empowerment is a process that involves both individual and collective. The term empowerment implying that it is about changing the perspective of physical, human,

intellectual, financial, self-esteem, confidence, creativity and ideology such as beliefs, values, attitudes, and ways of thinking and perceiving situations in a given society.

Human beings are different from other objective beings with respect to freedom of choice that their actions and behaviours are a result of their reasoning and will, albeit relatively. As social entities, human beings naturally interact with others. Islam values all human being on the basis of two different dimensions of his existence: the biological and the social. Morality becomes the great goal of Islamic teachings and the main factor in forming a religion.

Religion in general and Islam in particular can play positive role in reviving common values for mankind and uniting people for justice and equality, particularly the weaker sections. In Islam, a human being is very honourable and valued higher than many other creatures. He is created by the best Creator in the best form. He is created by God and chosen by Him to be His representative on earth. This relation with God has different dimensions which affect them as persons and all of their relationships. For such purpose, it is important to empower human beings through not only physical aspect but also spiritual one.

In the context of development, empowering female labour within Islamic framework means providing female labour with opportunities and resources needed of both inner and outer skill as an effort to increase their working ability. As part of human development, however, personal empowerment is guided not only by knowledge but also by the search for wisdom (Feste and Anderson, 1995).

Empowering female labour within Islamic perspective makes it possible for them to take on new roles as they have become better educated and more independent (Arnez, 2010). There is no gender disparity in islamic ideology. In the Quran, it is stated that, "And whoever does righteous good deeds whether male or female and he (or she) is a true believer in the Oneness of Allah, such will enter Paradise and not the least injustice, even to the size of a Naqira (speck on the back of a date-stone), will be done to them." (Qur'an, 4:124).

Islam is a code of life for all human beings, valid for every time and place. Islam gives dignity, respect, protection, and an appropriate place to women (Offenhauer, 2005). Women and men are born with the same humanistic qualities and are partners in humanity (Saleh, 2001). In regards to society, the Quran states that Muslim men and women share life's moral and social responsibilities equally and jointly.

In addition, they are equal in front of the law and in all religious obligations and punishments (Qur'an, 24:2). Islam does not only promote human rights but also encourage individuals to stand for their own rights. Under the laws of Islam, women have obtained maximum human rights like the right to sell and purchase properties, own business, take legal actions, vote, and participate in social, military and political affairs (Sharif Chaudhry Professor, Nosheen and Professor, 2012).

In Islam, education and the pursuit of knowledge and wisdom become a duty for every human being. Gender or race, culture or tradition could not become the cause for prohibiting a person from educating one's self. Empowering processes might include opportunities to develop and practice skills, to learn about resource development and management, to work with others on a common goal, to expand one's social support network and to develop leadership skills (Zimmerman, 1995). Islam acknowledges human basic values comprising of life (al-nafs), reason (al-aql), descent (nasab), property (al-mal) and religion (al-din). Islam protects these primary human values, and prohibits any violation of them. Education principles in Islam does not merely cover cognitive aspect but also affective and psychomotor which is the combination of cognitive functions and physical movement.

Education in Islamic perspective emphasizing on two elements, physical strength (al-ahdaful jasmaniyah) that aimed to build a healthy and strong Muslim and having working skill, and spiritual strength (al-ahdaful ruhiyah), aimed to build a faithful and devoted Muslim practicing moral values in life.

Education and employment are enabling factors since they can be instrumental in enabling women to gain the knowledge, confidence, skills, and opportunities that they need to increase their social and economic status and power in the household and in society (Gill, Pande and Malhotra, 2007). Women's education level appears to be important determinant of women's labour market activities (Mammen and Paxon, 2000). A study done by Njoh and Akiwumi revealed that religion explains a statistically significant portion (22%) of the variability in women empowerment as a Millennium Development Goal (Njoh and Akiwumi, 2012).

Lee and Koh have defined empowerment as the psychological state of a subordinate perceiving four dimensions of meaningfulness, competence, self-determination and impact, which is affected by empowering behaviours of the supervisor (Lee and Koh, 2001). The definition therefore integrates both relational and motivational aspects. The model they

suggested that the levels of job characteristics may affect three psychological states, experienced meaningfulness, experienced responsibility and knowledge of the results. These psychological states, in turn, can lead to a number of positive personal outcomes. In addition, three major individual differences (i.e. knowledge and skill, growth-need strength and satisfaction with contextual factors) can influence the relationship between job characteristics and psychological states.

A study by (Zafar, 2016) revealed that providing some life skill trainings to women like skills in embroidery enabled them to make new embroidery designs with new colour combinations, which resulted in increased sales. Similarly, women receiving training in livestock or poultry became more aware with regard to the rearing of livestock.

Empowering female labour through both outer and inner skill training will result human resources which enriched with positive energy either rationally or emotionally as well. This outcome will give positive effect in creating conducive business environment and accelerating the performance of the business.

A comprehensive model of female empowerment will result in magnifying awareness and knowledge, gaining a positive self-identity, confidence and responsibility, having ability to make decisions and having choices, increasing leadership, and furthermore reducing poverty. Increased awareness and knowledge of the employee are a critical outcome of the empowerment cycle, which eventually influence the performance of a business (Al-Dajani and Marlow, 2013).

(Ahmad, 2011) revealed that Islamic principles completely cover all aspects of life including working in an organization. Different studies result show that Islamic work ethics can help build a better morale amongst employees which in turn can result in greater employee job satisfaction. Adopting Islamic work ethics improves organizational commitment, level of motivation and thus is likely to reduce the number of staff wanting to leave the organization i.e. quitting the job results indicate there is a positive impact of Islamic Work Ethics on employee job satisfaction, motivation and organizational commitment.

Gender discrimination could be eliminated through education and changing behavior of the people in the societies. Education is the essential tool for women to fabricate fundamental abilities as well as to assume a significant part in realizing evenhanded social and financial advancement. A study by (Asrar, 2017) stated that Islamic idea of

women empowerment if actualized, will acquire profitable increases the general public.

The study reveals that there is an evidence of ethics formulation depending on Islamic literature which constructs Islamic values for work. His study aims to highlight work ethics that are based on an Islamic perspective that could educate employers and employees on the importance of infusing positive virtues as part of work culture. Work ethics in an organization, according to an Islamic perspective, are capable of directly influencing job satisfaction and work performance level of an organization

This paper suggested 18 dimension of Islamic work ethics: cooperation, discipline & punctual, dignity, justice, safety, rights, responsibility, humanity, consultation, work is a virtue, honesty, truthfulness, halal earning, ihsan, efficient, fulfilment, self-control, obedience. (Aldulaimi, 2016)

By analysing some ideas and findings of previous researches, this study argues that empowering female labour within Islamic framework means transferring positive attitudes and knowledge to the labour by providing them a comprehensive training comprises of two aspects inner and outer skill, physical and spiritual inputs. To reach full potential and become empowered, general education and working skills are important. This study proposes some training programs that are possibly implemented:

Table 1: study proposes some training programs that are possibly implemented.

No.	Inner Skill
1	Discussions on religious (Islamic) issues for daily living
2	Religious (Islamic) discussions for workplace application
3	Religious training on the Quran and Dhuha prayers in workplace environments
4	Promotion of <i>shadaqah</i> (charity) within communities
No.	Inner Skill
1	Provision of technical and soft skills to female employees
2	Training to broaden career paths of women in line with economic transition
3	Training in parenting skills
4	Training in personal financial management
5	Training on family financial management
6	Training in entrepreneurial skills

## 4 CONCLUSIONS

Female empowerment has been topical over the past few decades. Female labour empowerment is aimed at enhancing livelihood opportunities and social conditions for female labour through activities that equip them with knowledge and skills that are intended to make them competitive in the labour market and improve their productivity. The religious approach to empowering female labour continues to be employed across regions and religious groups with varying intensity and success. Endeavours to empower Islamic framework are holistic and meaningful attempts to develop the capacity of female labour through enhancing their grasp of Islamic doctrines and self-worth. In its totality, female labour empowerment in the Islamic context aims at providing training for both inner and outer skills.

Although gender studies witnessed significant interest in scientific enquiries across regions, studies into female labour empowerment through religious means remain sparse including those focusing on Islamic regions and practices. Notwithstanding limited literature on female labour empowerment, reviewed studies showed that women are benefiting from Islamic based empowerment initiatives at the individual, household and society levels. Women have been empowered to run their own businesses, they have improved their self-esteem, managed to progress in their careers, have improved work-life balance and also managed to collaborate efforts to tackle challenges in their society.

Findings from this review have a couple of implications. Development efforts focussing on gender differentials should also incorporate religious values as part of their female labour empowerment initiatives. Inner and outer skills can also be improved through the religious approach, thus studies into gender perspectives on development ought to probe the role of religious values, training or their lack in gender differentials in career success. Future research is needed to further develop the female labour empowerment model within Islamic framework in affecting business performance. Our discussion provides a useful base for further investigation of female labour empowerment in Islamic contexts. Further work is needed to establish a scale to measure and test the suggested concept of female labour empowerment within Islamic framework.

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