

**WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT THROUGH POVERTY ALLEVIATION: A SOCIO-CULTURAL AND POLITICO-ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT OF CONDITIONS IN PAKISTAN**

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**ABSTRACT**

Women's empowerment is one of the concerns of international community. This concern is manifested in the formulation of Millennium Development Goals. The third of these goals is related to women empowerment i.e. to promote gender equality and empower women. Poverty is one of the major reasons of women's disempowerment. Different micro and macro level strategies are being used by government agencies and NGOs for poverty alleviation of women as a way to empower them. In the present study I have attempted to analyse whether poverty alleviation programmes can really empower women in the context of Pakistan. Critical in this discussion are the issues of efficacy of NGOs' efforts in the face of cultural norms and values of the society and the political and economic situation in which poverty alleviation programmes are run in a society. I have analysed the social, economic and political condition of women which is central in the process of women's empowerment. I have come to the conclusion that along with poverty alleviation programmes for women empowerment, attention on non-economic issues is central. Although poverty alleviation helps women to lead a better life, it does not improve the status of women in the household. Women are still victims of violence at homes and exploitation in offices and at workplaces. They are paid low than men. This calls for a social change and change in the minds of men for women.

**Keywords:** women empowerment, poverty alleviation, socio-cultural and politico-economic assessment.