

Beyond Skills Acquisition: TVET, Household Dynamics, and Women's Empowerment in Pakistan

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<p>Keywords: Skill Development, Technical and Vocational Training, Women Empowerment, Economic Empowerment, Social Empowerment, Family Dynamics</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">ABSTRACT</p> <p><i>The influence of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) on women's empowerment is still a debated issue in patriarchal societies such as Pakistan. This research was conducted to understand the role of TVET in the economic and social empowerment of young women in relation to their income-generating ability, control over household resources, self-confidence and decision-making independence. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through interviews and focus group discussions with enrolled trainees and graduates to understand women's expectations and skills acquisition, as well as social and economic outcomes following the training. The results show that while TVET equip women with marketable skills, the overall effect on empowerment is limited, as many graduates are unable to practice their skills after training. Family dynamics, social norms, mobility constraints, and financial limitations have a strong influence on the women's role in the household and income opportunities. Support or restrictions from male family members have a considerable impact on women's empowerment. Whether the graduates succeed or not largely depends on the approval of their male relatives, father, brother, or husband. The study confirms that women who are employed or self-employed tend to be more confident and take part in household decision-making than those who are unemployed. Overall, the evidence shows that providing opportunities along with a supportive environment can allow young women to change their socioeconomic status.</i></p>
<p>Article History: Received: September 14, 2025 Revised: December 30, 2025 Available Online: December 31, 2025</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <p style="text-align: center;">a Gold Open Access Journal</p>	<p>This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License.</p> <div style="text-align: right;">  </div> <p>Copyright (c) 2025 Faheem Jehangir Khan and Saima Perveen. Published by Faculty of Social Sciences, the Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan.</p>
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1. Introduction

Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is considered an essential element of socio-economic development, supporting countries to enhance human capital, improve productivity and promote economic growth. At the global level, skills development has emerged as a central factor in labor market transformations such as the creation of employment opportunities and labor market competitiveness in both developed and developing countries. However, despite the increasing importance of skill development among the youth, many countries in the world are still experiencing

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challenges including lack of adequate facilities, insufficient practical training, and poor linkages between training institutions and industry. The Initiative "Towards a Global TVET Agenda" reflects an ongoing effort of global organizations to improve TVET systems at the global level and promote TVET as an important component of the International Development Agenda (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2025). Within the Asian countries, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) is supporting countries to redesign TVET and build a more flexible and modern system that connects vocational education to occupation (Asian Development Bank, 2025).

In Pakistan, TVET contributes significantly to national development by strengthening the economy, reducing poverty, and enhancing youth skills in both the domestic and international labor market (Akram & Rasool, 2025). According to Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2023), 26% of Pakistan's population consists of youth aged between 15 and 30. TVET aims to address increasing unemployment among youth. The 48.5% of the population consisted of women, but their contribution to the labor force is only 22.5%, which is notably less than that of men (LFS, 2024-25). Although the country's demographic potential is increasing, gender inequality continues to influence its workforce, education, labor force participation, and economic empowerment. The women's literacy rate is only 52.8%, in contrast to 68% among men (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2023). Furthermore, there is persistent gender gap exists, showing that women receive 25–30% less than men for similar work (ILO, 2025). Gender inequalities limit women's access to education and training opportunities, which demonstrate the structural and cultural barriers affecting the participation of women in the formal economy. Pakistan's Gender Inequality Index (GII) ranks 145th out of 172 countries globally, standing at 0.536 (UNDP, 2025). Moreover, Pakistan ranks lowest among the 148 countries, which shows only 56.7% gender parity in the Global Gender Gap Index (2025) (World Economic Forum, 2025).

Various socioeconomic barriers limit women's access to TVET programs, which reduces participation and income-generating opportunities. According to the National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTTC), only 0.5 million students were enrolled in TVET institutions, which consist of 33% female and 67% male (UN Women, 2023). Aligning education to labor market demands is difficult despite the existence of national development frameworks such as the National Skills Strategy (NSS) and Vision 2025 (Yasmeen & Hashaam, 2024). Moreover, the country's TVET program is struggling with insufficient government funding, which constitutes only 1.0-1.5% of the overall education budget, reducing the quality of training, infrastructure and the results of employability as well (Altaf et al., 2024). In addition, there are still gaps in the integration of gender-sensitive approaches that offer practical training and encourage cooperation with industry (Ali et al., 2024). The 'National Task Force on Human Resource & Skill Development' indicated that there are about 4,280 TVET institutes in Pakistan with an annual enrolment of about 1.6 million trainees. The Employer Skill Survey (2024) revealed that 2,169 (57%) of these institutes are in the public sector and 1,588 (43%) in the private sector (NAVTTTC, 2025), which highlights the pivotal role of both sectors in providing technical and vocational education. Although these institutions exist, trainees are enrolled, and the government are spending billions of rupees each year, yet the export of skilled manpower is less than 3% (Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment, online).

To tackle these challenges, the Government of Pakistan introduced various programs for skill development and self-employment, such as the Prime Minister's Youth Skill Development Program, National Incubation Centers, and other competency-based training programs. The Annual Plan 2025–26 focuses on the quality of training through the National Vocational Qualification Framework (NVQF), clarifies institutional roles, and introduces innovative financing models to improve training effectiveness. These initiatives are targeting high-tech sectors, such as artificial intelligence, e-commerce, and digital marketing, which can help mitigate skills gaps and enhance overall economic growth.

This research uses a qualitative case study approach to understand the importance of TVET in enhancing the social and economic empowerment of Islamabad and Rawalpindi (Twin Cities). The study discusses the role of gender responsive vocational education in promoting female participation in a national economy, improving entrepreneurial ability and enhancing inclusive national

development. While existing literature extensively discusses the importance of TVET in increasing employment opportunities, its role in strengthening the economic and social empowerment of women remains underexplored, especially in the twin cities. Even though there are some general opinion exist about the status of women at household and society levels in Pakistan, this research provides evidence from those young women who are facing challenges daily at various levels.

Both national and subnational governments have adopted several strategies in Pakistan, but this policy area has received less attention, particularly about its contribution to women's empowerment at personal, household and societal levels. The study is designed to tackle this gap by examining how TVET programs provide income generation opportunities and improve social interaction and confidence among young women. The findings offer meaningful insights to policymakers, TVET institutions, and development practitioners to design more inclusive, gender-responsive skill development initiatives.

Previous studies show that many women face significant challenges to transform their vocational skills into tangible economic outcomes, not because of a lack of skills but due to limited agency and restrictive social relations within households (Kabeer, 2005; Malhotra, Schuler, & Boender, 2002). Gendered expectations about women's roles, freedom of movement and participation in paid work depend on skills training and the ability to generate employment, self-employment or income opportunities, especially in the context of South Asian Countries. In this regard, participation in TVET programs helps enhance women's potential without fundamentally changing their economic status. Therefore, this study investigates how participation in the TVET leads to observable economic outcomes for women in Pakistan or whether its effects remain restricted to unrealized potential.

Apart from income and employment, empowerment is also influenced by changes in women's self-confidence, aspirations, mobility and participation in household decision-making. Engagement in TVET facilitates women's access to new skills, peer networks, and public spaces, which can influence their self-perception and family roles (Kabeer, 1999; Robeyns, 2005). Women who are using their skills for income generation can experience greater confidence and household influence than those who are not engaged in such economic activities. This study examines whether women's social empowerment results from their economic participation or whether structural or cultural factors limit both outcomes.

The central focus of this inquiry is to understand the role of family dynamics and male authority in shaping women's post-training trajectories. According to the capability perspective, patriarchal norms regarding women's work, respectability, and mobility often create barriers to transforming their skills into real economic and social outcomes (Sen, 1999; Robeyns, 2005). Women's ability to work, control earnings or engage in entrepreneurial activities depends on approval or resistance from fathers, brothers, and husbands. Consequently, women with similar training can achieve significantly different outcomes. This study explores the role of these household and societal factors in mediating the relationship between TVET participation and women's empowerment, without considering identical effects or predetermined conclusions.

This research is significant because it goes beyond the assumption that skills development automatically promotes women's empowerment and focuses on the social conditions to determine how vocational training leads to meaningful economic and social outcomes. While existing studies highlight the role of TVET in improving employability, only a few have discussed the role of women's agency, household power relations and gender norms in post-training trajectories. This inquiry is particularly relevant in the context of Pakistan, as many trained women are still unable to use their skills due to restricted mobility, patriarchal household structures, and male-dominated decision-making, despite government investment in TVET and policy support. By focusing on women's real-life experiences, this study shows why women with similar training receive different outcomes and highlights the gap between obtaining skills and achieving real empowerment. In doing so, this work contributes to academic discussion on women's empowerment and provides policy-relevant insights for designing gender-responsive TVET interventions in patriarchal societies.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Skill Development and Youth Empowerment

According to the literature, skill development programs have achieved significant outcomes in most countries. Skill development programs, such as technical and vocational education, help enhance the country's socio-economic development. For instance, Gul et al. (2019) conducted an empirical study based in Afghanistan, which indicated that TVET programs in Kabul and Khost support youth by fostering not only sustainable development but also self-employment. To ensure long-term success, they focused on the need to have a post-training support system, including toolkits, market access, and financial assistance. In LMICs, TVET positively affects not only economic outcomes but also well-being, culture and social capital, aspiration and health among the poor young people (Shi & Bangpan, 2022).

Asad et al. (2024) carried out a study to understand the role of the TVET sector in promoting socioeconomic mobility and job creation among trainers in Pakistan. They employed the neoclassical and endogenous growth theories, which indicated that skill-based education is linked to an increase in employment opportunities and quality of life. Lakho et al. (2023) conducted study about the relationship between ICT integration and vocational training in Sindh, Pakistan. Their results showed that ICT teaching methods help to enhance both student learning and satisfaction.

Mara (2025) examined the impact of continuous vocational education and training on motivational and empowerment outcomes. They found that 80.43% of the respondents were motivated to pursue further education or training, while 59.43% expressed strong confidence in obtaining future job opportunities in the market. Moreover, 18.86% still reported low motivation, and 37.37% felt disempowered, which indicates that more inclusive and supportive training systems are required to address the diverse needs of the learners. Moreover, 62.2% of vocational graduates were engaged in skill-based jobs in District Gujranwala, which helps to enhance household income and improve access to services such as education and healthcare (Nasir, 2021).

Although past studies showed positive results, others have highlighted structural and systemic issues in TVET systems. Muthar et al. (2022) identified the poor TVET structure in India, especially in the post-pandemic period, which consists of outdated teaching curriculum, weak infrastructure, and an increasing digital gap. In order to enhance inclusiveness and stability, they recommended adopting models such as Germany's dual system or China's modern vocational education framework. Similarly, Altaf & Shabbir (2024) found that present TVET programs do not align correctly with the labor market requirements because of skill mismatch in Pakistan. Chipfakacha (2019) examined that TVET is frequently neglected in the developing communities due to its association with academic failure, poor infrastructure, preferences for university education and unclear outcomes. The study found that it is essential to change perceptions about technical and vocational training to achieve sustainable development in developing countries, which involves investment in both infrastructure and public awareness. It also focused on how TVET can contribute to economic growth by encouraging entrepreneurship, addressing unemployment, and creating practical career paths for learners.

2.2 TVET and Economic Empowerment

Technical and vocational education and training have played a vital role in offering women choices related to personal, social, political, and economic spheres. TVET empowers women by equipping them with market-relevant skills and improving their income-generating opportunities and economic independence. Shah et al. (2024) investigated how vocational training shapes women's income-generating activities and entrepreneurial goals. The thematic analysis of interviews with 16 trained women revealed an important step towards small businesses, institutional partnerships, and sustainable growth. The findings demonstrated that vocational training improves women's economic participation and long-term development.

Ali et al. (2024) employed quantitative methods, including the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) and Propensity Score Matching (PSM), in the rural districts of Punjab and found a significant reduction in poverty among households where female members received vocational training as compared with the households that did not. These results are consistent with the claim that the economic well-being of both women and their families is influenced by vocational training. Gautam (2023) examined the role of skills training in Nepal and found that it enhances women's financial independence, social autonomy and control within the family. The study highlighted the

contribution of vocational training to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality.

Likewise, Muhwezi (2024) carried out research in Uganda that discovered that TVET programs result in empowerment of women, decrease unemployment and poverty, and enhance the growth of economic, psychological, and social agency. Women were not only able to improve their financial position but also to assist others in their communities to participate in vocational training programs. Moreover, at the household level, women's engagement in vocational training causes 25% reduction in multidimensional poverty (Ali et al., 2024). Overall, women who have vocational and entrepreneurial skills have more financial opportunities, a higher level of self-employment, and are more involved in the development of local enterprises (Christopher, 2021; Shah et al., 2024).

2.3 TVET and Social Empowerment

Skills development contributes to social empowerment by enabling individuals to participate in social life, build confidence, and express their views on social matters. Women are regarded as a significant section of society, and we cannot ignore them in the social structure. In this respect, Iqbal & Hassan (2022) have conducted research on the significance of skill development for the social empowerment of women in Punjab. Their results showed that skill development positively influences women's social empowerment. Ismail & Ab Halim (2023) have performed a systematic literature review of 20 qualitative and quantitative articles using PRISMA guidelines, and found nine significant training areas that affect the development of women's leadership. The research revealed that TVET programmes are transformative in terms of women's empowerment and help address long-standing issues regarding gender bias and cultural context.

However, despite the benefits, there are various challenges and barriers to skill development. Hojeij & Al Marzouqi (2023) conducted a study to find out Emirati female student's perception towards their TVET experience in order to identify the challenges and future expectations. The results showed that despite the positive results of TVET, they are still facing academic and cultural challenges. Participants believe that TVET does provide a better future and educational opportunities, but it needs greater social acceptance and improved programs.

Moreover, Ahmad et al. (2021) have examined the significance of vocational education for Balochistan to address tribal and social challenges that often limit female economic participation. Their results showed that TVET programs can actually improve skills, occupation, and income, but the practice's potential is constrained by a lack of investment in institutional infrastructure. The study looked at the requirement for more funding for TVET institutions in order to improve human capital in women and establish long-term systemic impacts. Similarly, Tasleem & Hatim (2024) found that academic and vocational education positively affect women's empowerment, but the effect seems to depend largely on cultural background. Furthermore, the study highlighted the importance of a supportive environment in the empowerment process, and restrictive norms were seen as an obstacle to that empowerment. Therefore, a more culturally sensitive policy regarding education is needed to encourage women's empowerment in a traditional context.

Women faced educational challenges because of financial limitations, poor prior schooling, and social challenges, including sexism and harassment, in South Asian countries (Matenda, 2019). These elements emphasise strengthening TVET environments and generating opportunities to empower women from underprivileged backgrounds.

Dagar, P (2022) explored the main differences between existing VET policy and the real needs of indigenous women in India. They emphasise the need to include more participatory, culturally inclusive TVET programs designed by indigenous communities. Furthermore, the study explored how self-determination and integration influence skills development initiatives.

2.4 Household Dynamics and Social Environment

Despite the increasing focus on skills development as a means of bringing people into economic life, this study suggests that TVET can contribute to the economic and social inclusion of women only when the skills gained through training are integrated into supportive household and social environments. It is well known that TVET is generally considered a mechanism to enhance employability and productivity, but its ability to achieve freedom is unequal in a patriarchal society like Pakistan (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2025; Asian Development Bank, 2025). Building on the

framework of women's empowerment introduced by Naila Kabeer and the framework of the Capability Approach presented by Amartya Sen, this research conceptualizes TVET as an important resource that increases women's capabilities, but one whose outcomes depend on whether or not women are able to exercise agency and translate their skills into meaningful economic and social gains (Kabeer, 1999; Sen, 1999). As mentioned in the past studies, family support plays a key role in TVET and contributes towards the elevation of women's empowerment (Sandhu and Ahmad, 2018). Women's capacities to apply TVET skills are influenced largely by a variety of family and societal factors such as parental education, household income and societal attitudes towards women, which either support or constrain their participation and outcomes. Rehman et al. (2024) conducted a quantitative study to investigate the effect of family, societal and school support on perceptions and reputation of TEVT programs in Pakistan. Their findings revealed that family and societal influences are important in shaping students' perceptions of TVET, thereby improving the program's reputation. This implies that social factors have a substantial impact on the recognition and worthiness of these programs.

Parents' educational level has a considerable influence on the family's opinion about vocational training. Highly educated parents had more awareness about vocational training as compared to those who were illiterate or less educated (Ishrat et al., 2024). Similarly, the family's financial status and parents' occupation also influence the access to resources, career advice and the exposure to different vocational opportunities, which influence the motivation of students to enrol in TVET programs. Moreover, Nayab et al. (2022) highlighted that parents in Punjab exhibit low satisfaction and engagement levels in TVET provision due to institutional challenges, including teacher shortage, outdated equipment, and lack of learning materials, which impact the outcomes and quality of TVET provision.

Family and societal factors will often act as barriers rather than motivations to participate in TVET programs. The status of vocational training in society is mainly determined by the cultural norms, gender roles and societal perceptions. According to Azeem et al. (2021). Perceived social support and vocational outcome expectations are related to a reduction in students' interest levels in TVET, which shows that negative societal attitudes and concern regarding low status or lack of career achievement restrict students' participation in the TVET opportunities. Furthermore, socio-economic status and university education in the family limit students' ability to pursue TVET qualifications, due to their low social status. In many societies, vocational education is perceived to be less prestigious than general or professional education, which leads to social stigma that hinders the enrollment of students (Khan & Ali, 2024)

Overall, the literature shows that well-designed TVET programs help individuals gain employment skills and earn income, becoming financially independent, socially respectable, and able to participate in family decision-making and in the national economy.

2.5 Theoretical Background

This study is based on Naila Kabeer's Women's Empowerment Framework along with Amartya Sen's Capability Approach. These two frameworks help to investigate how TVET influence the economic and social empowerment of young women in a patriarchal environment like Pakistan.

Kabeer defines women's empowerment as a dynamic process which involves three interconnected dimensions: resources, agency, and achievements (Kabeer 1999; 2005). Here, resources encompass not only material assets but also human and social resources, including education, skills, and access to training opportunities. Agency means one's ability to define their goals and act upon them, which includes decision-making power, self-confidence, and bargaining capacity within households and communities. Achievements are considered the tangible outcomes of this process, which involves getting a job, earning an income, control over household resources and enhanced social status. This framework is especially applicable to analyze TVET interventions, because only skill acquisition does not guarantee empowerment unless women exercise their agency and transform those skills into real socioeconomic outcomes.

However, this study shows that access to TVET-based skills is not enough to ensure women's

empowerment. Many trained women failed to use their TVET skills or not involved in income-generating activities due to strict gender norms, restricted mobility, financial limitations, and dependence on the approval of male family members. These findings are closely related to Kabeer's argument about empowerment, which emphasised that empowerment is mainly determined by prevailing social relations, especially within households and power is often unequally distributed along gender lines (Kabeer 1999). In a patriarchal family system, male family members, including fathers, brothers, or husbands, often act as controllers who determine women's participation in economic activities and their control over income, thus mediating the prospect for TVET to empower women.

The study applies Sen's Capability Approach (Sen, 1999) to fully understand the gap between skill acquisition and actual economic and social outcomes. Sen explains the difference between capabilities and functioning. According to him, capabilities are defined as the freedoms or opportunities people have to live the lives they want, while functioning refers to real achievements like having a job and being financially independent or socially empowered. In this context, TVET enhances women's capabilities by focusing on their skills and employability. However, the transformation of these capabilities into functioning relies on several conversion factors, such as social norms, household power relations, safety concerns and access to markets and capital (Sen, 1999; Robeyns, 2005).

In the Pakistani context, adverse social and institutional conversion factors tend to constrain women's ability to realise the economic returns of their training. Even if women have marketable skills, patriarchal norms about women's mobility, respectability, and home roles limit their labor market participation. As a result, women with similar skills obtain different outcomes and are mostly dependent on the level of support or resistance they receive in their families.

By incorporating Kabeer's empowerment framework with Sen's Capability Approach, this study conceptualises TVET as a necessary but insufficient condition for women's empowerment. While TVET enhances women's human capital and broadens their potential agency, empowerment outcomes are ultimately determined by gendered social structures operating at the household and community levels. Findings from the study reveal that employed or self-employed women have higher self-confidence, higher levels of participation in household decision-making, and greater influence in the allocation of resources, which is consistent with earlier empirical research showing that economic participation is associated with increased agency (Kabeer, 2005; Malhotra, Schuler, & Boender, 2002). On the other hand, women who remain unemployed after training show limited empowerment, which indicates the need to enabling social and institutional environment.

Overall, the theoretical framework allows for going beyond the narrow human capital perspective and situates TVET within a broader gender and development discourse. It underscores that sustainable women's empowerment must be supported not only by providing skills but also by social norms, intra-household bargaining power, and related institutional mechanisms that enable women to translate training into meaningful economic and social achievements.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Scope

This study focuses on the role of TVET in the economic and social empowerment of young women in Pakistan, particularly focusing on Islamabad and Rawalpindi (the Twin Cities). The scope of the research is informed by an empowerment perspective, which views skills development as a potential resource whose outcomes depend on women's agency, as well as the social context in which skills are utilized. The study targets female students in active TVET programmes and those who recently finished their training, which makes it possible to investigate their expectations, experiences and post-training outcomes. The study mainly focused on the household dynamics, family support or resistance and gender norms that affect women's ability to convert training into economic participation and social empowerment. Moreover, the research is largely exploratory in nature and does not seek statistical generalization; instead it aimed to generate context-specific insights about how TVET functions in patriarchal social structures.

3.2 Research Questions

Using an empowerment and capability-based perspective, this study examines the impact of participating in TVET programs on the economic and social empowerment of young women, with a focus on household dynamics and gender norms in Pakistan. The inquiry is designed using the following research questions:

- i. To what extent does participation in TVET programs enhance young women's income-generating capacity, employment prospects, and entrepreneurial opportunities?
- ii. How does participation in TVET influence women's self-confidence, aspirations, mobility, and participation in household decision-making?
- iii. How do family dynamics and approval or resistance of male family members (fathers, brothers, husbands) affect women's ability to use TVET skills to pursue economic and social advancement?

3.3 Research Design

This study employs a qualitative case study design to understand the contribution of TVET in the economic and social empowerment of women in a particular institutional and socio-cultural context. A women's TVET Institute, which has been operating in Islamabad since 1984, was selected as a case study, while graduates of this Institute were the primary subject of this research to understand the answers to the stated research objectives. Enrolled students and faculty of the institute were also included in order to capture different aspects related to this research. A qualitative approach is suitable emphasizing agency, lived experiences and household-level power relations, which cannot be captured by quantitative indicators alone. The case study design enables an in-depth exploration of how skills gained through TVET are negotiated, used or limited within the everyday social realities.

A women's polytechnic institute in Islamabad was selected as a case study because it offers both technical and vocational training to women and is managed by the National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTTC). The institute provides various courses, including both diploma and short courses, and caters to women of all socio-economic backgrounds, mainly from the areas of Islamabad and Rawalpindi. Choosing the single institutional case allowed an in-depth analysis of the interaction among the training, institutional practices and social norms that shape empowerment results.

In accordance with the theoretical framework, the study considered TVET as a resource, women's ability to act on that resource as agency, and employment, and household influence viewed as achievements of that process. At the same time, using the Capability Approach, the research examines how household norms, mobility restrictions and male authority affect whether these skills convert into tangible economic and social outcomes.

3.4 Sampling

The study includes two groups of participants: (i) women who completed TVET programs in the past five years, and (ii) women who enrolled in TVET programs. We include both groups to compare initial expectations with actual post-training outcomes and to explore differences in empowerment between employed and unemployed women.

Table 1: Sample

COURSES		GRADUATES	ENROLLED STUDENTS
Vocational Training	Dress-making	10	5
	Beautician	12	5
Technical Training	Office Management	10	5
	Information Technology	11	5
TOTAL		43	20

The study included four diploma programs as focal cases on the basis of enrolment level and relevance to labor market opportunities such as dress-making, beautician, office management and

information technology. Dress designing and beautician programmes were considered as vocational training, whereas office management and information technology were classified as technical training.

A total of 63 participants were chosen for the study, which involves 43 graduate participants and 20 enrolled students aged between 17 and 25 years old. Graduates were selected through purposive sampling based on their relevance to the research questions, and then snowball sampling was used to reach additional participants. Enrolled students were deliberately chosen to fully understand the diversity in student background and training stage. Most of the participants were from low-income households in Islamabad and Rawalpindi. Ethical considerations were strictly observed, including informed consent, voluntary participation, anonymity, and confidentiality. Triangulation, reflexivity and maintenance of audit trail were employed to enhance credibility and dependability.

3.5 Data Collection

Data collection was carried out in the form of semi-structured interviews between August and October 2025. Two interview guides were created, including one for enrolled students and the other for graduates. Both are organized based on the themes extracted from the theoretical framework and research questions.

For graduates, interviews focused on the utilization of TVET-acquired skills in employment or self-employment, and how much the skills training supported them to earn money and control their income. It also examined how TVET shaped their self-confidence, mobility and participation in household decisions. The study particularly focused on the role of family support or resistance after training completion and how this influenced women's economic and social trajectories. For enrolled students, interviews were conducted about motivation for enrolment to TVET programs, expectations in terms of future employment and empowerment, and perception of the attitude of family towards training and jobs. Discussions also tackled anticipated restrictions related to mobility, social norms and household responsibilities that have an impact on the use of their post-training skills.

Moreover, four key informant interviews were conducted with faculty members and management to obtain the institutional viewpoint regarding training quality, market relevance, student engagement and post-training opportunities. These interviews helped us to contextualize women's experience within the broader context of institutional practices.

The study conducted face-to-face interviews, but telephonic interviews were also used for graduates who relocated or were not willing to participate in an in-person meeting. Interviews took about 20-30 minutes. With their consent, interviews were audio-recorded, and where recording was refused, detailed field notes were taken.

Table 2: Key Analytical Indicators aligned with Research Questions and Theory

Analytical Dimension	Graduates	Enrolled Students
Motivation	Motivation for work or self-employment (personal ambition, financial need, family responsibility, peer influence)	Motivation for enrolment in TVET (personal interest, family encouragement, peer or community influence)
Access and Mobility	Accessibility of training and workplaces; affordability of training; ability to travel independently for work or business	Availability of TVET programs; institutional accessibility (distance, transport, safety); affordability of training (fees, tools, transport); perceived mobility constraints
Satisfaction with Training	Satisfaction with course or diploma; relevance of training to labor market needs and career goals	Satisfaction with teaching quality, curriculum, practical training, facilities, and workshops
Experience and Expectations	Post-training employment or entrepreneurial experience; challenges in	Expectations regarding employment or entrepreneurship; anticipated social

	skill utilisation; social recognition and autonomy	recognition, acceptance, and personal growth
Economic Empowerment	Income-generating activities; financial independence; control over income, savings, and expenditure	Expected income-generating opportunities after training; anticipated financial independence and control over resources
Social Empowerment	Self-confidence; participation in household decision-making (education, work, marriage, finances)	Perceived self-confidence; anticipated participation in household decision-making
Household and Family Dynamics (Conversion Factors)	Approval or resistance from father, brother, or husband; influence on work decisions; control over earnings; mobility permissions; impact of marriage and domestic responsibilities	Family attitudes toward training and women's work; anticipated approval or restrictions; expectations regarding mobility, marriage, and household roles

Table 2 presents the analytical indicators used to examine how participation in TVET shapes women's economic and social empowerment, explicitly aligned with the study's research questions and theoretical framework. The indicators helped to capture not only the post-training outcomes but also the processes by which women attempt to translate the skills obtained into meaningful outcomes. Based on the empowerment model by Kabeer, the indicators describe access to resources like training and skills, expression of agency such as motivation, confidence, mobility and decision-making, and accomplishment in terms of employment, income generation, and household power. Following the Capability Approach developed by Sen, the dynamics of the household and family are considered as a separate analytical dimension to capture conversion factors that facilitate or limit the translation of the skills into realised outcomes.

In the case of enrolled students, the indicators consist of motivations, expectations, and perceived constraints before entering the labor market, which allows the study to record the expected empowerment pathways. Among the graduates, the indicators are based on actual experiences of employment, income generation, autonomy and negotiation within the household. This research included household and family dynamics as an independent dimension, which allows for a systematic analysis of the male approval or opposition, control over income, freedom of movement, and domestic requirements. These factors help to capture the variation in empowerment outcomes among women with similar training backgrounds. These were the indicators that guided the semi-structured interviews and provided informative power to the thematic analysis.

3.6 Data Analysis

The thematic framework approach was used in the data analysis because it helps to explore empowerment as a process which is informed by skills, agency, and social context. NVivo software was used to organize and manage interview transcripts and field notes. The analysis started with the familiarization phase, where transcripts were read several times to gain a clear picture of the experiences of the TVET participation, use of skills and daily negotiations at the household level.

The coding was conducted through both deductive and inductive methods. Deductive codes were based on the theoretical framework, which focuses on concepts such as resources, agency, achievements, and conversion factors. On the other hand, inductive codes arise from the narratives of the participants, which reflect experiences specific to their context. These codes were then grouped into broader thematic aspects of analysis such as income generation and employment, control of financial resources, self-confidence and aspirations, mobility, involvement in household decision-making, family support or resistance and existing social norms.

A comparative study was conducted between the groups of participants to examine variation among the enrolled students and graduates, encompassing both married and unmarried participants, which allows us to compare expectations prior to labor market entry with post-training experiences.

Furthermore, a comparative analysis of both economically active and inactive women was carried out to determine how changes in family dynamics and mobility affected the transformation of their skills into economic and social outcomes. At the last phase, an interpretive analysis was employed to create a detailed explanation of how TVET operates with household power relations and social norms to influence the empowerment pathways of women. Reflexivity was observed throughout the entire course of the analysis process to ensure the research positions, and credibility was enhanced by triangulating data sources and groups of participants.

4 Findings and Discussion

This section presents and discusses the findings of the study based on the three research questions used in the analysis. The discussion is designed around key themes, which highlight women's motivations for joining TVET, the economic and social outcomes of skill acquisition, and how family dynamics and social norms shape women's post-training experiences.

4.1 Motivation towards TVET (Contextual Foundation)

Firstly, participants were requested to provide their feedback on motivations for enrolling in TVET and the other choices available to them before admission. Overall, motivations were largely considered as extrinsic instead of intrinsic, which is shaped by family members, relatives, friends, teachers, or graduates who viewed TVET as an alternative option alongside traditional higher education pathways such as undergraduate university programs. About two-thirds of the respondents indicated that economic hardship and family financial situations strongly influence their decisions.

“In our family, there are seven siblings... our sick grandmother also lives with us as well. Due to poor financial conditions, my father was unable to pay the university fees, so here I am.” (Beautician student, unmarried)

“My (school) teacher guided me to enroll in the diploma course. She was aware of our financial status. So, she supported me in the admission process.” (Dress designing student, unmarried)

However, not all participants joined TVET with clear career goals. Approximately one-third of the students from relatively affluent families enrolled because of poor academic performance or as a temporary arrangement before marriage. Others said they enrolled mainly because their friends were already in the institute, instead of any personal interest in the field.

“I enrolled in this course because my friends were already attending the institute, but I do not have any personal interest [motivation] in it. It is just a way to get away from the house.” (Information Technology student, unmarried)

Based on motivations and aspirations, participants broadly fell into two groups with almost equal distribution of 50-50. The first group consisted of women, both enrolled students and graduates, who viewed TVET as a pathway to further education, employment, or income generation. Some had already begun earning through home-based work after completing their diplomas.

“I started working from home after completing my diploma. Now I am able to earn a certain amount of money. It motivates me to continue working and earn more.” (Dress-making graduate, entrepreneur, married)

“Of course, this is an IT era, and after graduation, I shall be able to earn good money. I don't need to rely on a permanent job anymore... I can earn online as a freelancer.” (IT student, unmarried)

The second group included participants with no or limited intention to continue their education or pursue long-term careers. Their choices are mainly affected by factors such as marrying early or fixed marriages, religious backgrounds, financial limitations, and poor academic grades. Factors such as marrying early or fixed marriages, religious backgrounds, financial limitations, and bad academic grades affected

“After getting low marks in the SSC exams, I lost motivation to study. My parents did not push me to obtain higher education, so this course was the right choice for me.” (Office management student, unmarried)

“At that time, my fiancé was living in Saudi Arabia. I was expected to get married within a year. So, instead of wasting time at home, my father enrolled me there [to TVET Institute] to get a diploma.” (IT graduate, unemployed, married)

The results indicate that parents often encourage daughters to learn vocational skills mainly in order to secure a better marriage rather than to support their independent career. Findings suggest that parental education levels played a significant role, because uneducated parents were generally less supportive of their daughters' education or employment. Overall, family expectations and socioeconomic constraints were more significant motives for entering TVET than women's own career interests, which align with prior outcomes of cultural values and family pressures on women's engagement in skills development (Khan et al., 2025).

Based on the perspectives of the management and the faculty, the findings identified two main and two secondary factors influencing enrolment in diploma programs. The main reasons can be linked to economic and cultural factors. Firstly, those coming from poor communities often prefer diploma courses rather than university courses because they cannot afford the economic expenses related to higher education. Secondly, those with strong religious values are reluctant to send their female children to the co-education system and find the women's TVET institutes only a suitable alternative. The secondary reasons are more practical. Faculty and management observed the shorter duration of diploma programs, which are often completed within a year, as an attractive program, as they enable women to enter the job market in a shorter period of time. In addition, diploma courses are viewed as more respectable than basic schooling (matriculation or FA), especially in marriage proposals, where vocational training leads to improving a woman's social standing.

4.2 Skills Utilisation and Employment Outcomes

The findings indicate that the economic impact of TVET on women's empowerment is moderate and uneven, which largely depends on the ability of the women to utilize acquired skills. Based on post-training trajectories, respondents were categorized into three sub-groups: those who wanted to use their skills in the future, those who were unable to use their skills, and those who were using their skills to generate income. These groups point out how the same training experience cannot have the same outcome depending on household support, marital status, and mobility.

(a) Aspirations without immediate utilization

The first group consisted of enrolled students and graduates, who represented more than half of the entire sample and aspired to use their skills for jobs, home-based work or to be businessmen or women in the future. In this group, most people saw government work as an unachievable goal because of competition from university graduates and high qualification standards. As a result, they prefer to work in the private or informal sector, as it is more realistic, which is frequently low-paid and demanding.

“There is a strict competition for government jobs that we cannot compete with university graduates. They have degrees, and our diplomas are worthless. However, we can get job opportunities in the private sector for low-paid or long-hour jobs.” (Office management graduate, employed, married)

For some young women, aspirations were postponed rather than abandoned because of family decisions and life transitions such as marriage. One graduate shared that her plan changed over time within changing family circumstances:

“My elder brother didn't allow me to do a job. It was decided on day one. He promised to support me in setting up a boutique in the neighborhood, but I got married, and later, my husband allowed me to fulfil my dream.” (Dress-making graduate, freelancer, married)

This group represents unrealized potential, where women do have skills and aspirations, but they still have constraints such as timing, family decision-making and lack of autonomy.

(b) Skills acquired but unused

The second group, which was more than three-fourths of the graduates, consisted of women who could not use the TVET skills they had acquired. Early marriage, lack of family permission,

and/or resistance from husbands or in-laws were the primary barriers. Many women in this group remained unemployed or accepted low-paid, unrelated work that did not reflect their training.

“During my training, I was motivated to pursue my career in office management. I also applied for some jobs and got one (offer) in Rawalpindi. But my father never allowed me to travel because of the distance and family pressure... [for the last two years] I have been unemployed, unmarried, and doing nothing except housework... but no one cares!” (Office management graduate, unemployed, unmarried)

“I was among the best students in my (training) class... I knew that my father and brothers would never allow me to work. So, I made up my mind earlier... and perhaps that’s why it didn’t hurt much... [nevertheless,] some of my classmates who were not that smart, but had family support, are working and earning well.” (IT graduate, unemployed, unmarried)

For these women, the acquisition of skills did not result in economic participation because of restrictive household norms and mobility. Their experiences highlight that training is not sufficient if there isn't family approval. Although some women expressed willingness to work, employment decisions were, in many cases, made by male family members; women were economically dependent even though they possessed marketable skills.

From the point of view of the management and the members of the faculty, this condition was identified as frustrating and highly disturbing. Instructors stated that they typically become discouraged when they see intelligent, motivated, and academically capable students unable to translate their skills into work due to the restrictions of their families (especially male family members). Faculty members emphasized that this resistance was less about the nature of work, and more about a general lack of trust. As one administrator noted, in the patriarchal social structure of Pakistan, men often doubt women's capacities for working on their own, even for actually moving around the public space or for performing professional tasks. According to the faculty, more troubling is that this doubt is slowly internalised by young women themselves. Over time, many students start to assume that they cannot successfully work without the approval, guidance or protection of male family members. This internalized self-doubt further diminishes women's level of agency which perpetuates dependence and stifles the enabling power of TVET despite skills and opportunities being available.

(c) Active skill utilisation and economic gains

The third group included a small but analytically significant number of graduates who were actively utilising their skills in generating an income through employment or self-employment. These women were engaged in home-based jobs or employed in the private sector or in the informal market, such as dress designing, beauty services, and computer-related activities. This group was distinguished based not only on the possession of skills but also on the presence of enabling conditions. Most importantly, the existence of strong family support, relative autonomy in terms of mobility, and in some cases, access to initial financial resources.

Women from this group indicated that they received concrete economic outcomes, such as regular or supplementary income, had more financial independence, and could contribute to household expenses. Several participants demonstrated the importance of earning an income in the improvement of their self-worth and status in the household.

“I am working as a beautician. At the time of my wedding, I paid for my dowry with my own earnings. I support my father’s financial expenses and am proud of it.” (Beautician graduate, employed, married)

“We are five siblings in my family, and I am the third one... Throughout my life, I’ve noticed that my parents look up to my older brother more than us (the girls), and it sometimes feels like we aren't given much attention... and because I’ve been earning well and contributing in household expenses. Lately, I’ve started to feel more respected at home within just two years. I truly believe my financial contribution has played a significant role in this change.” (Office management graduate, employed, unmarried)

For such women, income generation contributes to increasing involvement in household decision-making, especially within the framework of nuclear families. They described themselves as

having more confidence about managing their earnings, savings and talking to spouses about financial matters. In contrast, most women living in joint-family systems were subjected to more restrictions and had little autonomy.

"My husband is quite supportive and respects my contribution to the family. He included me in family decisions. We both work and contribute our share to run the household... (but) it's little bit different for my sister-in-law. She is living in a joint-family system. She doesn't a lot of say in the discussion of family matters." (Office management graduate, employed, married)

"Not every time, but I do have a say in family decisions... After all, I contribute my share to meet the expenses of the family." (Beautician graduate, employed, unmarried)

"My husband controls all the financial matters at home. Each month, my mother-in-law collects kameti [monthly savings contributions]. I always give my salary to my husband and get my personal expenses from him. He is better at financial management than me. (IT graduate, employed, married)

From the perspectives of management and faculty, the experiences of women in this group underscore the importance of a supportive environment for women's economic participation. Instructors consistently highlighted that the main decisive factor in engaging women in sustained work and income generation is having encouragement and trust from family members, especially from male relatives. Faculty explained that when families are supportive, women often become more confident, persistent, and willing to deal with challenges related to work, mobility, and social expectations.

At the same time, management pointed out that women's own motivation and determination to earn and contribute is also considered a critical factor. Students with a high level of willingness to struggle, learn, and change are more likely to remain economically active, particularly when this personal effort is supported by family support. Faculty members noted that women obtain the best empowerment when institutional training, individual motivation and a supportive household environment work together, which explains that skills alone are not enough to guarantee women's economic and social advancement.

However, even within this group, empowerment depends on various conditions. Most women wanted to continue their work within socially acceptable boundaries, which involves home based or gender appropriate jobs to maintain family approval and social respectability. Their experiences show that while TVET promotes economic participation, empowerment depends on negotiation and continuous family consent. Nonetheless, this group provided clear evidence that when skills are combined with supportive household environments, TVET can provide a significant boost to women's economic agency and social standing.

4.3 Financial Contribution and Economic Decision-Making

Based on financial contributions, the participants were divided into three groups. The first group consisted of the enrolled students and the graduates who wanted to take care of their families in the future by entering the job market or home-based work.

"I am learning computer and information technology, and if the opportunity is available, I can earn and support my family." (Student of information technology, not married)

"The sole objective of my enrolment was to get some (dress-making) training and earn some extra money for my family." (Dress-making graduate, not working, married)

The second group comprised young women who were unable or unwilling to earn due to family restrictions or social norms, despite possessing relevant skills.

"I could have provided financial support had I been given the opportunity to work, but I did not receive permission from my parents and later from my husband." (Beautician graduate, unemployed, married)

"It [the training] was just a time-pass activity. I knew my father would never allow me to work later on... and honestly, I don't want to work either... I am not confident enough to do things on my own." (Dress-making graduate, unmarried)

The third group included a small number of graduates who were actively earning and contributing to household expenses. Some shared earnings with fathers, husbands, or in-laws, while others used their income as they chose.

“My son goes to Allied School, and I am preparing myself to send the second (daughter) to the same school as well. We can afford this (private) school because of my earnings.” (Beautician graduate, employed, married)

“I share a large portion of my salary with my father. He uses some of it for household expenses while saving the rest for my dowry. I keep a reasonable amount for myself. It is my choice what I do with that... I spend it on my clothes, shoes, travel, food, and other things... I feel good about it. (Office management graduate, employed, unmarried)

With respect to economic decision-making, women's participation depends on their household structure. Women in nuclear families expressed greater freedom of autonomy in matters relating to earnings, savings and spending, while those in joint families show limited decision-making powers as a consequence of the hierarchical family structure.

“Every month, I only pay the electricity bill. What I do with my salary is my choice. My husband never questioned me about my salary. It is because he is earning well, and we are living in a separate (nuclear) family setup.” (IT graduate, employed, married)

“It is very hard to balance work and family life, especially if you are living in a joint-family system. My job never reduces my responsibilities at home, and my in-laws are not pleased with it. They think I am having fun out of the house (at work) without taking into consideration that I have two jobs, one is at work and the other at home.” (Office management graduate, employed, married)

The findings suggest that women's involvement in the family's financial matters does not represent their economic decision-making power. While some women are able to exercise autonomy over earnings, many are still restricted by household structures and gender norms, which limit their ability to control their incomes, especially in the case of joint-family systems. This indicates that TVET can allow people to earn incomes, but its ability to empower young women is dependent on supportive family environments and women's capacity to negotiate economic agency within the household.

4.4 TVET and Social Empowerment

Participation in TVET had a positive impact on improving women's self-confidence and social interaction. However, its overall impact on social empowerment remained limited and uneven. Women who transform their training into money and collectively contribute to household expenses exhibit more confidence, independence, and a more positive sense of self-worth.

“I am earning money and contributing to the expenses of my family after I completed my diploma course. It helps to improve my self-confidence.” (Beautician graduate, employed, unmarried)

Despite these benefits, social empowerment was often limited by family norms, marital status and limited mobility. Many of the participants indicated that questioning elders or publicly expressing one's independent opinions was regarded as disrespectful, which limits women's role in household decision-making. In this regard, married and economically active women tend to be more socially empowered than unmarried students and unemployed graduates.

“We both (my sister and I) are doing jobs, but her opinion on family matters is considered more seriously, only because she is married, and I am unmarried.” (IT graduate, employed, unmarried)

Enrolled students said that they were not involved in any family decisions, as authority was largely in the hands of the elder male members of the household.

“Most of the family decisions are made by elder male members without including us.” (Office management student, unmarried)

Overall, the findings demonstrated that although TVET can promote women's confidence and social visibility, social empowerment is still closely linked to women's employment status, their position in the marital relationship and family attitude. Economic participation seems to improve the social standing of women, but without supportive household environments and higher levels of mobility, the overall transformative potential of TVET for social empowerment is limited.

4.5 Family Dynamics as a Mediating Force

The findings show a clear difference among graduates depending on the level of family support they received after completion of TVET, focusing on how household dynamics influence empowerment outcomes. Broadly, the respondents were categorized into two groups. The larger group consist of three-fourths of graduates, who lacked the family sanction for work, while a smaller group involves about one-fourth who had the benefits of supportive family environments.

The first and larger group comprised those graduates whose families, especially the male members such as father, brothers, husbands, or in-laws, limit their involvement in paid work or in entrepreneurial activities. For these women, choices about employment, income use and mobility were primarily in the hands of others, and there was limited attention given to exercising agency despite possessing marketable skills. Further, marriage emerged as a significant turning point for a large number of women in this group, after which expectations with regard to childcare, domestic responsibilities and social respectability further restricted their use of the training.

"I wanted to work, but my family never gave me permission, and I didn't push for it." (Dress-making graduate, unemployed, unmarried)

"My mother always advises me to get married first, then I can do any kind of job with my husband's permission. After marriage, my husband asked me to wait a few years until we found a separate apartment. Now I have become a mother and am too busy with domestic responsibilities." (Beautician graduate, unemployed, married)

As a result, many graduates were excluded from economic activity, becoming economically inactive, despite having completed TVET and an initial expression of willingness to work. These experiences demonstrate that when family approval is absent, it acts as a major barrier, which limits women's ability to transform their skills into economic and social empowerment.

On the other hand, the second group included a smaller percentage of graduates who got encouragement and permission from their families to be involved in both employment and self-employment. These women showed more autonomy about their mobility, access to work opportunities and control over earnings. Supportive family environment, usually different aspects such as trust, flexibility and practical assistance allowed these women to maintain economic activity and contribute to the household income. Consequently, economic participation helped to build their confidence and enhanced their engagement in household decision-making. This group, although still continuing to function within socially acceptable limits, also received support from their families and was able to significantly diversify their roles and responsibilities within households.

"My father is my hero. He also inspired me to work hard and contribute. He treats my two brothers and me equally. It is his trust, support, and encouragement that have enabled me to travel on Metro Bus, work as a secretary at a private firm, and also take additional courses to improve my skills." (IT graduate, employed, unmarried)

Overall, these findings show that family dynamics play a crucial role in determining whether TVET training actually helps to achieve the outcomes of women's empowerment. The gap between the two groups highlights that only skills acquisition is not enough, but the presence or absence of family approval, especially male family members, will mainly shape the women's ability to turn their training into meaningful economic and social advancement.

5 Conclusion

This study examined the impact of TVET on the economic and social empowerment of young women in Pakistan, emphasizing on role of family dynamics and social norms in mediating this effect.

Based on qualitative data from students, graduates and institutional stakeholders, findings show that although TVET improves skills, aspirations and perceived opportunities for women, its empowering effect is not the same for everyone and depends highly on context. Family support and social restrictions are crucial elements which influence skills utilization. The results are consistent with evidence from other areas indicating that women's labor market participation is strongly associated with household approval, mobility expectations, and gender power structures.

In the analysis, there were significant differences in women's post-training experience. Most graduates found it difficult to translate their skills into employment or income because of factors such as early marriages, low mobility and resistance from male family members. This meant that they were not able to reach their full potential, despite the training they received. In contrast, a smaller group who were backed by supportive household environments were able to turn their skills into income, build confidence and participate more actively in household decision-making, often within negotiated and socially acceptable limits. These findings identify that household dynamics play an important role in whether TVET leads to actual economic and social progress for women.

Overall, the study suggests that while TVET is considered a key factor in promoting women's empowerment, it is not sufficient by itself, and other factors are needed to make it fully effective. Without support from family relations and gender-sensitive program design, TVET could unintentionally reinforce existing inequalities by equipping women with skills they are unable to utilize fully. In order to truly empower women, TVET needs to be combined with interventions that address household power structures and social norms. This includes the involvement of family (including men), which creates flexible and market-oriented work opportunities and provides post-training support. These measures help ensure that training results in real and lasting empowerment.

5.1 Policy Recommendations

TVET programs for women must focus not only on providing skills but also on actively engaging with families and communities. Vocational and technical institutes should institutionalize the 'Open Day' gatherings to introduce successful women graduates to parents, male family members and community stakeholders. Seeing tangible outcomes in terms of employment and levels of income can help to reduce social resistance, build trust and encourage families to support women's participation in TVET.

Institutes should also promote digital outreach through official websites and social media platforms to provide information about enrolment, courses, facilities and graduate outcomes. Regularly highlighting women's success stories can raise awareness, counter negative perceptions, and encourage gender-inclusive enrolment.

Finally, the TVET authorities should incorporate family engagement and post-training support in their program design, such as an orientation session for parents during enrolment and basic career guidance for graduating students. Without tackling household-level concerns and restrictions, the women's skills will continue to remain underused.

Together, these measures help shift TVET from a skills-only approach to a more holistic empowerment approach that addresses household power dynamics, social norms, and practical barriers, enabling women to use their training to achieve economic and social benefits.

5.2 Future Research Directions:

This study offers a detailed analysis of women's experiences with TVET and empowerment, but it also identifies some important areas for future studies. As parents and male family members play a key role in changing educational, economic and social pathways of women, future studies should include parents and guardians as direct participants to understand their concerns, constraints and perceptions that influence decisions related to daughters' education and employment. Examining these household-level perspectives would enable a more comprehensive analysis of the social and cultural barriers that affect the outcome of women's empowerment. Furthermore, future studies could expand the analysis beyond TVET and investigate the role of university-level education and skills-based training in shaping women's empowerment, especially in the domain of women's civic and political participation. Exploring how different forms of education shape women's voice, leadership, and engagement in public life would deepen understanding of the broader societal impacts of

education and inform more inclusive policy design.

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