

Unveiling Women's Economic Empowerment: The Role of Self-Determination Theory,
Psychological Capital, and Cultural Barriers

Hussain Khoja

PhD Scholar, Institute of Business Management, Karachi, Pakistan.

Dr. Muhammad Azeem Qureshi

Associate Professor, Institute of Business Management, Karachi, Pakistan

Dr. Junaid Ansari

Assistant Professor, Institute of Business Management, Karachi, Pakistan.

h.jaghrani@gmail.com

Abstract

Thus, the purpose of this study is to evaluate the influence of the different dimensions of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) on the economic empowerment of working women in Pakistan. It explores how psychological needs, operationalized by locus of control and moderated by cultural discrimination, affect women's economic empowerment. This study follows a quantitative research design and used cross-sectional data to test the hypothesized model. Using a non-probability snowball sampling technique, this study analyzed the data gathered from 317 working women from Pakistan through a self-administered questionnaire based on a 7-point Likert scale. The analysis was performed on Smart PLS using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) to test the proposed model. The study's findings indicate that psychological need and the positive psychological capital play a significant role in determining women's empowerment in the economic domain. This study establishes that locus of control mediates these relationships, and cultural discrimination as a moderator reduces the positive influence of psychological needs/psychological capital on women's economic empowerment. This research offers more significant insights about women's economic empowerment through the lens of self-determination theory and with diverse cultural perspectives. It brings together psychological and cultural approaches to explore what empowers people economically and provides new perspectives on this process.

Keywords: Self-Determination Theory, Economic Empowerment, Working Women, Pakistan, Locus of Control, Cultural Discrimination, Psychological Needs.

Introduction

Economic independence is a crucial element for women's growth as the issue of economic omission continues to persist in Pakistan (Rohatgi & Gera, 2024). According to research by Jumady et al. (2024)

and Lavanya & Mamilla (2024), encouraging the use of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) by giving women more economic power leads to their economic equality and ends the problem of unequal economic opportunities and outcomes between men and women. This introduction discusses the use of SDT in promoting economic literacy and women's empowerment in Pakistan with an emphasis on the integration of psychological motivation in the practical ability in the use of technology and money. According to self-determination theory, intrinsic needs such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness are greatly satisfying and will greatly enhance motivation as well as engagement (St-Onge & Beauchamp Legault, 2022; Richey et al., 2022). That is why SDT can be useful when implementing women's empowerment programs; it allows women to regain control over their economic decisions and improve their performance with regards to socio-economic resources (Heriberta et al., 2024; Yussuf, 2023). Research has indicated that women with perceived self-efficacy are better placed to engage in financial planning and debt and therefore can improve their economic returns (Jumady et al., 2024; Lavanya & Mamilla, 2024). Thus, incorporating SDT into any of the employee psychological and social contextual activities could significantly contribute to women's economic empowerment.

It has also been noted that through SDT for economic empowerment, it supports and improves the welfare of those involved and brings about positive change in the society at large (Naima, 2024; Mitra & De, 2024). Education also helps women to make smart decisions to invest in local businesses, thus boosting the economy through harnessing their buying power and reducing their chances of being destabilised by future ebbs in the economy (Sathiyabama et al., 2023; Rampalli, 2024). Women entrepreneurship in Pakistan is predominantly restrained due to entrenched cultural conditioning; thus, factors of self-determination theory can aid closure of the gender gap in economic engagement (Rohatgi & Gera, 2024; Allioui & Chafik, 2024). All these transformational potentials explain why educative campaigns aimed at enhancing the economic empowerment of women are necessary. Some of the variables that contribute to the link between SDT and economic empowerment include self-efficacy, motivation, and social support (Ndiak, 2024; Rohatgi et al., 2023). Knowledge or perceived control over financial matters, often referred to as economic self-efficacy, is necessary for the productive utilization of electronic financial technologies (Jumady et al., 2024; Kaur et al., 2024). Moreover, social support systems may also help increase women's self-efficacy and interest in using the DFS, hence improving

economic performance (Wu et al., 2022; Bano, 2023). Thus, enhancing programs designed to support and encompass elements of a supportive context for women's desire and ability to manage money.

Advancing the economic empowerment of women and toward self-determination theory proposes a pioneering path toward promoting the presence of economic independence in Pakistan, endorsed by Rohatgi and Gera (2024), Dewald, and Schee (2022). Given that all the cited initiatives tap into the basic motivational psychological needs mentioned above, it can increase women's engagement in the economy (Wei et al., 2022; Mitra & De, 2024). Such empowerment is not only good for individual women but also for society, implying the need for specific educational interventions to bring economic rights across societies (Rohatgi et al., 2023; Rampalli, 2024). Subsequent developments in research and policy should expand on these types of approaches to boost the positive effects on women's economic status in Pakistan.

Objectives

1. To examine the impact of the need for competence on women's economic empowerment.
2. To assess the influence of the need for autonomy on women's economic empowerment.
3. To evaluate the role of positive psychological capital in enhancing women's economic empowerment.
4. To investigate the mediating role of locus of control in the relationship between psychological needs (competence and autonomy), positive psychological capital, and economic empowerment.
5. To explore the moderating effect of cultural discrimination on the relationship between women's economic empowerment.

Research Gap

Although the factors of self-determination theory hold the promise of contributing towards the improvement of economic capacities of women, there are still certain challenges in this regard, especially in the developing countries like Pakistan. This means that the women's economic empowerment is still a reality influenced by intrinsic psychological challenges as well as sentiments that are socio-cultural (Rohatgi and Gera, 2024, Naima, 2024). Though earlier literature has given emphasis to the part of women's economic sustainment, there is scant literature available wherein the SDT framework has been combined with other important factors fulfilling the psychological necessities of competence, autonomy, and positive psychological capital. In addition, other variables such as locus of control as a mediator and cultural discrimination as a moderator in this context have not been

revealed adequately (Yussuf, 2023). Thus, this research seeks to bridge these gaps by exploring how SDT will be applied to improve their economic status, reducing the effects of locus of control and discrimination based on culture.

Literature Review

Factors of SDT are in the use of emerging factors for economic enfranchisement, especially for females in developing nations. Rohatgi and Gera (2024) argue that SDT and cultural factors in some way place women in a better position of economic power as they are given more control over the family's implications. This control is relevant in areas where women struggle to get access to monetary products. As Lavanya and Mamilla (2024) pointed out, the analysis of the role of women's economic empowerment also reveals that the relationship between perceived wealth creation is also mediated by other factors and challenges, especially in the context of female IT professionals; thus the usefulness of women's economic empowerment cannot be overemphasised in different fields. Along the same line, Mitra and De (2024) discuss that women's economic empowerment and socio-psychological behaviours have a role in the life satisfaction of women, supporting the notion that it is helpful in raising the standard of life. Recent research by Wei, Chen, and Liu in 2022 established that extrinsic motivation, according to the self-determination theory, is a strong determinant of the engagement of employees and social media for work purposes. The same can be found in economic settings, where motivation appears to explain the use of economic empowerment solutions among women (St-Onge and Beauchamp Legault, 2022; Dewald and Schee, 2022). Richey, Brooks, and Ravishankar (2022) have established that self-determination among other disadvantaged groups through entrepreneurship can improve their economic well-being and recommended that entrepreneurship may also do well in the economic empowerment programs for women.

Last but not least, social and environmental aspects of raising digital SDT and economic inclusion cannot also be undermined. Yussuf (2023) examines the relationship between socioeconomic factors and the performance of women in empowerment projects and a favourable environment. Naima (2024) shows how digital credits help to close the gender gap among low-income women and how the

accessibility of digital products can transform women's lives. In the same manner, Alloui & Chafik (2024) posit that social media increases business capacity among female entrepreneurs, as well as decreases poverty within developing nations. Altogether, these works highlight many-fold advantages of enhancing women's empowerment levels and re-emphasise the importance of multifaceted and context-based approaches to the task.

Theoretical perspective

This research adopts a multiple theoretical perspective to understand women's economic enfranchisement in Pakistan. According to the proposed framework, competence, autonomy, and positive psychological capital (PsyCap) play separate roles. Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and Conservation of Resource Theory (CRT) are used to explain these roles. It also uses locus of control as a mediator variable and cultural discrimination as a moderator variable, and the dependent variable is economic empowerment based on Empowerment Theory.

Self-Determination Theory: Competence and Autonomy

Self-determination theory, which posits that the motivation for competence and autonomy are innate requirements for both human satisfaction and functioning (Wei et al., 2022; St-Onge & Beauchamp Legault, 2022). Autonomy, as a motive to achieve control of tasks and acquire knowledge, is relevant in the context of economic empowerment. Rohatgi and Gera (2024) and Jumady et al. (2024) note that women's confidence in handling economic instruments affects their usage of those instruments and, by extension, the effectiveness of their financial decisions. Self-governance because the ability to direct one's own behavior improves women's economic literacy and enables them to financially support their families independently (Lavanya and Mamilla, 2024, Mitra and De, 2024).

Positive Psychological Capital and Locus of Control

According to Conservation of Resource Theory (CRT) people seek to gain and safeguard resources such as psychological resources like positive psychological capital (PsyCap) (Dewald & Schee, 2022). PsyCap appears to improve women's capability for managing economic freedom and context (Richey et al., 2022; Heriberta et al., 2024). This is the positive psychological state that is essential in promoting internal locus of control where clients believe they have control over their finance (Ndiak, 2024; Bano,

2023). Locus of control can play the role of the moderator in the relationship between SDT and economic empowerment (Wu et al., 2022; Kaur et al., 2024).

Cultural Discrimination as a Moderator

Cultural discrimination as a moderator between SDT and economic empowerment can be analyzed by Conflict Theory and Functionalism Theory. According to Conflict Theory, social relations and power relations maintain inequalities such as gender prejudice that discourages women's economic development to this Society (Naim 2024; Yussuf 2023). On the other hand, the Functionalism Theory postulates that standards and beliefs, which hold society together, can perpetuate an oppressive gender stereotype that hinders women's economic agency (Rohatgi et al., 2023). Cultural discrimination hence either enhances or moderates the relation between SDT factors and economic empowering or depending on the existing cultural perceptions and support for gender (Allioui & Chafik, 2024).

Economic Empowerment

Empowerment Theory forms the basis of explaining the dependent variable of the study- economic empowerment. Economic literacy is understood as the work that entails the populations' acquisition of control over their mean endowment and choices, thereby improving the population participation in the economic lives (Rampalli, 2024; Rohatgi & Gera, 2024). These empowerments are not only based on the understanding of the availability of financial resource but also the ability to make strategic choices on these resources, thereby improving the well being and socio-economic status (Sathiyabama et al., 2023; Mitra & De, 2024). Empowerment Theory lays emphasis on the significance of the environments that should allow women to gain awareness of financial technologies and their subsequent economic enfranchisement.

Hypothesis

H1: The need for competence positively impacts women's economic empowerment.

H2: The need for autonomy positively impacts women's economic empowerment.

H3: Positive psychological capital positively impacts women's economic empowerment.

H4abc: Locus of control mediates the relationship between psychological needs (competence and autonomy), positive psychological capital, and economic empowerment.

H5abc: Cultural discrimination moderates the relationship between psychological needs (competence and autonomy), positive psychological capital, and economic empowerment. such that higher cultural discrimination weakens the positive relationship.

Hypothesized Model

The following framework shows the linkages between the dimensions of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and economic empowering of working women in Pakistan. This conceptual model forms the operational framework for empirical research done in this study. More pointedly, it examines how the fundamental psychological process of the Self-Determination Theory encompasses the psychological necessity for competence, autonomy, and positive Psychological Capital that has been enhanced through the impact of the initiative on women’s economic empowerment. Furthermore, the study explores how locus of control moderates the relationships between the variables and how cultural discrimination moderates these relationships.

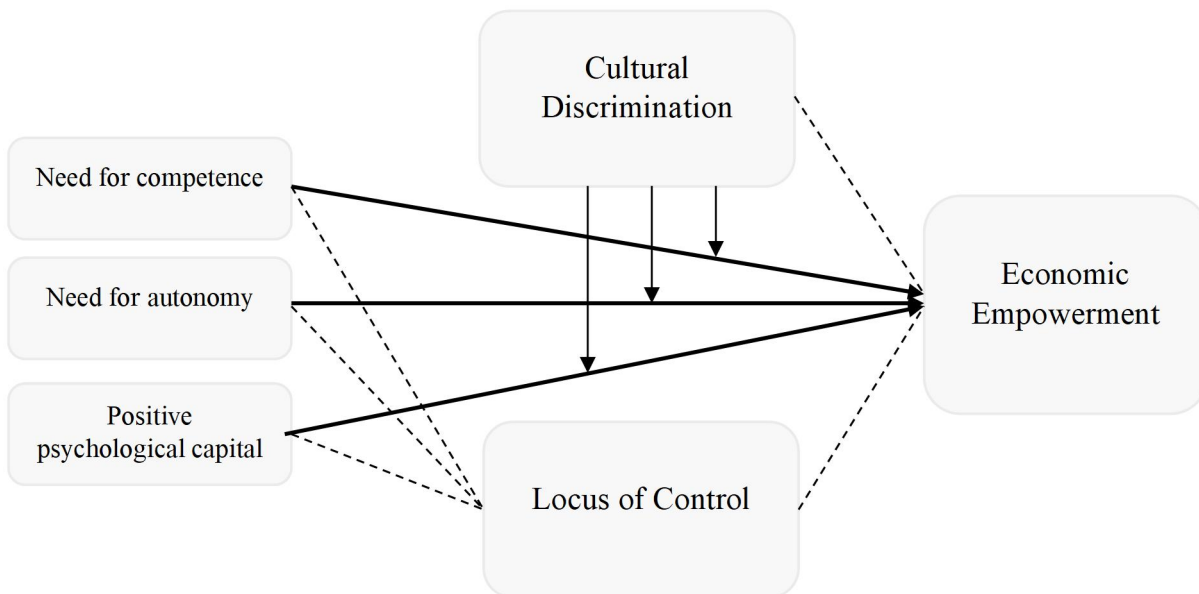


Figure 1.0. Model of the Study

Research Methodology

This research uses a quantitative methodological approach to test the nature of the association between the SDT components and economic empowerment of working women in Pakistan. Quantitative

methods and data reinforce the relations between the variables and enable to predict future trends, which is especially important in studying contextually dynamic phenomenon such as women's economic empowering. Cross-sectional analysis of the variables was done using descriptive research since it allows one to study several variables simultaneously. In the current study, a non probability snowball sampling technique was used to target 317 working women in Pakistan which increases the generalizability of collected demographic data and provides meaningful data for analysis in large numbers. Questionnaire survey data were obtained with a self-administered survey questionnaire composed of basic demographic questions and 24 items related to the study measures that were adapted from prior studies on the need for competence, need for autonomy, positive psychological capital, locus of control, cultural discrimination, and economic empowerment as measured on 7-point Likert scale.

To conduct Statistical analysis Smart PLS was used to perform the analysis with the technique known as Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling or PLS-SEM which has been considered effective for non-normal data sets and for studies that employ a relatively small sample size (Hair et al., 2014). The PLS-SEM method enables the evaluation of the proposed research hypotheses related to the study variables and gave an understanding of the capability of the predictive models. Such a methodological framework helped the researchers to comprehend the interplay of the related intrinsic psychological needs of competence and autonomy, positive psychological capital facilitated through locus of control and the impact of cultural discrimination on the economic empowerment of working women in Pakistan. It fills knowledge gaps in the literature on the basis for economic empowerments as informed by the advancement in digital technology.

Data Analysis And Results

Factor Loadings, and Internal consistency reliability analyses

Table 1 presents the results of factor analysis and internal consistency reliability analyses for the six constructs: The research model consists of six variables among which the following are; Need for Competence (NC), Need for Autonomy (NA), Positive Psychological Capital (PPC), Locus of Control (LOC), Cultural Discrimination (CD), and Economic Empowerment (EE). The scores for the composite reliability (CR) for all the constructs are above 0.7 which is acceptable for scale reliability following the standards set by Hair et al. (2022) and Kibria et al. (2021). The CR values for the constructs are as for

NC: 0.741, NA: 0.778, PPC: 0.746, LOC: 0.821, CD: 0.762, and EE: 0.811. The five selected features yielded the following reliability coefficients: Values presented above witness that each construct is measured objectively and can be relied on, and hence contributes to high internal consistency of the proposed model.

Table 1. Factor analysis and Internal consistency reliability analyses.

<i>Sr No.</i>	<i>Item Code</i>	<i>NC</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>PPC</i>	<i>LOC</i>	<i>CD</i>	<i>EE</i>
<i>Composite Reliability (CR)</i>		0.741	0.778	0.746	0.821	0.762	0.811
1	NC1	0.786					
2	NC2	0.723					
3	NC3	0.802					
4	NC4	0.712					
5	NA1		0.832				
6	NA2		0.733				
7	NA3		0.741				
8	NA4		0.703				
9	PPC2			0.701			
10	PPC3			0.749			
11	PPC4			0.712			
12	LOC1				0.862		
13	LOC2				0.717		
14	LOC3				0.775		
15	LOC4				0.709		
16	CD1					0.742	
17	CD2					0.801	
18	CD4					0.762	
19	EE1						0.814
20	EE2						0.807

21	EE3	0.809
22	EE4	0.789

The values for individual items, the factor loadings, are also above the acceptable level of 0.7 indicating that each item contributes uniquely and meaningfully to its corresponding construct. For NC, factor loadings are 0.712 to 0.802 and, for NA, the loading estimates are 0.703 – 0.832. For PPC, loadings fluctuate between 0.701 and 0.749, and for LOC, loadings range from 0.709 to 0.862; the LOC1 has the highest average loading. The CD items range from 0.742 to 0.801 and the EE items range from 0.789 to 0.814. As these results show, all constructs and their associated items are indeed meaningful, providing additional support for the viability of the theoretical framework.

AVE and Discriminate Validity Analysis

Table 2 presents the results of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Discriminant Validity (DV) analyses for the six constructs. The results reveal a convergent validity of all the constructs, as the AVE values are above the recommended minimum value of 0.5 by Hair et al., (2022). Specifically, the AVE values for the constructs are as for NC, authors obtained a score of 0.721, for NA – 0.622, for PPC – 0.694, for LOC – 0.731, for CD – 0.702, and for EE – 0.707. These values indicate that the constructs have satisfactory degrees of convergence with their corresponding measures.

Table 2. AVE and Discriminate Validity (DV) Analysis

<i>Latent Variables</i>	<i>NC</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>PPC</i>	<i>LOC</i>	<i>CD</i>	<i>EE</i>
<i>AVE</i>	0.721	0.622	0.694	0.731	0.702	0.707
NC	0.849	0.322	0.431	0.324	0.319	0.352
NA	0.521	0.789	0.288	0.512	0.425	0.411
PPC	0.512	0.482	0.834	0.426	0.434	0.487
LOC	0.342	0.543	0.341	0.855	0.231	0.398
CD	0.524	0.443	0.326	0.325	0.838	0.452

EE	0.439	0.452	0.511	0.345	0.458	0.841
----	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------

Discriminant validity is ascertained by comparing the AVE values along the diagonal with the cross-variable correlation coefficients in the off-diagonal position. To ensure a discriminant validity of elements, the square root of the AVE for each factor must be higher than correlation with other factors. The square roots of the AVE for each construct are as NC = 0.849, NA = 0.789, PPC = 0.834, LOC = 0.855, CD = 0.838, and EE = 0.841. These values are more than off-diagonal correlations and therefore, each of these constructs is different from the others. For instance, AVE for NC is 0.849 which is more than its correlation with other variables such as NA (0.521), PPC (0.431), LOC (0.342), CD (0.319) and EE (0.352) thus providing evidence that all constructs are capturing different dimensions of overall model. We see this pattern across all constructs, signifying constructs' good, convergent, and discriminant validity.

Model Test (F-Square and R-Square analysis)

Table 3 shows the R-Square (R²) and F-Square (f²) for the constructs in this model to evaluate the criterion validity and the overall impact of each of the constructs. For the model of Economic Empowerment (EE), R² = 0.701 meaning that the model explained 70.1% of the variance on this construct, thus regarded as a high level of explanation. Chin (1998) and Hair et al (2011) noted that an R² value of 0.75 is significant whereas, values of 0.50, and 0.25 are moderate and low, in that order. The R² for Cultural Discrimination (CD) is 0.512, this means that the model explains 51.2% of total variance, an acceptable level, according to Cohen (1988) value above 0.33 is considered moderate. However, the R² values of the other constructs (NC, NA, PPC, and LOC) are not presented in the table, which implies that in this context these constructs do not account for the explained value of endogenous variables per se.

Table 3. Model Test (F-Square and R-Square analysis)

<i>Latent Variables</i>	<i>R Square</i>	<i>F Square</i>
NC	--	0.504
NA	--	0.400
PPC	--	0.492

CD	--	0.510
LOC	0.512	0.421
EE	0.701	--

The F-Square (f^2) values are indicative of the influence of the predictor constructs for the endogenous latent variables. Cohen (1988) defined f^2 as small ≥ 0.02 , moderate ≥ 0.15 and large ≥ 0.35 . For the Need for Competence (NC), the need for Autonomy (NA), Positive Psychological Capital (PPC) and Cultural Discrimination (CD), f^2 varies between 0.400 and 0.510 which indicate moderate to large effect size. In particular, the value of f^2 for NC is 0.504, NA is 0.400, PPC is 0.492, while the value of f^2 , CD is 0.510, which means that these constructs exert moderate to large impact on endogenous variables of the model. These high f^2 values underscore the relevance of the psychological constructs for understanding differences in Economic Empowerment (EE) and Locus of Control (LOC). Altogether, the presented R^2 and f^2 estimates evidence the important and worthwhile role of the constructs for describing the major outcomes within the specified model.

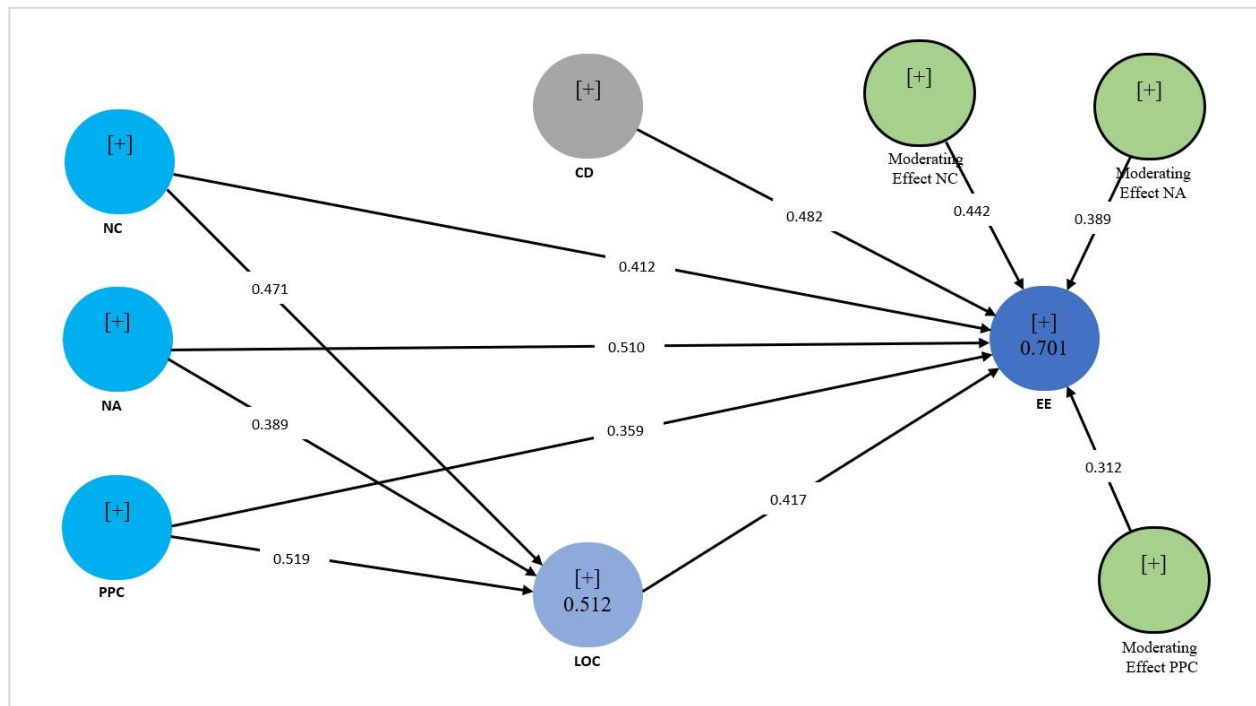


Figure 2. Measurement Model of the Study

Path Coefficient Analysis (Hypotheses testing)

The proposed model hypotheses were tested through path coefficient analysis and the measures of the associations between constructs are presented in Table 4. The estimated path coefficients (O), the sample means (M), the standard deviations (STDEV), the T-statistics and the P values for all the hypothesized relations are shown in the table below. The path coefficients gives only information about signs and relative strength of relations between the variables while coefficients T and P are used for judging the significance of these relations. If P value is less than 0.05 then it signifies that the relationship is statistically significant.

Table 4. Path Coefficient Analysis (Hypotheses testing)

<i>Hypotheses</i>	<i>Original sample (O)</i>	<i>Sample mean (M)</i>	<i>Standard deviation (STDEV)</i>	<i>T statistics (O/STDEV)</i>	<i>P values</i>
<i>NC -> EE</i>	0.412	0.201	0.024	17.17	0.001
<i>NA -> EE</i>	0.510	0.211	0.041	12.44	0.000
<i>PPC -> EE</i>	0.359	0.173	0.034	10.56	0.003
<i>NC -> LOC-> EE</i>	0.471	0.198	0.028	16.79	0.001
<i>NA -> LOC-> EE</i>	0.389	0.167	0.031	12.55	0.002
<i>PPC -> LOC-> EE</i>	0.572	0.231	0.043	13.33	0.001
<i>NC -> CD*-> EE</i>	0.442	0.186	0.037	11.95	0.004
<i>NA -> CD*-> EE</i>	0.389	0.177	0.035	11.11	0.000
<i>PPC -> CD*-> EE</i>	0.320	0.159	0.039	8.210	0.003
<i>LOC-> EE</i>	0.417	0.200	0.031	13.451	0.001
<i>CD-> EE</i>	0.482	0.207	0.022	21.909	0.000

This implies that both need for competence (NC), need for autonomy (NA) and positive psychological capital (PPC) have significant positive relationship with economic empowerment (EE) with values of 0.412, 0.510, and 0.359 respectively. These relations are also significant at the 0.5% level, T = 17.17, T = 12.44, and T = 10.56 for P <0.001, P <0.000 and P <0.003 respectively. Locus of control (LOC) is also the mediating factor between NC, NA, and PPC and EE; it has path coefficients of 0.471, 0.389, and 0.572, T-statistics of 16.79, 12.55, and 13.33, and P values of 0.001, 0.002, and 0.001, respectively. Furthermore,

cultural discrimination (CD) acts as a mediator in the relationships between NC, NA, PPC, and EE, with marginal indirect effect of 0.442, 0.389, and 0.320 in T statistics 11.95, 11.11, 8.21 and P values of 0.004, 0.000, 0.003 respectively. The present study provided evidence for the posited model that NC, NA, and PPC affected EE directly and indirectly through LOC and CD.

Discussion

The results obtained from the path coefficient analysis confirm the key importance of psychological needs and cultural factors in supporting women's economic empowerment. Self-need competence (NC), self-need autonomy (NA), and positive psychological capital (PPC) have positive direct effects on EE and the mediated variable, locus of control (LOC). These results are also consistent with prior research focusing on self-determination and intrinsic motivation for economic and financial enabler contexts (Rohatgi & Gera, 2024; Jumady et al., 2024). Furthermore, cultural discrimination (CD) acted as a moderator between psychological characteristics and socio-cultural factors, following the premises of Lavanya & Mamilla (2024), as well as Mitra & De (2024) in Terms of the supportive cultural environment for financial enfranchisement. These findings serve to remind us that psychological needs as well as cultural characteristic still play critical roles in the way forward of empowering women economically (Allioui & Chafik, 2024; Yussuf, 2023). In addition, the substantial indirect effects from NC, NA, and PPC to EE through the mediator, LOC, underscore perceptions of control as central to the processes of empowering outcomes. This is in harmony with various literature suggesting that psychological variables moderate economic behaviors ad effects (Ndiak, 2024; Naima, 2024). That positive moderation of CD on these relationships indicates enhanced psychological capital can contribute to empowered outcomes despite a culturally common barrier , which affirms St-Onge and Beauchamp Legault (2022) as well as Rohatgi et al. (2023). Aside from that, the T-statistics achieved here are rather high, and the reported P values are less than 0.05, which confirms the importance and effectiveness of interventions to enhance women's psychological needs and reduce cultural discrimination to enhance women's financial power (Wei et al., 2022; Richey et al., 2022). Collectively these findings endorse the hypothesized model with implications for the psychological and cultural dynamics for women's economic empowerment proposed by Mitra and De (2024) and Sathiyabama et al. (2023).

Recommendations

The following recommendations can therefore be made towards improving economic opportunities for women. First, competence and autonomy should come under state and organizational priorities as they are among the psychological needs. Courses that are developed on skill enhancement and self-efficacy will enable women to feel more capable and independent in economic tasks. Second, establishing an environment that can enhance the positive psychological capital will also enhance the women in leadership. In addition, it is also recommended that organizations should encourage staff to have per mentoring and support positive outlook and resilience programs for women. Furthermore, both within community and in organizations, initiatives need to be made to improve the appreciation of the cultural differences. The support of such policies which work in the fight against discrimination and violation of the rights of women can promote the solution of the problem. It means that organizations require offering diversity and inclusion training, which will make all individuals within the organization understand the need for equity. By solving the psychological needs of women and cultural issues an overall constitution on women rights to economic power can be enhanced.

Implications of the Study

The discussion of the research findings, therefore, holds important implications for theory and practice. From a theoretical perspective, it builds on knowledge of how psychological needs and culture act on women's economic power and development. They pointed out the need for integrating person-level and context-level interventions in designing and implementing empowerment interventions. In practical terms, the research evidence indicates that efforts to build up psychological capital and tackling cultural prejudices may result into a noteworthy change in female future economic status. It will assist various organizations and policymakers in infusing cardinal ideas in the structure of practical and better first stage empowerment programs. Furthermore, it is possible to apply the discovery of this work to the decision on effective policies for women's involvement in the economy. For instance, combining innovation strategy with financial education and psychological counseling when managing women's empowered forms of credit mechanism increases the efficiency of the use of these mechanisms. Also, learning how cultural discrimination acts as a moderator and thus how programs should fit with cultural context will be useful to greater extents. In conclusion, the present work outlines a general theoretical structure for promoting women's economic power.

Future Directions

Further research should also examine other mediators and moderators that would help explain the relations between psychological needs, digital financial literacy, and economic empowerment. For instance, research on the effects of social support and resource availability could offer a broader perception of these relations. Furthermore, other future investigations could compare the outcomes of specific interventions for increasing psychological capital and decreasing cultural prejudice. To overcome these limitations and to embark upon further avenues of research, the existing results have to be strengthened and the current trends in the area of women's economic empowerment have to be expanded.

Conclusion

In summary, the research highlights the significant imperative of psychological need and cultural influence towards the enhancement of women's economic status. The results also illustrate that competence, autonomy, and positive psychological capital have direct and indirect associations with economic performance via LOC. Moreover, cultural discrimination mediates these relations, suggesting commitment to both individual and contextual factors that hinder women's empowerment. This knowledge forms a solid foundation for constructing the best empowering work environment via intervention programs and policies. All in all, the present research advances the knowledge about the determinants of women's economic status and provides specific suggestions on how this status can be improved. The five psychological needs and eight cultural barriers help to capture the intricacy and depth of women's economic engagement and present a better foundation from which policymaking and organizational interventions can be designed. The present findings have theoretical significance as well as practical applications, suggesting recommendations for further research in the field and the development of intervention strategies.

References

- Allioui, S., & Chafik, K. (2024). Empowering female entrepreneurs in developing countries: A comparative case study on the impact of social media on microenterprises and poverty alleviation. *An International Serial Publication for Theory and Practice of Management Science*.
- Bano, A. (2023). Determinants of digital entrepreneurship success: Role of formal and informal learning practices among Malaysian IT entrepreneurs. *Journal of Digitovation and Information System*, 3(2), 186-197.

- Chin, W. W. (1998). Commentary: Issues and opinion on structural equation modeling. *MIS Quarterly*, vii-xvi.
- Cohen, S. (1986). Contrasting the Hassles Scale and the Perceived Stress Scale: Who's really measuring appraised stress?
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The "what" and "why" of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry*, 11(4), 227-268. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327965PLI1104_01
- Dewald, F. P., & Schee, B. A. V. (2022). Financial services digital badging: Applying self-determination theory to student motivation. *Journal of Financial Education*, 48(1).
- Ebirim, G. U., Ndubuisi, N. L., Unigwe, I. F., Asuzu, O. F., Adelekan, O. A., & Awonuga, K. F. (2024). Financial literacy and community empowerment: A review of volunteer accounting initiatives in low-income areas. *International Journal of Science and Research Archive*, 11(1), 975-985.
- Hair, J., & Alamer, A. (2022). Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) in second language and education research: Guidelines using an applied example. *Research Methods in Applied Linguistics*, 1(3), 100027.
- Heriberta, H., Zulfanetti, Z., & Setiawati, R. (2024). Exploring the impact of age and motivation on self-determination: Insights from informal sector mothers. *Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Terapan Universitas Jambi*, 8(1), 310-324.
- Jumady, E., Alam, S., Hasbiyadi, H., Fajriah, Y., & Anggraini, Y. (2024). The effect of financial planning on consumer debt management: The role of financial literacy, self-efficacy, and financial motivation. *Atestasi: Jurnal Ilmiah Akuntansi*, 7(1), 340-368.
- Kaur, N., Gupta, M., Saha, S., Manallack, S., & Gupta, P. (2024, February). Financial literacy through gamification. In *2024 4th International Conference on Innovative Practices in Technology and Management (ICIPTM)* (pp. 1-6). IEEE.
- Lavanya, R., & Mamilla, R. (2024). Empowering economic growth: The mediating influence of financial decision making on financial literacy and perceived wealth creation among female IT professionals. *International Journal of Revenue Management*, 14(3), 280-311.
- Luthans, F., Youssef, C. M., & Avolio, B. J. (2007). Psychological capital: Developing the human competitive edge. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof/9780195187526.001.0001>

- Mitra, A., & De, A. (2024). Enhancing life satisfaction through financial literacy and behavior: Insights from the Indian IT sector. *Journal of Workplace Behavioral Health*, 1-38.
- Naima, U. (2024). Bridging the digital gender divide through digital financial inclusion: A case of low-income Bangladeshi Muslim women in South East Queensland (Doctoral dissertation, Queensland University of Technology).
- Napoli, B. E. (2023). Attracting entrepreneurs to community college through self-determination theory informed educational practice (Doctoral dissertation, University of Wisconsin--Stout).
- Ndiak, R. (2024). Empowering financial decision-making in the digital age: Evaluating educational efforts and their influence on consumer behavior. *Management Studies and Business Journal (PRODUCTIVITY)*, 1(4), 550-559.
- Odjo, C. Z. (2024). Self-determination and economic development in Africa: Assessing successes, challenges, and future prospects. *Challenges, and Future Prospects* (July 10, 2024).
- Rampalli, P. (2024). Women empowerment as a catalyst for societal transformation: An analytical exploration. *Vidhyayana-An International Multidisciplinary Peer-Reviewed E-Journal-ISSN 2454-8596*, 10(s1), 504-518.
- Richey, M., Brooks, J., & Ravishankar, M. N. (2022). Building self-determination of disadvantaged groups: Insights from an entrepreneurship focused program for refugees. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, 28(7), 1828-1850. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEBR-02-2021-0116>
- Rohatgi, S., & Gera, N. (2024). The augmenting role of digital banking in reconstructing women's economic empowerment. *International Journal of Bank Marketing*.
- Rohatgi, S., Gera, N., & Dana, L. P. (2023). Antecedents of economic empowerment: An empirical study of working women in Delhi-NCR. *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, 38(6), 784-803. <https://doi.org/10.1108/GM-02-2022-0036>
- Rotter, J. B. (1966). Generalized expectancies for internal versus external control of reinforcement. *Psychological Monographs: General and Applied*, 80(1), 1-28. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0092976>
- Sanchez, J. I., & Brock, P. (1996). Outcomes of perceived discrimination among Hispanic employees: Is diversity management a luxury or a necessity? *Academy of Management Journal*, 39(3), 704-719. <https://doi.org/10.2307/256660>
- Sarstedt, M., Ringle, C. M., Henseler, J., & Hair, J. F. (2014). On the emancipation of PLS-SEM: A commentary on Rigdon (2012). *Long Range Planning*, 47(3), 154-160.

- Sathiyabama, M. V., Vidwakalyani, R., Priyadharshini, B. I., Kiruthika, T., & Ragaprabha, M. M. (2023). Women empowerment through financial inclusion.
- St-Onge, S., & Beauchamp Legault, M. È. (2022). What can motivate me to keep working? Analysis of older finance professionals' discourse using self-determination theory. *Sustainability*, 14(1), 484. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14010484>
- Wei, S., Chen, X., & Liu, C. (2022). What motivates employees to use social media at work? A perspective of self-determination theory. *Industrial Management & Data Systems*, 122(1), 55-77. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IMDS-12-2020-0705>
- Wu, S. Y., Wang, W. T., & Hsieh, Y. H. (2022). Exploring knowledge sharing behavior in healthcare organizations: An integrated perspective of the empowerment theory and self-determination theory. *Kybernetes*, 51(8), 2529-2553. <https://doi.org/10.1108/K-04-2021-0273>
- Yussuf, A. (2023). Social economic determinants of performance for women empowerment projects: A case of womankind in Garissa County, Kenya (Doctoral dissertation, Strathmore University).
- Zimmerman, M. A. (1995). Psychological empowerment: Issues and illustrations. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 23(5), 581-599. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02506983>