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## **EMPOWERMENT AMONG SMALL FARMERS OF SINDH PROVINCE, PAKISTAN**

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### **Abstract**

Community empowerment is an important goal for many governments in developing countries. Various activities for the empowerment of communities have been conducted in developing countries like Pakistan. The present research attempted to assess an activity of community empowerment on the Crop Maximization Project (CMP-II) in Sindh province, Pakistan. A total of 455 small farmers were surveyed using questionnaire in three districts namely; Khairpur, Nawabshah and Mirpurkhas. The level of empowerment was assessed based on three domains namely; capacity building, self-esteem and self-efficacy. The findings of the study showed that, there was a moderate level of empowerment among the beneficiaries (small farmers) of the crop maximization projects of the Sindh province based on a summed mean score of 178.77 for the three dimensions of empowerment. Therefore, it is concluded that projects like crop maximization are able to empower the beneficiaries as the intangible outcomes.

**Keyword:** Community development, community empowerment, small farmers, capacity building, self-esteem, self-efficacy

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Empowerment of communities has remained the main target for local governments of the developing countries. Similarly the government of Pakistan is working for the empowerment of small farmers' communities in Sindh province through the launching of programs such as food security programs, micro-finance schemes, farmers' field school, poverty alleviation programs, crop-maximization projects. The main objective of these programs and projects is to empower the small farmers and their communities. Likewise, the government of Pakistan has also launched USAID Dairy Project, Youth Economic Empowerment Project (YEEP) and Community Empowerment through Livestock Development and Credit Project (CELDAC), but only a few studies have been conducted to assess or evaluate the impact. The empowerment of communities have been described in various ways; empowerment is a process through which people build their capacities and competencies, both as individuals or as participating members of different groups,

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communities and societies, to gain or achieve results for themselves (Christens *et al.*, 2011). The process of empowerment enables or empowers the individual or groups to take part in decision-making, enhance capacity, and increase ability to make changes individually and collectively (Christens & Peterson, 2012). Pretto and Pavesi (2012) also argued regarding empowerment as it is a social action process through which individuals, organizations and communities gain control over their lives and also try to improve their equity and quality of life by changing their political and social environment. Similarly, Iqbal (2007) described empowerment as a process through which a person or a community gives and gets power. In line with this, Maton (2008) has defined that empowerment is a process through which less privileged and powerless people/ individual or groups can achieve or get higher control of their lives and they can acquire value of their lives and resources to achieve their goals in life. According to Perkins (1995) empowerment means to give power to another and to provide the means of exerting or asserting power as behavior practiced by individuals. Kabeer (1994) stated that “the expansion in people’s ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them. Similarly, Hjorth (2003) said that, empowerment is necessary and important for people to have control on the process of development, have a solid increase in political power or social influence. Corbett & Keller (2004) said “power” can be acquired through a process individually or collectively. Burn (2005) viewed that empowerment is a process through which, people develop their confidence in their own capacities. Wallertein (2006) explained that empowerment is an umbrella term which includes, control, mastery, and self-efficacy. Generally, empowerment is a process by which people gain control over their lives (Cattaneo & Goodman, 2010; Hedayat *et al.*, 2012). In addition, it is a process through which one can gain the power and acquired power gained through process is known as empowerment (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995; Peterson & Zimmerman, 2004).

In the light of reviewed literature, the researchers tried to determine the empowerment level among small farmers by focusing on the three dimensions of empowerment; capacity building, self-esteem and self-efficacy. Capacity building mean enabling people to develop and enhance their individual as well as collective potential as contributing members of community or society (Aref, 2011). Smith *et al.* (2001) and Sail and Abu-Samah (2010) said that the capacity building is a process that can lead to community development. In the same way few researchers have also more or less explained the capacity building as it is basically the name of the ability of an individual or community at collective level to adapt the challenges or opportunities for the betterment of individual or community (Rogers *et al.*, 2007; Clinch, 2008; Crabbe *et al.*, 2010). Furthermore, the self-esteem dimension of empowerment is also used to determine the level of empowerment. Zarnaghash (2011) said that the self-esteem is an attitude regarding the individual acceptance, importance, success and values; besides, it is also an individual’s self-evaluation. In addition, Stupnisky *et al.* (2013) said that self-esteem is the positive or negative attitude towards his/her self. Furthermore, the third empowerment dimension used in this study is self-efficacy which is a perceived expectation of people regarding their abilities through which they can solve their tasks and issues to achieve their targeted goals as an active agent (Bandura, 1997; Sainz & Eccles, 2012; Hatlevik *et al.*, 2015). In Pakistan, only a few studies have been conducted about the impact of these programs and projects. The best example of empowerment has been set by the study conducted in the project by Oxfam (2015) entitled “empowering small producers, especially women” in dairy sector in Muzaffargarh district, south Punjab. They evaluated that the project had given an impact over small producers in district with resulted their success by getting empowered. Muhammad *et al.* (2013) similarly conducted a study to observe the impact of FFS (Farmer Field School) on the empowerment of farmers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) province, found that project had empowered the farmers in the study area. Likewise, Waheed (2009) conducted a research study on rural micro credit in the province of Punjab according to which the micro-credit schemes improved the income and empowered the borrowers. However, there is lack of study conducted about the empowerment of small farmers in Sindh, Pakistan that could assess the level of empowerment in detail. Furthermore, to realize the imperative level of empowerment, the researchers tried to determine the level of empowerment by examining the levels regarding

capacity building, self-esteem and self-efficacy of small farmers who participated in the CMP in Sindh, Pakistan.

Therefore, this project was launched by the provincial government and it’s Agriculture Department in collaboration with the Federal Government of Pakistan. The main features of the project were to organize and empower communities of farmers, intensify agriculture extension services at local level, provide farmers’ extensive trainings, provide assurance for easy access to soft agricultural credit or loan, capacity building for crop productivity, establish small enterprises for income enhancement and build linkages of farmer groups with main marketing chains. Thus, this study has been conducted to scrutinize the empowerment among small farmers of Sindh province.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

Three districts of the Sindh province (Khairpur, Nawabshah and Mirpurkhas) randomly selected for this study. The Crop Maximization Project was much focused in these particular districts that covered the main zones of province ; upper, middle and lower Sindh. This study was approached quantitatively using survey design. Questionnaire was administered to the respondents for data collection. A total of 455 respondents who participated in the Crop Maximization Project (CMP-II) were surveyed. The sample size was computed as 455 using formula of [Rea and Parker \(2014\)](#), [Sheikh et al. \(2015\)](#) and more recently followed by [Khushk et al. \(2016\)](#). The sampling method applied for this study was the multistage sampling technique. A multistage cluster sampling technique is suitable in a large scale sampled survey because of its advantage of clustering collection system ([Preston et al., 2013](#)) as reflected in the three selected districts in this study. The breakdowns of respondents were Khairpur (155), Nawabshah (151) and Mirpurkhas (149), respectively. We followed the procedure with some modification given by previous authors such as [Ciarrochi et al. \(2007\)](#), [Schwarzer and Jerusalem \(2010\)](#), [Amadi and Abdullah \(2012\)](#) respectively.

The validity of questionnaire was prior analyzed and further validated by expert of committee of Universiti Putra Malaysia and Sindh Agriculture University, Pakistan. The recommended range as shown in Table 1 was reliable (> 0.7) and widely accepted at Cronbach’s alpha level for this questionnaire ([Fedorowicz et al., 2007](#), [Sheikh et al., 2015](#)). The questionnaire was further divided into three domains such as capacity building, self-esteem and self-efficacy. The responses to the questions were collected using a six-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Agree to 6=Strongly Disagree) because the validity of the Likert scale is justified in a perception-based research ([Teck-Hong, 2012](#)).

**Table 1: Reliability coefficients for pilot and final test**

Latent Variable	Construct Variables	Pilot Test (n=50)		Final Test (n=455)	
		Items	Alpha ( $\alpha$ )	Items	Alpha ( $\alpha$ )
Empowerment	Capacity Building	23	0.99	23	0.98
	Self-esteem	11	0.99	11	0.98
	Self-efficacy	9	0.99	9	0.97

## 3. RESULTS

### 3.1. Level of empowerment

The level of empowerment in the present study was divided into three sections namely: capacity building, self-esteem and self-efficacy.

#### 3.1.1. Level of capacity building

Table 2 showed the item analysis measuring capacity building which revealed that the respondents’ capacity was developed as a result of their participation in crop maximization projects. The

different statements were asked regarding their competence, ability and skills acquired through trainings. The analysis result of capacity building section showed that there were a majority of items that fell under the category of moderate level of empowerment. The results in table 2 were ranked from high, moderate and low; and were labeled 3, 2 and 1 respectively, and from the highest mean score of the items to the lowest mean score of the items. Thus the result revealed that the respondents of the study can use their experiences to bargain with other people ( $M=4.51$ ,  $SD=0.79$ ) and they can influence other people to defend their own rights ( $M=3.41$ ,  $SD=1.02$ ). Thus, the overall mean score result of this section showed the moderate level of empowerment among the respondents ( $M=4.12$ ,  $SD = 0.89$ ).

**Table 2: Level of capacity building (N=455)**

S.No	Statements	M	SD	Levels	Ranks
1	After participation in crop-maximization project, I can use my experience to bargain with other people	4.51	0.79	High	3
2	After participation in crop-maximization project, I can use and manipulate the available resources	4.49	0.82	High	3
3	After participation in crop-maximization project, I can use my experience to give opinion	4.48	0.85	High	3
4	After participation in crop-maximization project, I can implement an activity	4.48	0.82	High	3
5	After participation in crop-maximization project, I can negotiate with other people	4.45	0.85	High	3
6	After participation in crop-maximization project, I can use my experience to interpret an issue	4.45	0.81	High	3
7	After participation in crop-maximization project, I can interpret community's problem and needs	4.42	0.91	High	3
8	Participation in crop-maximization project increased my competence regarding crop production	4.42	0.83	High	3
9	After participation in crop-maximization project, I am aware of my own skills	4.39	0.95	Moderate	2
10	After participation in crop-maximization project, I can influence and make decision in implementing an activity	4.36	0.82	Moderate	2
11	Participation in crop-maximization project increased my overall agricultural knowledge	4.28	0.95	Moderate	2
12	After participation in crop-maximization project, I can analyze the situation	4.17	0.95	Moderate	2
13	After participation in crop-maximization project, I am aware of the issue/problem that happened in my community	4.07	1.06	Moderate	2
14	After participation in crop-maximization project, I know about my own needs	4.07	1.02	Moderate	2
15	After participation in crop-maximization project, I can use my experience to make decisions	4.07	0.84	Moderate	2
16	After participation in crop-maximization project, I can manage an activity	4.07	0.81	Moderate	2
17	Participation in crop-maximization project provided awareness regarding agriculture	3.78	0.87	Moderate	2
18	After participation in crop-maximization project, I can use my experience to collaborate with other people	3.75	0.83	Moderate	2
19	After participation in crop-maximization project, I can plan and form an activity	3.71	0.89	Moderate	2
20	Participation in crop-maximization project increased	3.69	0.89	Moderate	2

my skills of crop management (through training)					
21	After participation in crop-maximization project, I know to whom I should refer when problems happen	3.61	0.89	Moderate	2
22	After participation in crop-maximization project, I can identify and determine the priority of an issue/problem and needs of the community	3.58	0.89	Moderate	2
23	After participation in crop-maximization project, I can influence others to defend their own rights	3.41	1.02	Moderate	2
Overall M and SD		4.12	0.89	Moderate	2

M= Mean; SD= Standard Deviation; Ranks (1-3); Levels (Low, Moderate and High)

1=Low (1-2.6), 2=Moderate (2.7-4.3), 3=High (4.4-6)

### 3.1.2. Level of self-esteem

The analysis of items in Table 3 showed that the respondents' self-esteem had increased moderately. The respondents were asked to respond and judge their own capabilities through statements. The results showed that there was high confidence in respondents in doing their activity (M=4.41, SD=0.94) and they had created loving and healthy relationships (M=4.23, SD=1.01). Thus the overall mean score results of this section showed the moderate level of empowerment among the respondents (M= 4.31, SD=0.94).

**Table 3: Level of self-esteem (N=455)**

S.NO	Statement	M	SD	Level	Rank
1	I have the confidence in doing an activity	4.41	0.94	High	3
2	I can lead and guide in implementing an activity	4.37	0.92	Moderate	2
3	Life is good, and I like being a part of it	4.35	0.96	Moderate	2
4	I am able to do things as well as most other people do in the community	4.35	0.86	Moderate	2
5	I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others in my status	4.33	0.95	Moderate	2
6	I am not feeling afraid	4.32	0.97	Moderate	2
7	I feel that, I have number of good qualities to share with the community members	4.31	0.91	Moderate	2
8	I take a positive attitude towards myself	4.29	0.95	Moderate	2
9	I respect myself and others	4.27	0.96	Moderate	2
10	On the whole, I am satisfied with my life	4.26	0.92	Moderate	2
11	I am creating loving, healthy relationships	4.23	1.01	Moderate	2
Overall M and SD		4.31	0.94	Moderate	2

M= Mean; SD= Standard Deviation; Ranks (1-3); Levels (Low, Moderate and High)

1=Low (1-2.6), 2=Moderate (2.7-4.3), 3=High (4.4-6)

### 3.1.3. Level of self-efficacy

The items in Table 4 were used to measure the level of self-efficacy section of empowerment and the results were presented in the order from the highest to the lowest mean score. The analysis of results revealed that there was a moderate level of self-efficacy among small farmers. In this section the respondents were inquired about their perceived expectations and abilities. The analysis of self-efficacy showed that all items came under the category of moderate level of empowerment. The analysis demonstrated that as a result of their participation in projects, the respondents can usually think of a solution to a problem (M=4.29, SD=0.99) and they are confident of dealing with their problems that come up in their life efficiently (M=3.62, SD=0.81). The overall mean score (M=4.06, SD = 0.93) showed the moderate level of empowerment among the respondents.

**Table 4: Level of self-efficacy N=455**

S.No	Statements	M	SD	Level	Rank
1	As a result of participation in crop maximization project, I can usually think of a solution to a problem	4.29	0.99	Moderate	2
2	As a result of participation in crop maximization project, I learned how to find several solutions to a problem	4.26	1.00	Moderate	2
3	As a result of participation in crop maximization project, I can manage to solve difficult problems through my hard work	4.24	0.98	Moderate	2
4	As a result of participation in crop maximization project, I can make my plan to work successfully, especially if I invest the necessary effort	4.16	1.04	Moderate	2
5	As a result of participation in crop maximization project, I can find means and ways to get what to cater for my basic needs	4.07	0.87	Moderate	2
6	As a result of participation in crop maximization project, I can achieve most of my aims and accomplish my goal	4.03	0.93	Moderate	2
7	As a result of participation in crop maximization project, I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I rely on my coping ability	3.97	0.91	Moderate	2
8	As a result of participation in crop maximization project, I am brave enough to face the situations	3.93	0.86	Moderate	2
9	As a result of participation in crop maximization project, I am confident of dealing with most problems that come up in my life efficiently	3.62	0.81	Moderate	2
	Overall M and SD	4.06	0.93	Moderate	2

M= Mean; SD= Standard Deviation; Ranks (1-3); Levels (Low, Moderate and High)

1=Low (1-2.6), 2=Moderate (2.7-4.3), 3=High (4.4-6)

#### 4. SUMMARY OF LEVEL OF EMPOWERMENT

The results in Table 5 presented a summation of the individual level of empowerment sections and also a summation of all three sections as the total empowerment level.

Further, it depicted that the level of capacity building section of empowerment was in the moderate category with summated mean score of 94.71 and a standard deviation of 20.46, in which is in line with the analysis results on the previous Table 2. This means that the small farmers of the Sindh province of Pakistan have a moderate level of capacity building.

Similarly, the level of self-esteem section of empowerment showed that all the items fell under the moderate category based on an aggregated mean score of 47.49 (SD=10.39) which reflected the analysis of the previous Table 3. This indicated that all the small farmers were moderately confident and possessed self-esteem to handle not only farm related activities but also other activities of daily living. Furthermore, all the respondents felt that they were persons of worth and had equal status in their community.

**Table 5: Summary of level of empowerment N=455**

S.No	Dimensions of empowerment	Total	SD	Level	Rank
1	Level in capacity building	94.71	20.46	Moderate	2
2	Level in self-esteem	47.49	10.39	Moderate	2
3	Level in self-efficacy	36.57	8.43	Moderate	2

4	Total Level of empowerment	178.77	39.29	Moderate	2
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SD= Standard Deviation; Ranks (1-3); Levels (Low, Moderate and High)  
 1) 1=Low (23-61.33), 2 =Moderate (61.4-99.73), 3=High: 99.74-138.07)  
 2) 1=Low (11-29.33), 2=Moderate (29.34-47.67), 3=High (47.68-66.01)  
 3) 1=Low (9-24), 2=Moderate (24.1-39.1), 3=High (39.2-54.2)  
 4) 1=Low (43-114.63), 2=Moderate (114.84-186.5), 3=High (186.62-258.28)

In addition, the level of self-efficacy was also similar to the other two sections of empowerment. All the items were found in the moderate category of empowerment based on a combined mean score of  $M=36.57$  and  $SD= 8.43$ . This proved that the respondents had taken advantages from crop maximization projects with regards to their capabilities to organize and execute a course of action(s) required in managing prospective situations.

Finally, the present research result showed that, there was moderate level of empowerment among the beneficiaries (small farmers) of the crop maximization projects of the Sindh province based on a summed mean score of  $M=178.77$  and  $SD= 39.29$  for the three dimensions of empowerment (capacity building, self-esteem and self-efficacy).

## 5. DISCUSSION

Crop maximization project is government initiated project to improve farmers' income. However, there are also intangible outcomes from this project gained by beneficiaries (small farmers). These intangible outcomes were examined in terms of the level of capacity building, self-esteem and self-efficacy of the farmers, which is labeled as empowerment. The study discovered that the overall empowerment among the beneficiaries is at moderate level. The small farmers developed their own capacities, competencies, knowledge and skills regarding farming productivity after participating in the project. They were convinced that with their newly found confidence, they could achieve success in particular situations. Furthermore, the results of present research were in line with the study of [Waheed \(2009\)](#), who observed the impact of micro-finance schemes on the empowerment and well-being on borrowers in the Punjab province. Similarly, the results of this study were nearly similar to the findings of the study of [Muhammad et al. \(2013\)](#) about the impact of Farmers Field School (FFS) on empowerment and well-being on farmers of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. Likewise, the results of present study found similarity with the study of [Oxfam \(2015\)](#) about the empowerment of small producers, especially women in the dairy sector in Muzzaffargarh district, south Punjab and it was found that the small holders got empowered through projects. In these studies, the impact of projects/ programs towards the empowerment of farmers was assessed but these studies were limited and could not provide detailed information of the level of empowerment. On the other hand, the results of the present research provided detailed levels on different sections, such as capacity building, self-esteem and self-efficacy in empowerments. Furthermore, based on the analysis results and overall mean score of level of empowerment, the crop maximization project gave an impact on the small farmers' community of Sindh such as the micro-finance credit schemes and farmers' field school projects of other provinces of Pakistan.

## 6. CONCLUSION

On the basis of the results of this study, it is concluded that the small farmers of the study area have achieved an overall moderate level of empowerment after participating in crop maximization project launched by provincial agricultural department of Sindh in the collaboration with the federal government of Pakistan. The project has yielded satisfactory results in terms of capacity building, self-esteem and self-efficacy of the small farmers. In addition, the projects such as crop maximization not only empower the individuals but also lead them towards the empowerment of their communities as a whole.

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