

Role of Microcredit towards Socioeconomic Empowerment of Pakistani Urban Women

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ABSTRACT The microcredits offered to the un-bankable poor women are perceived to be instrumental in improving the livelihood patterns and empowering the womenfolk around the globe. The present qualitative study explores the efficacy of microcredit towards the socioeconomic development of urban women hailing from three locales of Rawalpindi district. It examines the impacts of opportunities offered by the micro-finance institution, *Akhuwat*, to the women to help them ameliorate their living conditions through efficient utilization of credit. The paper has endeavored to investigate the claim that the use of interest-free microcredit by households has a direct correlation with socioeconomic empowerment of marginalized urban women. A total of 90 women were interviewed using a questionnaire and in-depth interviews. Results indicate that female borrowers have greater access to income generating opportunities, become more confident, participate actively in decision-making processes, develop stronger networks, experience reduced domestic violence and enjoy enhanced freedom of mobility.