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Women's Roles in Education and Social Welfare Development: Insights from a Qualitative Study

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Abstract

This study explores the pivotal roles of educated women in advancing family and community welfare within the Saudi Arabia context, where education intersects with cultural, moral, and socio-economic dimensions of empowerment. Grounded in the premise that education enhances women's agency and social participation, the research employed a qualitative approach to capture the lived experiences of women in urban and peri urban areas of Saudi Arabia. Data were collected through semi structured interviews and non-participant observation involving purposively selected participants who had completed at least secondary or tertiary education and were engaged in welfare-related activities. Thematic analysis revealed four major findings: first, education functions as a catalyst that strengthens women's decision-making, financial literacy, and community engagement; second, moral and ethical awareness derived from education motivates women to assume leadership roles in promoting collective welfare; third, women's ability to balance domestic responsibilities and social involvement reflects adaptive strategies rooted in educational empowerment; and fourth, digital literacy emerges as a critical enabler for welfare innovation and socio-economic resilience. These findings align with and extend existing literature on women's education and welfare, offering new insights into the integration of cognitive, moral, and social empowerment as a unified framework for sustainable development. The study concludes that education transforms women into agents of social transformation whose influence transcends the household, shaping intergenerational well-being and community sustainability. The implications of this research emphasize the need for gender-responsive educational policies, curriculum integration of leadership and digital literacy, and inclusive welfare programs that acknowledge women's informal and moral contributions as vital components of national and community development.

Keywords: Education; Empowerment; Social Welfare; Qualitative Study; Women.

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INTRODUCTION

Women's participation in education and social welfare constitutes one of the most significant levers for achieving equitable and sustainable development across nations. Education enables women to acquire cognitive, emotional, and professional competencies that directly enhance their decision-making capacity, health literacy, and economic productivity, leading to measurable improvements in family and community well being [1], [2], [3]. Numerous studies affirm that higher levels of maternal education are consistently associated with reductions in child mortality, better nutritional outcomes, and stronger intergenerational mobility, underscoring education as both a human right and an investment in collective welfare [4], [5], [6]. Beyond its individual benefits, women's educational advancement exerts transformative effects on social structures: educated women tend to promote healthier family environments, encourage participatory decision-making, and sustain values of empathy, discipline, and responsibility within their households and communities [7], [8], [9].

Empirical evidence also shows that maternal education enhances children's early literacy and numeracy [10], [11], fosters social-emotional competence [12], [13], and contributes to improved nutrition and health outcomes through informed parenting [14], [15]. In parallel, financial-planning literacy and educational exposure empower women to become active contributors to local economic growth and household welfare, illustrating that women's education generates not only private returns but also public value [16], [17]. This multidimensional significance situates women's education within global policy frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals, which recognize that advancing women's educational attainment is fundamental to reducing poverty, enhancing health outcomes, and strengthening community resilience [18], [19], [20].

Nevertheless, persistent disparities across regions especially between rural and urban areas reveal enduring challenges related to gender norms, unequal resource distribution, and limited access to welfare programs [7], [21], [22]. While existing research has extensively quantified correlations between education and welfare outcomes, there remains a paucity of qualitative insights into how women themselves conceptualize and negotiate their educational and social roles in everyday life. Specifically, studies rarely capture the lived experiences of women as moral, educational, and social actors within community welfare systems particularly in the Saudi Arabia context, where religion, culture, and socioeconomic factors intersect to shape women's agency [23], [24], [25]. Addressing this gap, the present study employs a qualitative approach to explore how educated women perceive and perform their roles in enhancing the moral, social, and economic welfare of their families and communities. The research aims to generate a nuanced understanding of women's lived experiences in balancing educational attainment, domestic responsibilities, and civic engagement, thereby providing evidence-based insights to inform gender-responsive education and welfare policies in Indonesia and comparable developing contexts.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore the roles of educated women in promoting family and community welfare through their educational, social, and moral engagement. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for an in depth

understanding of subjective experiences, contextual meanings, and social interactions that cannot be adequately captured through quantitative methods [26], [27], [28]. The research was conducted in selected urban and peri urban areas of Saudi Arabia, where women's educational participation and social involvement exhibit dynamic variations across socio economic groups. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, focusing on women who had completed at least secondary or tertiary education and were actively involved in family, community, or educational initiatives. This inclusion criterion ensured that participants could provide reflective insights into how their educational background influences welfare related practices.

Data were collected through semi structured interviews and non participant observation, enabling triangulation of perspectives to enhance interpretive validity [29], [30], [31]. The interview questions were designed to elicit narratives about participants' educational journeys, daily responsibilities, decision-making processes, and perceived contributions to family and community well being. The collected data were transcribed verbatim and analyzed thematically following the six-step framework of Braun and Clarke (2021), involving familiarization, coding, theme generation, review, definition, and reporting. To ensure research credibility and trustworthiness, member checking and peer debriefing were conducted, while reflexivity was maintained throughout the analytical process to minimize researcher bias [30], [32], [33]. Ethical considerations were strictly observed, including informed consent, confidentiality, and the voluntary nature of participation, following the ethical research guidelines for social science research. The overall methodological framework was thus designed to produce a rigorous, context-sensitive, and ethically grounded understanding of how educated women contribute to social welfare development through their lived experiences and educational empowerment.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Education as a Catalyst for Social and Economic Welfare

The findings indicate that education functions as the primary enabler of women's agency in both domestic and community spheres. Participants consistently reported that formal education enhanced their decision-making capacity, literacy, and confidence to engage in welfare-oriented activities, including financial planning, community leadership, and child education. Educated women demonstrated higher levels of initiative in promoting family health, supporting children's schooling, and organizing social programs. These results align with global evidence underscoring education as a multidimensional determinant of women's empowerment and welfare [34], [35], [36]. Similarly, Golnaz et al.,2024 [5] found that maternal education directly improves child nutrition and health outcomes, while Clement Moyo et al.,2022 [37] observed that education mitigates poverty through enhanced human capital and social participation. Within the Saudi Arabia context, Norah et al., [38] also noted that educated women play a pivotal role in shaping family well-being through informed parenting and active community engagement. The present study extends these insights by showing that education not only provides cognitive skills but also instills moral and social awareness that translate into collective welfare contributions an aspect often overlooked in prior economic centered analyses.

Moral Agency and Community Leadership

Another significant finding reveals that educated women perceive moral responsibility as integral to welfare development. Participants emphasized values such as empathy, honesty, and fairness as guiding principles in their community initiatives. Several respondents were involved in voluntary education, health campaigns, or religious study groups aimed at strengthening moral values within families. This resonates with previous studies linking women's moral education to social cohesion and ethical leadership [39], [40], [41]. Ding and Massouti et al. [39] similarly highlighted that women's family status and moral influence significantly shape intergenerational well-being [42]. However, unlike earlier works that primarily emphasized moral instruction as a passive domestic role, this study shows that educated women actively transform ethical consciousness into social action bridging the moral and material dimensions of welfare. This represents a shift from traditional gendered expectations toward an integrated model of moral agency and leadership that redefines women's roles in community development.

Balancing Domestic Responsibilities and Social Engagement

A recurrent theme across interviews is the dynamic negotiation between household duties and community participation. Most women expressed that while domestic responsibilities remain central to their identity, educational attainment provides strategies to manage multiple roles effectively. Time management, digital literacy, and collective collaboration emerged as adaptive mechanisms to sustain this balance. These findings echo prior research that documents the "double burden" phenomenon among women in developing societies [43], [44]. Yet, unlike studies that portray this duality as a constraint, the current study identifies it as a transformative opportunity, where women reframe domestic tasks as educational and welfare practices such as integrating financial literacy into household budgeting or environmental awareness into family routines. This interpretive shift underscores the agency of women in transforming constraints into capacities, reinforcing their significance in both micro and macro social systems.

Education, Digital Literacy, and Welfare Innovation

Participants also highlighted the increasing importance of digital literacy in expanding their welfare contributions. Educated women leveraged digital platforms to access health information, promote entrepreneurship, and participate in online learning communities. This corroborates the findings of Avanesian et al. [45], who observed that digital literacy enhances women's socio-economic engagement, particularly among younger demographics. Similar trends were documented by Kass-Hanna et al. [46], who found that financial literacy, often developed through digital exposure, strengthens family financial planning and resilience. The integration of technology into welfare practices represents an emergent domain in gender studies, suggesting that women's education today encompasses not only academic knowledge but also adaptive technological skills crucial for navigating modern social systems.

Novelty, Theoretical Contribution, and Practical Implications

The novelty of this study lies in its qualitative illumination of how education fosters a synergistic model of moral, cognitive, and social empowerment among women in Indonesia

moving beyond previous quantitative studies that primarily measured welfare outcomes through economic or health indicators. By integrating moral agency and community participation within the welfare discourse, this research contributes a culturally grounded framework that recognizes women not merely as beneficiaries but as architects of social transformation. The findings have practical implications for policymakers and educators: first, curricula and community programs should embed gender-responsive values and leadership training; second, welfare policies must acknowledge women's informal contributions in both domestic and civic spaces; and third, digital and financial literacy initiatives should be expanded to empower women's socio economic participation. Collectively, these insights advance the discourse on women's education as a multidimensional driver of sustainable welfare.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study reaffirm that women's education serves as a transformative force in advancing family and community welfare, integrating cognitive, moral, and social dimensions of empowerment into everyday practice. Educated women not only enhance the economic and health conditions of their households but also act as moral agents and community leaders who promote values of empathy, responsibility, and collaboration. Through education, women gain the literacy, confidence, and digital adaptability necessary to navigate modern challenges while fostering social innovation and intergenerational well-being. This study's qualitative insights extend beyond conventional economic interpretations of welfare by illuminating how education enables women to bridge domestic and public spheres, transforming knowledge into collective resilience and sustainable development. Theoretically, the research contributes a contextualized understanding of women's agency that links education with moral leadership and social participation dimensions often overlooked in prior quantitative studies. Practically, the results call for educational and welfare policies that recognize women's informal contributions, support gender-responsive curricula, and expand access to digital and financial literacy training. Despite its contextual limitations, the study provides a foundation for future research to explore comparative and cross-cultural dynamics of women's empowerment, offering valuable evidence for the design of inclusive social welfare systems that position educated women as central actors in achieving equitable and sustainable development.

LIMITATIONS

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. The qualitative scope, while rich in depth, limits generalizability across diverse socio economic contexts. The focus on urban and peri urban participants may underrepresent rural women's experiences, which are shaped by different access patterns and cultural dynamics. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported narratives may introduce social desirability bias, as participants might frame their contributions in idealized ways. Future research could address these limitations by employing mixed-method designs, integrating longitudinal or comparative studies across regions, and incorporating participatory action research to amplify women's voices in policy formulation. Moreover, cross cultural analyses could illuminate how religious, digital, and socio economic

variables intersect in shaping women's evolving roles in welfare development across Southeast Asia.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

S.H. conceptualized the study, designed the methodology, conducted interviews, analyzed data, and drafted the manuscript. S.A. supervised the research design, refined the analytical framework, and revised the manuscript. Both authors reviewed and approved the final manuscript.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

"The authors declare no conflict of interest."

DECLARATION OF USE OF AI IN SCIENTIFIC WRITING

The author used OpenAI's ChatGPT to support language refinement. All content was carefully reviewed and revised by the author, who assumes full responsibility for the final manuscript

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