

**Presenting a Model for Economic Empowerment of Vulnerable Women based on Grounded Theory  
(Case of Study: Vulnerable Women Supported by Tehran Municipality)**

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**Abstract:** *“Economic empowerment” is the ability of vulnerable women to make a decent living for themselves and their family. This ability not only helps them to meet their essential needs continuously, but also decreases the stress level and mental strains caused by deficiencies in the process of satisfying these needs. A range of fundamental and prevalent social issues affecting various societies usually have a different nature and dissimilar manifestations regarding women as compared to men. For instance, while poverty is considered one of the most prevailing and challenging social issues in different societies, analyzing its trends and its causing and intensifying factors regardless of gender could certainly lead to false results. This study has been conducted on the basis of analytical and descriptive research methodology aiming to plan and present a model for empowering vulnerable women based on grounded theory. The results of this study indicate that factors such as employment, balancing income and expenses, saving, and entrepreneurship have a decisive and significant role in perpetuating and stabilizing the economic empowerment of individuals.*

**Keywords:** *Empowerment, vulnerable women, grounded theory, Tehran Municipality.*

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## **Introduction**

A range of fundamental and prevalent social issues affecting various societies usually have a different nature and dissimilar manifestations regarding women as compared to men. For instance, while poverty is considered one of the most prevailing and challenging social issues in different societies, analyzing its trends and its causing and intensifying factors regardless of gender could certainly lead to false results; because female’s experience of poverty and its consequences is quite different from males’ in this regard, due to their status in social, economic, and cultural structure of different societies. Regarding the key issue in this study, that is “enabling” or “empowering” vulnerable women, the above-mentioned point is very important. According to Adger (2006), if we define vulnerability by the degree of sensitivity in being exposed to damaging conditions caused by environmental and social changes in addition to lack of enough capability to adapt to such conditions, it will be quite obvious that women have a much more complicated condition due to their biological demands, and lower social and cultural status compared to men in different societies, as well as less and limited access to necessary resources to overcome their vulnerability.

Therefore, greater understanding of the causes and effects of this process requires referring directly to women and theorizing based on their experiences and understanding of their living conditions. Such a theory could be a good foundation to evaluate measures taken to empower vulnerable or damaged women to make the transition from damaging conditions to acquire the ability of managing their life and solving their problems. Accordingly, the main purpose of this study is planning and evaluating a model to empower damaged and vulnerable women in Tehran. The significance and necessity of addressing this issue becomes to a great extent obvious when we consider the statistics on the group of damaged and vulnerable women studied in this research. The above-mentioned group consists of women in charge of a family (single mothers), imprisoned women or women in crisis-stricken (damaged) families. Although official statistics on the number and conditions of especially the third group is not available, minor statistics published every now and then in the official and semi-official sources as well as some academic studies on this issue, comparatively indicate terrible conditions in this area especially in Tehran. According to official statistics issued by Iranian Center for Statistics, the number of women in charge of families has reached approximately 2.5 million in 1390 which comprises 12.1 of all Iranian households. Moreover, minor statistics indicate that the number and proportion of women in charge of families will have a growing rate at higher

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age-ranges. International Center for Prison Studies, a partner of the University of Essex, has declared the number of Iranian prisoners approximately 204000 in 2010, about 3.5 % of which were women who comprised around 7200 prisoners. Although the number and proportion of these prisoners seem to be trivial in comparison to men, the growing number of imprisoned women while being below poverty line, and being responsible for their families (or themselves belonging to crisis-stricken families), create a particular situation which requires particular attention.

In addition to these two groups, this study has addressed women who live in crisis-stricken families and have been involved in the core of the crisis. Violence, addiction, divorce, mental disorders and running away from home comprise the major part of these crisis-generating issues. Although legal procedures, supporting services and various protecting measures should be taken in all the above-mentioned matters, it shouldn't be ignored that there are individuals involved in these issues, either as part of the problem or as passive victims of the situation or potential solution to the problem. Hence, in order to prevent these women from falling into the endless vicious cycle of poverty and damage, it is necessary to conduct studies to clarify the present conditions of these individuals and also create effective patterns to permanently empower and improve their living conditions and their quality of life. This study has been carried out in this direction and with this goal in mind.

### **Theoretical Discussion**

One way to think about the concept of power is thinking about it as the ability to choose; therefore, becoming powerless means being unable to choose or not having the right to choose. To become powerful, it requires going through the process of change. The people who make a lot of choices in their lives may be powerful, but they may have never been powerless. There is a logical relationship between poverty and state of being powerless; because ineffectiveness of a person's abilities to satisfy his basic needs, often destroys the possibility of making good choices (Kabir 1389:14). Social hierarchy is based on various foundations. Other aspects of inequality such as gender, age, race, religion, informal gender tendencies, and physical disabilities as well as inequalities concerning creation, distribution and trade of wealth which in the modern society contribute to the formation of social strata, all influence the opportunities and the lifestyle of individuals and discriminative distribution of social privileges. Gender is definable with regard to the lively relationships between men and women through which sexist beliefs and discriminations are formed. Some of these differences and inequities deal with gender-biased task division inside the family, and some other deal with relations in the public domain and the outside world. What is quite obvious in all societies is the limited access and control of women over social, political and economic resources (Azamzadeh 1384:56-57).

A thinker called Chafetz believes that two types of forces contribute to the persistence of sexual inequality system: coercive forces and voluntary forces. Regarding coercive forces, Chafetz believes that sexual stratification concerns the macro-level work division in society. If this work division tends to be sexualized, men will surely enjoy more resources than women and this will lead to difference of power between men and women, both in macro and micro levels. Chafetz points out three sexual definitions: sexual ideology or the ideas about biological differences between men and women; sexual norms or ideas about proper conduct of men towards women; sexual cliché stressing the difference between men and women in response to circumstances. Chafetz believes that agreement upon the above-mentioned definitions will lead to voluntary acceptance of women's status in sexual inequality system (Lahsaezadeh and Boustani, 1385:50).

### **Poverty and Empowerment**

Poverty as a phenomenon does not necessarily mean lack of money or sufficient income but from a human development perspective signifies being deprived of the right to choose and be chosen, and the opportunity for a decent life (Shaditalab et al, 1384:5). War, religious and racial violence, natural disasters, lack of resources and poor infrastructure, wrong social and political policies, and absence of labor markets are among the major factors which create poverty. But there are other factors which increase poverty such as ignorance; unequal distribution of income; poor education; diseases and malnutrition; weakness; lack of independence; indifference and hopelessness; and the absence of economic independence (Rashidi, 1389:3-11).

Meanwhile, women's poverty is beyond the lack of money, income or necessary means of survival. Women's poverty signifies being deprived of: the right to choose, access to opportunities, self-reliance, self-confidence, and the right and ability to participate in social, political and economic activities (Shaditalab et al, 1384:5). According to international researches and reports, women are more exposed to poverty than men, because they are deprived of the necessary means for empowerment, fighting or alleviating poverty. In other words, real hope to improve

living conditions and escape from the vicious cycle of poverty and regression is scarce among young women (Pourezat et al, 1389:102). Various factors have been propounded as the efficient variables of feminizing poverty such as inequality of rights making women unable to enjoy their rights as a citizen. Inequality of capabilities which is due to the inequality of opportunities and unequal consequences of structure-balancing policies, feminization of the informal sector of economy and women being deprived of official employment, immigrations and wars, absence of family protecting networks, etc. not only has led to feminization of poverty but also has resulted in women being the poorest members of society (Shaditalab and garaie, 1383:50)

## Empowerment perspectives

### 1. Vivian Wee and Frida Shahid theory

Vivian Wee and Frida Shahid in the article “A research framework for women’s empowerment in Muslim contexts: gender, poverty, and democratization from the inside out” write: “the process of empowerment necessarily happens in these conditions: 1. Women live in an environment without violence 2. Women have access to the sources of power 3. Women deny the legitimacy of the existing systems and structures through fighting with institutions. 4. Women have access to decision making mechanisms.” (Wee and Shahid, 1389). Vivian Wee and Frida Shahid have identified four key issues in the war of power in the table below.

**Table (1): Four key issues in the war of power**

Controlling methods used by disempowering forces	Empowering strategies helping women claim their rights
1. Different forms of violence based on sexism	Women resisting and avoiding sexual violence and trying to stop it
2. Discriminative distribution of resources, including limitation of access and control of women over resources	More access to the means containing the source of power
3. Methods of legitimizing the disempowerment of women including cultural and religious interpretations against women	Interpretation of cultural and religious sources with equality of gender perspective
4. Depriving women of direct access to power and decision making associations	Accession and utilization of such associations in order to claim their rights and participating in decision making processes
(Extracted from Vivian Wee and Frida Shahid, 1389, 92)	

Vivian Wee and Frida Shahid emphasize the importance of two types of resources helping women to have access to constructive sources of power. The first group consists of livelihood resources especially having access to employment and controlling resources, income and capital. The second group consists of access to educational opportunities (that is to say formal education), access to knowledge and information (including books, publications and public meetings) and access to social and cultural sources (including religious knowledge). Control of women over livelihood resources plays an important role in their empowerment.

Wee and Shahid believe that issues resulting from “war of power” in the process of empowerment can be categorized and studied in three areas including job, employment and livelihood resources; health and welfare; and finally education. Regarding employment and livelihood resources, empowerment of women in some developing countries is realized based on informal economy, low-interest loan funds, cooperatives and economical networks. In addition to direct standards, health and welfare include matters like violence against women and mental health. Plus training skills and abilities, education plays an important role in the process of empowerment especially because of its potential function in illumination (Wee and Shahid, 1389:90-93)

### Pradhan Theory

While Pradhan criticizes the usual indicators of development which monitor women’s empowerment level in different societies, he strongly emphasizes the weakness of traditional measuring methods and proposes special techniques to identify the necessary variables for measuring empowerment. In his point of view, empowerment theory results from the need of empowerment by women who should be able to stand against the systematic causes

of domination, manipulate it and increase their power to further influence it. According to this definition, social and economic standards like education, income and women's employment rate in labor market traditionally considered as the measuring means of women's empowerment, lose their efficiency in the modern definition of empowerment (pradhan, 1995).

Feminists and social-science experts have a common understanding of empowerment concept including the ability for empowerment, capability of controlling all types of resources, and the innate power of individuals to overcome outside obstacles blocking positive and constructive interactions. This is indicative of the existence of power relations in sexual inequality roles and imbalanced access to power resources. For instance, the existence of innate gender-bias at schools prepares girls and women to be educated so as to take subordinate roles in society. Moreover, in the labor market women are considered cheap and expendable workforce which reduces the production expenses (ibid).

### **Linda Mayoux Theory**

Mayoux theories are chiefly about the effect of small credits on women's empowerment. According to this researcher, equal access of women to small loans is the result of observing human rights. She believes that loaning programs positively affect women's lives. The quantity, timing, repayment schedules, and saving patterns play an important role in making women able to control income in the family. From some researchers' perspective, the only key factor in any definition of empowerment is the ideals and strategies of women themselves which is considered a decisive element in the results of loaning programs and should be present in every analysis of empowerment (Mayoux, 2005). Mayoux considers empowerment as a multifaceted and interwoven process of change in power relations. In this regard, he propounds three paradigms: a) paradigm of sustainable financial self-sufficiency, b) paradigm of poverty reduction, c) paradigm of feminism empowerment. Mayoux has considered all these levels of analysis by setting the paradigm of sustainable financial self-sufficiency at the micro level; the paradigm of poverty reduction at the medium level; and the feminism empowerment at the macro level. She emphasizes women's self-employment activities in the sustainable financial self-sufficiency paradigm; she stresses the family income and utilization of loans in the paradigm of poverty reduction; and finally she emphasizes the dependence of economic empowerment of individuals upon social and political empowerment in the paradigm of feminism empowerment (ibid: 4).

### **Sampling Method and Sample Size**

In the present study, the case studies are damaged women or women exposed to damages who are present in the study environment. Furthermore, the participants in the study should be Iranians who speak Persian (or have full competency in speaking Persian) so that the interviews may be feasible. The sampling method is based on theoretical sampling. Glares and Strauss describe this method as follows: "theoretical sampling consists of the process of collecting data for theorizing in which the analyzer collects, encodes and analyzes data simultaneously and decides what sort of data he should gather for the next stage and where to find them so as to compile his theory while it is developing... Usually the number of participants in a qualitative study is not determinable beforehand, as in a grounded theory, and should be achieved in the stage of collecting and analyzing data after theoretical saturation of the subject" (flick, 1387:138). Therefore, in the present study, a sample of 59 individuals was interviewed.

### **Means and Method of Data Collection**

Means of data collection is a compiled guide of conducting semi-structured interviews which is prepared based on the study purpose and opinions of experts in this area. This guide can be modified and improved while data is being collected and analyzed. The primary method of collecting data is holding semi-structured depth interviews which are planned based on the question guide concerning the subject and the target population. In addition, other techniques like observation, taking notes on the spot, and utilization of existing cases and documents have been employed. Data collection will be carried out based on theoretical sampling and a review of articles will follow.

### **Evaluating Qualitative Data**

Authenticity in qualitative research means correctness and sufficiency of methodology. Researchers judge authenticity through credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability. The most important of the four is credibility (Holloway & Wheeler, 2002). In this study, in addition to comparing findings of encoded data with

the existing empirical and theoretical records, the experts of empowerment theory have tried to confirm the authenticity of findings via criticizing and evaluating the study results in different stages as much as possible.

### **Data Analysis Methods**

The purpose of grounded theory is finding primary and central variables through “perpetual comparative analysis”. In order to shape and develop the main concept, we should encode and analyze from the beginning. Encoding is a process through which concepts or subjects are identified and named. Data gets modified and limited so that categories are formed. And after forming categories, theories are born. There are three levels of encoding: the first level is called “open level”; the second level, “pivotal level”, and the third level, “optional level” (Ibid).

### **Research Findings Analysis**

The first ring in the long chain of damageability as stated in most theoretical approaches and sources is economical poverty. Although people have different understanding of poverty, vulnerable groups of society usually define the concept of poverty as “not being able to provide the minimum needs of living such as food, clothes, shelter and Medical expenses”. Meanwhile, living in a metropolis like Tehran, despite its negative effects on vulnerable groups, provides access to a network of financial support by public and governmental organizations and NGOs which in conjunction with family protection networks and even local networks partly improve the conditions of these groups. However, the efficiency of this support is in doubt, because it is neither sustainable nor proportional to living expenses of Tehran. A woman responsible for the expenses of her family said: “I don’t have a husband; there is no one to support me and I have nothing. Of course God helps me, God is great and Bountiful. But, consider a lady who wears a lot of jewelry and ornaments, travels a lot, has got a nice car of her own, her husband is rich and has a car of his own and her son too; in our society, the government supports us just the same, like we are at the same level ...”.

On the other hand, the level of expectation and the pattern of desirability for these women increase uncontrollably as they are exposed to a flood of formal and informal propaganda in the urban public areas and thus compare their conditions to others at school, at work or in their neighborhood and this helps to widen the gap between their present situation and their desirable condition. This is somehow indicative of a higher level of relative poverty for these individuals compared to other poor individuals who are at the same level of poverty but because they live in a different social environment unlike Tehran, their poverty is less conspicuous.

Another factor that plays an important role in the economic conditions of the studied group, is working in a healthy environment concerning the relationship among workers and the relationship between workers and managers which helps to improve other aspects of their personal, familial and social life. A single mother, who is 50 years old and has 3 children, said the following about how her employment positively affected her life:

“I used to be shy; I didn’t have my present courage, because I didn’t socialize much. Then, I worked for 5 years in the institute that I told you about. Then my relationship with others got better and I got a job in Qowthar and Seddiqin institutes and my social skills improved. I used to be so shy I didn’t dare talk to my children’s teachers but, now I go talk to the mayor himself. This morning I had an appointment with the mayor of our town. For example, I go to the governor’s office and talk to him without difficulty and get very good results.”

On the other hand, economical problems spread to other areas of life easily and rapidly. For example, the relationship between economic problems and matrimonial disputes is quite obvious. A 52-year-old lady who had lived several years discontentedly with his late husband and was imprisoned because of carrying drugs which belonged to him, described her living conditions before her husband’s death as follows:

“My marriage was a failure. When my husband proposed, he pretended to be a nice man. He said he was a decent worker who worshipped his family. But he had lied to me because in the first month of our marriage I realized he had trapped me. He didn’t go to work and beat me all the time. He told me I had to go to work and earn my living. I had no refuge; no father, no mother, no brother. I couldn’t run away from him; so, I had to bear that horrible situation for years.”

### **Paradigmatic Model of Economic Empowerment**

The suggested paradigmatic model of economic empowerment for vulnerable women is presented in figure 1. The central phenomenon of this model is economic empowerment. The following explains in what conditions this phenomenon takes place.

## **Practical Conditions**

In addition to “empowerment programs” on promoting the economic ability of individuals, generally three factors which somehow include the main content of the above programs can be called the practical conditions of vulnerable women’s ability. The first one is “mastery of technical and professional skills”. In fact, from an instrumental perspective, this factor can be considered as a basic prerequisite for the “economic empowerment” to be realized. The higher the level of these skills and the more their proportion to the needs of the labor market, the more decisive will be their role in “economic empowerment”.

Basically, technical and professional skills regardless of their dependence on talent which can be to a great extent biological, are learned through an acquisition process including a variety of formal and informal training. The significance of this comes from the fact that regardless of the nature and quality of a certain skill, learning that skill is made possible in terms of parameters such as age, leisure time, place of residence, and of course personal interests. Now if an individual has learned such skills at an early age, at home or elsewhere, it may be considered a potential investment which they can use in certain conditions to improve their level of “economic empowerment”. There are many instances of such people in the target population especially women who have learned popular skills like tailoring, rug weaving or cooking at an early age from their mothers at home, or from their teachers at school. When these individuals are involved in the process of empowering, they will certainly accomplish their goals with more quantitative and qualitative rapidity. On the other hand, for those individuals who haven’t had the opportunity to learn such skills at an early age, an empowering program based on skill training could be the first step to involve them in the process of “economic empowerment”.

The second important factor is access to “job opportunities” in proportion to personal skills and intervening variables. This will be explained further in due course. Basically, success in chasing and taking “job opportunities” even in a dynamic and flourishing economy depends on psychological and personality advantages of individuals. In spite of all arrangements by economical programmers, equality of access to opportunities for all individuals in a society has remained an idealistic and unreachable goal. Now if macroeconomics in a society is far from good and even in an ailing condition, naturally those individuals who are in a vulnerable condition will be doubly deprived of access to employment opportunities, due to decrease of job opportunities and relaxation of rules concerning distribution of these opportunities.

The significance of job opportunities is not limited to their generation of income, because they can also make technical and professional skills thrive and get set in the course of labor market’s practical needs. Therefore, lack of access to job opportunities to a great extent neutralizes the efficiency of technical and professional skills. This has been repeatedly observed in the studied individuals who despite enjoying technical skills, just because of missing job opportunities have been unable to enter the labor market. The third efficient factor affecting “economic empowerment” of vulnerable women is the amount of their “access to financial and credit resources”. The effectiveness of this factor can be considered in two ways. On the one hand, if vulnerable women especially those in charge of a family or those informally burdened with family responsibilities, encounter a costly problem such as medical expenses of a family member, mortgage payments or marriage expenses of a family member, overcoming these obstacles would not be possible without access to small loans. Now if vulnerable women do not have equal and systematic access to such loans, they will inevitably have to choose a risky way to pay for these expenses which will in turn lead to reduction of their present level of economic empowerment.

In addition, “access to small credits” is very important in creating job opportunities for the studied society. This paves the way for vulnerable women to create a working condition at home for economic activities and earning an income especially when working outside the home is not possible for them. For example, some of these individuals have been involved in a successful economic activity at home by buying a sewing machine, purchasing raw materials for making cheap jewelry, and buying tools for rug weaving. Unlike this group, some individuals in the target population, following a successful experience of learning technical skills, have been able to enter the competitive sectors of the labor market in controlled conditions and thanks to “access to small credits” have begun to pursue an implement their entrepreneurial plans. We will discuss this further in “strategies”.

## **Ground Conditions**

Tehran is the ground in which the phenomenon of “economic empowerment” takes place. Tehran’s economy along with its similarities to the current economic trends in Iran has particular important characteristics which pave the way for the occurrence of this phenomenon.

The existence of an extremely varied labor market and plenty of job opportunities, a wide network of city transportation, large distance of north to south (or margin- enter) concerning the economic conditions of this immense metropolis, and finally the high rate of job seekers immigration to Tehran, are among the particular characteristics of this enormous metropolis. In addition to the above-mentioned points, the existence of an extensive normal labor market and the expansion of the so-called “black sectors” or underground economy have created a particular condition in Tehran. As far as the target population (that is to say the group of vulnerable women) is concerned, the above examples have been considered as both threats and opportunities. On the one hand, as discussed before, more opportunities means more access for these women. On the other hand, due to the fact that mostly, poor and vulnerable groups of people take low standard and illegal jobs, the studied women have been observed to be more exposed and attracted to these sectors of Tehran’s economy.

Another key point is the particular environmental condition of Tehran which makes it possible for individuals to live and work in separate places. The significance of this matter is due to the fact that in most cases, participation of vulnerable women in inappropriate and disproportional economical activities is justified by this important point. In other words, as individuals are almost certain that the nature of their economic activity will be kept hidden from their family, friends and relatives; they will attach more importance to profitability rather than respectability and creditability of their job. At first glance, this might be considered an advantage, but due to the risky and damaging nature of illegal sectors of the labor market, often the entrance of the studied women to these areas has led to their captivity in the long chain of damage and disempowerment. In addition to the above-mentioned points, the extensive activity of charities and NGOs along with the public structures which provide supporting services such as creation of employment opportunities for vulnerable women in Tehran, is considered to be an important and effective characteristic in relation to “economic empowerment”. This matter has its positive and negative aspects. On the one hand, total dependence of a group of vulnerable women on such organizations and institutions has ended in their failure to achieve economic activity. On the other hand, other groups of women have succeeded in raising their level of “economic empowerment” by choosing the right strategies and relying on these services.

### **Intervening Conditions**

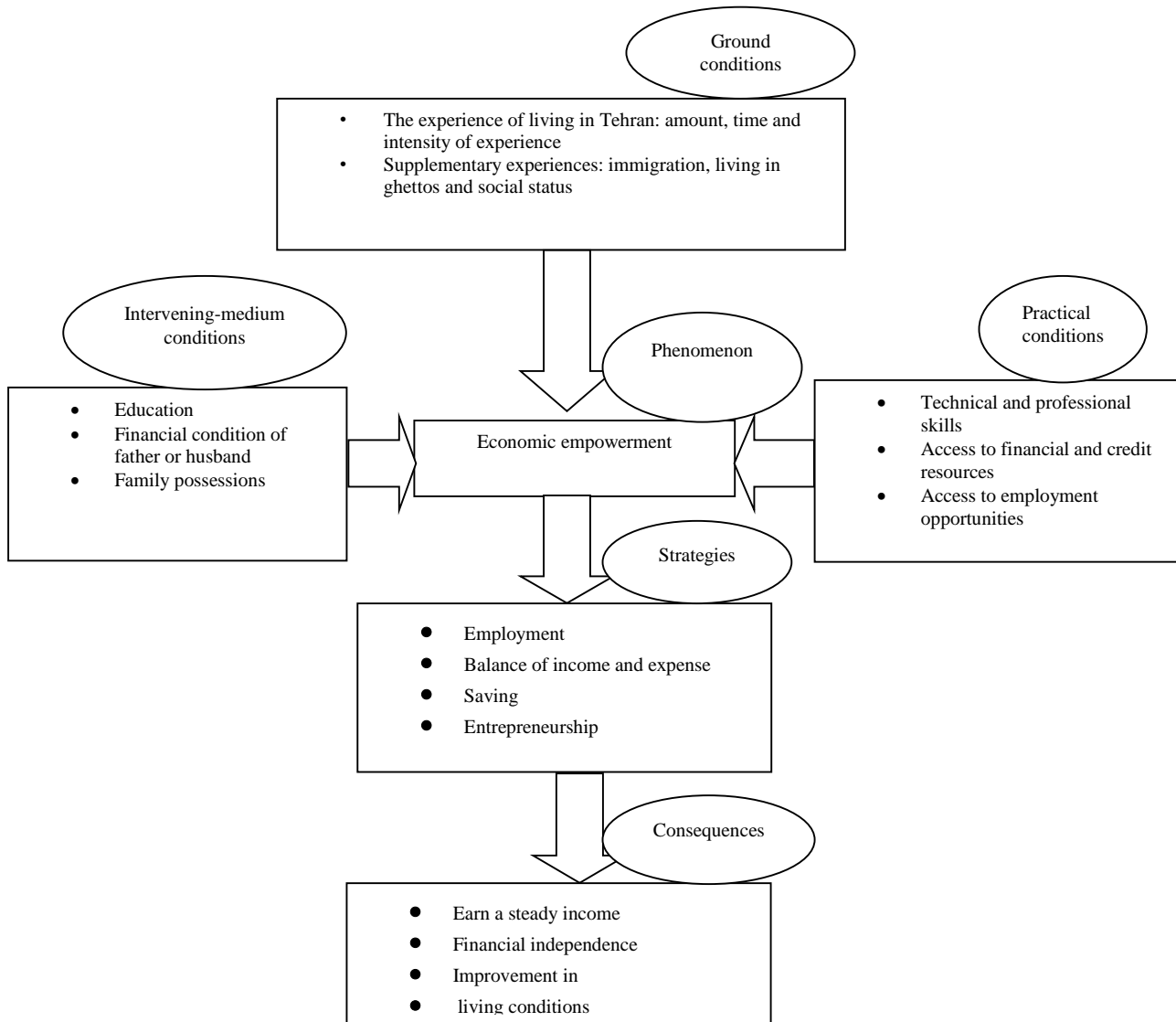
“The level of general and academic education” among the studied individuals has had a confirmable but not necessarily direct relation to their level of “economic empowerment”. On the one hand, education improves an individual’s access to job opportunities in the labor market; on the other hand, it widens the gap between the present and desirable condition of an individual by raising the level of their desires, thus leading to reduction of their experienced and comprehended level of economic empowerment. Moreover, education can have an effect on an individual’s understanding of categories like income, expense, saving, and prioritization of basic needs and so on. In many interviewed cases, this factor has acted as an important intervening variable in bolstering economic empowerment. Another intervening condition related to “economic empowerment” is the income level and possessions of the former head of family especially a woman’s husband or father. For vulnerable women, the experience of living in a desirable economic condition either in their parental home or in their husbands’ home in the past, has led to their subjective and objective dependence upon a financial supporter, thus resulting in improper prioritization of financial matters which positively affect economic empowerment.

On the other hand, the control of earnings and possessions by head of the family (either father or husband) has acted as an instrument for dominating the studied women. For instance, a middle-aged married woman said that her husband prevented her from working and studying on the pretext that he provided for her, and even after he became addicted to drugs and stopped working, constantly reprimanded her for working in other people’s houses to earn their living and sometimes even questioned and beat her for that.

### **Strategies**

Strategies adopted by vulnerable women concerning “economic empowerment” can be summed up in four major categories. The most important and fundamental of these four categories is the “employment” of these women. Being in employment is very effective not only in earning an income but also in discovering personal identity and improving mental empowerment. Most of the studied women, while facing severe crises such as addiction of their husbands to drugs, acted more decisively and efficiently when they were employed compared to when they were unemployed and spent the whole time at home. Another important strategy is “balancing income and expenses”. One of the major issues negatively affecting these individuals, as mentioned before, is constant definition of new and unnecessary needs without considering their financial ability. Therefore, individuals who have created a logical balance between their income and expenses according to personal experience or based on financial counseling have been generally successful in achieving “economic empowerment”.

“Saving” is another key strategy in relation to economic empowerment. However, this strategy has become noticeable due to its absence in the studied population. In other words, in most cases, vulnerable women have experienced their highest economical inability while facing a problem which could be solved easily by financial means but as they did not have enough saving, they were not able to resolve it. But there have also been individuals who were very grateful to saving as the main cause of a fundamental change in their financial condition and economic empowerment level. In fact, “saving” as a strategy has played an important role in sustaining and stabilizing their “economic empowerment”. Another important strategy mentioned before which can be considered as the highest indicator of economic empowerment is “entrepreneurship”. Although entrepreneurship conceptually involves a complex mixture of mental, personal and economic abilities, it has been generally considered as an interesting strategy to achieve “economic empowerment”.



**Figure (1): Suggested paradigmatic model for economic empowerment**

Among vulnerable women, especially those who have had a successful “personality and mental ability” this strategy along with the practical conditions for “economic empowerment” can make individuals successful in this area. However, few cases have been observed to use all these strategies. But if we consider minimum instances instead of maximum definitions, the number of flexible examples will increase. In these cases, the studied women after discovering their talents and abilities and learning the necessary professional skills, have been able to establish their own business, independent of the “economic empowerment” program run by the supporting organizations.



## Consequences

The first observable consequence of “economic empowerment” phenomenon is the capability of vulnerable women to earn a decent living” for themselves and their families. This capability not only includes continuously meeting their basic needs, but also leads to decrease of stress levels and mental strains caused by deficiency in the process of fulfilling their needs. The potential relationship between the conditions of vulnerable groups especially the studied population and the characteristics of the labor market concerning illegal jobs was discussed earlier. The ability of “earning a living” based on the proposed strategies in the previous part, can considerably prevent these women from resorting to risky and illegal jobs. Furthermore, if this end is realized, attraction of false jobs or unconventional mechanisms of earning a living such as prostitution or pretension to poverty in order to get help and financial support from charities will be eliminated.

“Financial independence” is another important consequence of vulnerable women’s “economic empowerment”. Basically, one of the major factors in placing women in low positions dominated by men within the family has been the control of financial resources and possessions by men (that is to say their fathers or husbands), thus not allowing them to take part in financial activities. Employment of vulnerable women and consequently their ability to earn an income which may end in their working away from home, (even in some instances of violent reaction by their husbands) has resulted in their being taken more seriously by their family and finally improvement in their status in the power relation structure inside the family. In parallel with the above-mentioned points, the improvement in vulnerable women’s “quality of life” objectively and subjectively, has been realized as a result of “economic empowerment”. Improvement in physical health, leisure time, children’s upbringing and education, nutritional model, family relationships and finally mental health resulting from reduction of causes of disagreement and dispute, are among the reasons repeatedly stated by the interviewed individuals as instances of “improvement in their quality of life”.

## Conclusion

“Economic empowerment” is the capability of vulnerable women to “earn a decent living” for themselves and their family. This capability not only includes continuously meeting their basic needs, but also leads to decrease of stress levels and mental strains caused by deficiency in the process of fulfilling these needs. “Financial independence” is another important consequence of vulnerable women’s “economic empowerment”. Basically, one of the major factors in placing women in low positions dominated by men within the family has been the control of financial resources and possessions by men (that is to say their fathers or husbands), thus not allowing them to take part in financial activities. Employment of vulnerable women and consequently their ability to earn an income which may end in their working outside the home, (even in some instances of violent reaction by their husbands) has resulted in their being taken more seriously by their family and finally improvement in their status in the power relation structure inside the family. In parallel with the above-mentioned points, the improvement in vulnerable women’s “quality of life” objectively and subjectively, has been realized in consequence of “economic empowerment”. Improvement in physical health, leisure time, children’s upbringing and education, nutrition pattern, family relationships and finally mental health (resulting from reduction of causes of disagreement and dispute), are among the reasons repeatedly stated by the interviewed individuals as instances of “improvement in their quality of life”.

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