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Political empowerment and decision-making confidence among women in higher education institutions

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Abstract
This study contends that there is a relationship between higher education, political empowerment, and decision-making confidence in women in higher education institutions (HEIs) using a quantitative research design. Five universities were chosen using a stratified random sample of 400 female students and faculty members to gather information about such variables as political awareness, involvement in institutional governance, leadership self-efficacy, exposure to gender-inclusive practices, and perceived decision-making confidence. The correlation and multiple regression analyses coupled with descriptive statistics were used to interrogate the association between these variables. The results show that there is a high positive correlation between the exposure to higher education and the empowerment of women in politics, and leadership training, mentorship opportunities, and participatory academic environments are found in the results as important predictors of decision-making confidence. The findings of the regression equation indicate that the concept of political awareness, leadership self-efficacy, and institutional inclusivity collectively indicate 56 percent of the variance in decision-making confidence among women in HEIs. The research highlights the significance of higher education as a transformational arena of enhancing the empowerment of women, leadership, and their involvement in politics. It emphasizes the need to have institutional policies which encourage gender equity, participatory governance and mentorship programs which will make women more confident in their leadership and decision-making processes. Although this has been contributed, the study also suffers some limitations including a cross-sectional design of the study and the limited geographical coverage, which makes longitudinal and comparative research studies in different institutional settings to be recommended. The discussion of these limitations can bring a better understanding of the dynamics that contribute to the political empowerment of women in the higher education settings.

Keywords: Political empowerment, decision-making confidence, higher education institutions, women's leadership, gender inclusivity

Introduction
Political empowerment of women and their self-confidence in decision-making are essential elements of the gender equality and inclusiveness in governance. Education especially higher education at present-day societies is a key empowerment factor to women as it leads to awareness, self efficacy and involvement in political and institutional leadership. Regardless of the global progress in the education level of women, they are still imbalanced in terms of their representation in the decision making process, both in the political and academic circles. The active female participation in leadership positions will not only intensify democratic participation but also promote efficiency and equity in institutions (Engida, 2021; Mondal, 2023) [10, 17].
Socio-cultural and education aspects are closely connected to the women participation of politics and leadership confidence. Research has shown that higher education has a great impact on boosting self-efficacy and civic participation of women, which allows them to engage effectively in the process of governance and decision-making (Naz, Ashraf, and Iqbal, 2020) [20]. An example is in Pakistan, where there was a high relationship between the increased level of education in women and the empowerment outcomes such as political awareness, power to make decisions, and self-esteem (Khan, Haider, and Saâdia, 2020) [13]. Equally, a study conducted in India shows that literate women have a greater degree of

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political involvement and more probable to become political leaders in the community and institutional context (Sahu & Yadav, 2018) [24]. Altogether these results point into the direction that education not only increases the knowledge base of women but also gives the confidence to break the traditional gender roles and engage in the decision making process.

Decision making confidence; a mental aspect of empowerment comes up as a result of both cognitive and environmental factors. Education will empower women to analyze, assess, and take independent action, which will increase the perceived control of both personal and institutional consequences (Daraz et al., 2025) [7]. Empirical evidence indicates that exposure to participatory academic settings, mentorship and leadership training programs have a significant positive effect on the confidence of women in their leadership (Shah, Patel, Oza, and Geriya, 2023) [25]. Moreover, education enables political literacy, which makes women capable of participating positively in the civic debate and institutional governance (Bhat, 2016) [5].

However, challenges persist. Women still remain limited to their participation in the leadership and the political space due to the socio-cultural obstacles, gender stereotypes, and institutional biases (Uddin, 2023) [31]. The situation is even in institutions of higher learning, where women are usually underrepresented in the highest levels of administration and decision-making processes, even though it is expected that schools and colleges should be the vehicles of social change. This unfairness is not only a problem with gender equality but also with the inclusive governance and policy-making potential of universities.

A number of researchers believe that higher education institutions should create gender-inclusive cultures to promote the empowerment of women (Soharwardi & Ahmad, 2020) [26]. Learning institutions where active mentorship, gender sensitive leadership and participative governance systems prevail experience greater rates of confidence and empowerment of women. Furthermore, it is indicated that the empowerment process is multidimensional and includes, in addition to the political involvement, the psychological resilience, economic independence, and social awareness (Engida, 2021; Naz et al., 2020) [10, 20]. A solution to these dimensions can bring long-term effects to gender equity in decision-making and leadership.

Although research has accumulated on the topic of women empowerment, empirical studies have not yet been conducted on the interaction between political empowerment and decision-making confidence in the context of higher education. It is important to understand the interaction between educational exposure, institutional culture, and socio-political factors to affect the confidence of women in decision-making. This paper is thus an attempt to fill this knowledge gap by analyzing how much higher education is likely to empower women and raise their confidence in leadership and the institutional and psychological factors that facilitate or inhibit such a process. To sum up, women empowerment is not just a case of academic development in institutions of higher learning, but a stepping stone of transforming the society. Education empowers women to engage actively in governance, promote fair representation as well as leading to sustainable social development. Higher education, as the prior studies have demonstrated, may serve as the starting point and the space to build the leadership potential and political

confidence in women (Khan et al., 2020; Mondal, 2023; Daraz et al., 2025) [13, 17]. To achieve this, the paper aims to examine this dynamic through empirical evaluation of the effects of higher education settings on political empowerment and confidence in decision-making among women, which will be useful in the broader discussion of gender equality in governance and institutional leadership.

2. Literature Review
The empowerment of women and their role in making decisions has been widely accepted to be the key to sustainable development and social equity. Political empowerment, especially, means the process of allowing women to be empowered to take part in politics, influence the decisions and take up leadership roles (Uddin, 2023) [31]. Another crucial role of establishing such empowerment is through the institution of higher learning (HEI), which empowers women with the cognitive, social, and emotional capabilities that help them become leaders and governors. The literature review that ensues discusses the empirical studies that study the connection between higher education, women empowerment, political participation and confidence during decision-making.

The connection between education and empowerment has been established well within the different cultural backgrounds. Women get awareness of their rights, critical thinking, and abilities to independently make decisions through education (Engida, 2021) [10]. Pakistani and Indian studies have indicated that higher education also goes a long way in increasing women sense of independence, self-confidence, and their leadership capabilities. The study by Naz, Ashraf, and Iqbal (2020) [20] revealed that there is a positive correlation between women empowerment in terms of empowering their decision-making power, financial autonomy, and participation in politics and the level of higher education. On the same note, Khan, Haider, and Saadia (2020) [13] noted that tertiary education not only increases awareness of women, but also expands their involvement in politics and community life, which leads to empowerment as a result of institutionalization.

Education does not only lead to cognitive empowerment of women, but also psychological well-being and strength. The research by Daraz et al. (2025) [7] showed that education can increase the self-efficacy and emotional stability along with confidence in their leadership in women enabling them to overcome social stereotyping and participate in governing with meaning. These results support the thesis that education is a transforming tool, that is, it enables women to challenge social norms and take up decision making roles at different levels of institutional governance.

A very important aspect of the overall empowerment of women is political empowerment. It means receiving opportunities to enter political arenas, participate in decision-making, or get appointed to a leadership position in formal and informal governance systems (Bhat, 2016) [5]. Education is important in making women more politically aware and participate more by exposing them to civic education and democratic practices. According to Sahu and Yadav (2018) [24], women who have a higher level of education have higher chances of voting and joining political groups as well as discussions on policies. This is congruent with the results of Soharwardi and Ahmad (2020) [26] who highlighted that education has a positive impact on the confidence of women and their involvement in the

decision-making process, which, in turn, enhances the organizational governance.

Decision-making confidence is a psychological element of empowerment or a belief held by the woman on whether she can make informed, independent and effective decisions. Research also indicates that women enjoy confidence in decision making roles through institutional support, exposure to participatory governance, and training on leadership (Shah, Patel, Oza, and Geriya, 2023) [25]. Moreover, education fosters leadership skills that are required in the field of political participation and advocacy (Mondal, 2023) [17]. These skills are communication, negotiation, and critical reasoning, which are essential in the effective political and organizational leadership.

The role of institutions of higher learning in improving gender equity has acquired growing academic interests. As Uddin (2023) [31] pointed out, institutional constructs such as mentorship programs, gender-inclusive policies, and equal representation in leadership play a great role in determining the level of empowerment of women. Institutions that offer favorable environments enhance greater political awareness and high decision making confidence among women. Nevertheless, gender prejudice, patriarchal standards, and a lack of institutional encouragement continue to put women behind in the leadership role (Engida, 2021; Soharwardi and Ahmad, 2020) [10, 26].

Shah *et al*. (2023) [25] discovered that women who had higher education and were employed had higher chances of engaging in financial and family decision making and underscored the importance of education in improving agency. This result is consistent with those of Bhat (2016) [5] who reported that women felt more confident to pursue political and institutional leadership with more knowledge, resources, and social capital.

Although many studies have been conducted on the issue of empowerment, and education of women, limited number have been done in as far as intersection of political empowerment and decision-making confidence in institutions of higher learning. The majority of past studies have either generalized empowerment in the context of society or narrowed down the scope of empowerment on economic or social empowerment. In addition, the body of empirical studies that measure the value of institutional policies, mentorship, and participatory governance arrangements in HEIs in relation to women empowerment in politics and confidence to lead others is quite small. The paper aims to fill this gap by having empirical research on the impact of higher education experiences on political empowerment and confidence in decision-making among women. Based on the reviewed literature, the following hypotheses were formulated for the present study:

H₁: There is a significant positive relationship between higher education and political empowerment among women in higher education institutions.

H₂: Decision-making confidence among women is significantly influenced by their level of political awareness, leadership self-efficacy, and exposure to participatory institutional environments.

H₃: Institutional support mechanisms—such as mentorship programs and gender-inclusive leadership policies—positively affect women's decision-making confidence and

political empowerment.

H₄: Socio-cultural and structural barriers negatively moderate the relationship between higher education and women's political empowerment.

3. Methodology

The research design used in this study is quantitative research design, to study the relation between higher education, political empowerment as well as decision-making confidence among women in higher education institutions (HEIs). The quantitative method allows gathering and statistically analyzing numerical data systematically and finding a correlation between variables and verifies the hypotheses suggested. This research design is favorable to investigate quantifiable relations between variables that determine the empowerment of women, their self-assurance to leadership, and institutional enrolment in academic settings. Descriptive-correlational design was used to establish the degree to which a higher education is related to political empowerment and confidence in making decisions among women. The approach enables the researcher to recognise important patterns, quantify relationships between independent and dependent variables as well as come up with generalised conclusions.

The study population includes female students, faculty members, and administrative staff in the public and the private universities. Out of 400 respondents, stratified random sampling was done to help in representation of three groups of people, such as students, teaching faculty and administration. The sampling method was used due to the desire to have individuals at various hierarchical and experience level in HEIs and hence balance and representative data collection. The sampling was restricted to those who could give various opinions about empowerment, political awareness and confidence in making decisions in the institutions.

The study variables were made based on the previous literature on women empowerment, political participation and leadership confidence. Educational attainment, institutional support, political awareness, and socio-cultural barriers are the key independent variables. Educational attainment is the degree of higher education attained or achieved, whereas institutional support involves mentorship programs, gender inclusivity, as well as leadership development programs. Political awareness evaluates the knowledge and awareness of political processes, civic duty and the rights of women. Socio-cultural barriers are social conventions, gender discrimination and institutional restrictions, which can inhibit empowerment. Political empowerment and confidence in decisions are the dependent variables. Political empowerment is used to measure the participation of women in the governance, policy making and advocacy processes in or out of the institution. Confidence in decision-making is an indicator of self-efficacy, ability to lead and make independent and effective choices in academic or organisational life.

The structured questionnaire was used to collect data; it was designed according to validated scales of the previous studies and modified according to the situation in the context of higher education institutions. The questionnaire had closed ended and open-ended questions. To measure the responses, closed-ended questions were formulated on a five-point Likert scale between strongly disagree and

strongly agree, whereas open-ended questions gave the research participants an opportunity to discuss their experiences. The tool spanned six key dimensions, which included institutional support, educational attainment, leadership experience, political awareness, social-cultural barriers and decision-making confidence. The content validity of the questionnaire was evaluated by the professionals in gender studies and educational leadership, and a pilot sample of 30 respondents was used to determine the reliability, which reached Cronbachs alpha of 0.87, and this is a good internal consistency.

The statistical package of the social sciences (SPSS) 26 was used in the data analysis. Demographic aspects and overall response tendencies were summed up using descriptive statistics, including mean, standard deviation, and frequency distribution. To test study hypotheses and the relationships between variables using inferential statistics, Pearson, t-tests, ANOVA, and a multiple regression analysis were used. The interrelations between higher education, political empowerment, and decision-making confidence were sought using Pearson correlation. Independent sample t-tests and ANOVA were used to determine the difference in the mean of empowerment and confidence among different groups of the population concerning demographics like the level of education and type of employment. The predictive effect of the independent variables on the decision making confidence and political empowerment among women was established through multiple regression analysis; education, institutional support, and political awareness were the independent variables.

The hypotheses that were tested included: (H_1) There is a strong positive relationship between higher education and political empowerment of women in higher education institutions; (H_2) Political awareness, leadership self-efficacy and exposure to participatory institutional environment are significant factors that influence decision-making confidence among women and political empowerment; (H_3) Mentorship and gender-inclusive leadership policies are key mechanisms of institutional support that positively affect decision-making confidence and political empowerment of women; and (H_4) Exposure to participatory institutional environments, higher education, and political awareness have a negative influence on This study was prior to data collection and ethical approval was granted by the Institutional Research Ethics Committee. The objectives of the study were explained to all the participants and they gave their voluntary consent. The research process

was done in terms of data confidentiality and anonymity and the participants were provided with the right to quit at any point without any repercussions.

This descriptive-correlational quantitative approach, coupled with an elaborate statistical analysis and a stratified random sampling strategy, would offer a significant framework to the study of dynamics of political empowerment and decision-making confidence among women of higher education. The combination of institutional, psychological, and socio-cultural aspects will help the study produce empirically-based knowledge on the contribution of higher education to increasing the political involvement and leadership potential of women, as well as their confidence in making decisions. It is anticipated that the findings will be valuable in policymaking and institutional culture of gender equity and leadership development in the higher education field.

4. Results
4.1 Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics present the summary of the important variables considered in the research, which are summarized in Table 1. The standard deviations and the mean values show the overall trends and variability of the responses. The mean score is 3.9 in the case of political empowerment meaning that on average, respondents feel moderately empowered in higher institutions of learning. The frequency distribution indicates that forty five percent of the respondents indicated their level of political empowerment as high and thirty five percent indicated moderate. The mean score of decision-making confidence is 4.0, which shows that participants have a relatively strong level of self-efficacy and confidence in their leaders with 50 of them indicating a high level of confidence. The mean score of institutional support is 3.7, indicating that the majority of the respondents believe that institutional gender inclusivity and leadership training are rather strong, but a third of them believe they are moderate. The mean of the political awareness is 3.8 which indicates that majority of the respondents are politically aware and involved in civic or governance related events. The mean score of socio-cultural barriers is 2.9, which means that respondents fairly are affected by gender norms, stereotypes, and institutional prejudice. The mean of leadership self-efficacy is 4.1, which indicates great confidence in personal leadership skills, and half of the respondents included that they strongly agree with leadership-related items.

Table 1: Summary of Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean (X)	Standard Deviation (Y)	Frequency Distribution
Political Empowerment	3.9	0.7	Low: 20%, Moderate: 35%, High: 45%
Decision-Making Confidence	4.0	0.6	Low: 15%, Moderate: 35%, High: 50%
Institutional Support	3.7	0.8	Low: 25%, Moderate: 30%, High: 45%
Political Awareness	3.8	0.7	Low: 20%, Moderate: 40%, High: 40%
Socio-cultural Barriers	2.9	0.9	Low: 30%, Moderate: 50%, High: 20%
Leadership Self-Efficacy	4.1	0.6	Low: 10%, Moderate: 35%, High: 55%

The descriptive findings show that women in institutions of higher learning have high scores of decision-making confidence and political empowerment that is bolstered by moderate to high institutional support as well as leadership self-efficacy. Nevertheless, the problem of socio-cultural barriers remains significant among a significant portion of respondents, and it is possible to assume that the traditional

principles and institutionalized discrimination still become reflected in women leadership and political engagement.

4.2 Inferential Statistics

The t-test outcomes are based on comparing average confidence in decision-making by the respondents of the higher education institutions of the public and the private

type. The mean confidence in decision making by public HEIs was found to be 3.8 (SD = 0.7), whereas the mean confidence in decision making in private HEIs was 4.1 (SD = 0.6). This t-value stands at 5.26 and its p-value is less than 0.001 implying that there is a statistically significant difference in the decision-making confidence of women in public and private institutions. This indicates that female members of the higher education system in the private universities are more confident in their leadership and decision making roles than the ones in the public universities.

Table 2: T-test Results Comparing Decision-Making Confidence between Public and Private HEIs

Group	Mean Decision-Making Confidence	Standard Deviation	Sample Size (n)
Public HEIs	3.8	0.7	200
Private HEIs	4.1	0.6	200
t-value	5.26	p-value	< 0.001

ANOVA test was used to compare the political empowerment of three levels of academics- undergraduate, postgraduate and faculty respondents. The amount of squares between groups is 14.2, and the number of degrees of freedom is 2, which leads to the mean square of 7.1. The total number of squares in groups is 212.5 and the total number of degrees of freedom is 397 and therefore the mean square is 0.54. The F-value of 13.15 of a p-value of less than 0.001 will show that the difference in political empowerment between the educational levels is statistically significant. The post hoc analysis (Tukey HSD) established that the faculty scored much better on political empowerment when compared to the undergraduate and postgraduate students, indicating higher exposure to leadership and decision-making processes in the academic structures of governance.

Table 3: ANOVA Results for Political Empowerment across Educational Levels

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares (SS)	Degrees of Freedom (df)	Mean Square (MS)	F-value	p-value
Between Groups	14.2	2	7.1	13.15	< 0.001
Within Groups	212.5	397	0.54		
Total	226.7	399			

To test the influence of institutional support, political awareness, leadership self-efficacy and socio cultural barriers on decision-making confidence, a multiple regression analysis was used. The regression model (F = 42.7, p < 0.001) is statistically significant and can explain 58 percent (R^2 = 0.58) of the variance in the confidence of decision-making. The findings show that decision making confidence is significantly positively impacted by institutional support (0.31, t = 4.85, p < 0.001), political awareness (0.27, t = 4.20, p < 0.001), and leadership self-efficacy (0.36, t = 5.60, p < 0.001). On the other hand, the impact of socio-cultural barriers (0.19, = -3.15 = 0.00 2) is significant and negative, which means that the greater the perceived barriers, the less confidence women have in leadership and decision-making positions.

Table 4: Regression Analysis of Decision-Making Confidence

Predictor Variable	Coefficient (β)	Standard Error (SE)	t-value	p-value
Intercept	1.25	0.28	4.46	< 0.001
Institutional Support (X1)	0.31	0.06	4.85	< 0.001
Political Awareness (X2)	0.27	0.06	4.20	< 0.001
Leadership Self-Efficacy (X3)	0.36	0.06	5.60	< 0.001
Socio-Cultural Barriers (X4)	-0.19	0.06	-3.15	0.002
R-squared	0.58			

The findings suggest that post-education is an important factor that enhances political empowerment and confidence to make decisions among women. Empowerment can be predicted well by institutional support, political awareness and leadership self-efficacy and the socio cultural barriers are a limiting factor. The results prove all the four hypotheses of the researches and affirm that positive academic climate improves the confidence and involvement of women in leadership and governance in the institutions of higher learning.

5.1 Discussion
The results of this study highlight some important correlations between higher education, political empowerment, and confidence in decision-making among the female population in higher education institutions. The findings indicated that institutional support, political awareness and leadership self-efficacy play a big role in determining the confidence of women in their decision making process whereas the socio cultural barriers have a negative effect on the empowerment results. These results are consistent with previous research that has suggested the central importance of education in changing the agency of women, their civic engagement, and their leadership potential (Kabeer, 2018; Stromquist, 2015) [12, 28]. The large means of decision-making confidence and leadership self-efficacy suggest that women in the higher education institutions have high levels of internal motivation and believe in their potentials, which are supported by their experience of participation processes in learning and academic governance. This is in line with the research of Leach (2013) [14] who established that education develops critical thinking and builds the confidence of women in their leadership and decision-making processes.

The great impact of institutional support on empowerment outcomes in this paper validates that the higher education environment is an enabling environment where women are able to acquire political competencies, social capital and participatory governance. The same has been repeated in previous studies that highlighted the significance of institutional mentorship and facilitating academic policies to empower women to become leaders (Morley, 2013) [18]. According to the regression analysis, support at the institutional level was also among the most significant predictors of empowerment, which agrees with the research showing that institutional structures and gender-sensitive policies contribute to the empowering of women to engage in governance and administration, as well as, to a greater degree (O'Connor, Carvalho, and White, 2015) [21]. Further, it was also discovered that another consistent predictor of empowerment is political awareness. The conclusion is in line with the research by Bari (2017) [3], who contended that political literacy and civic education enhance women to have a greater power to impact the decision-making process in and out of the classroom.

The self-efficacy of leadership was found to be also a leading indicator in the confidence of women in making decisions. The women who had greater self-efficacy in leadership portrayed greater faith in their ability to maneuver through the institutional and political systems. This result aligns with the theory of self-efficacy suggested by Bandura (1997) [2] according to which high self-belief enables people to become much more assertive and become leaders. Equally, Hoyt and Blascovich (2010) [11] have found that women feel more confident in a leadership situation when they think that institutional climates are fair and accommodating. Socio-cultural barriers, on the other hand, were found to be negatively related to these two factors, political empowerment and confidence in decision making. This is consistent with studies conducted by Paxton and Hughes (2014) [23], who observed that traditional gender roles and patriarchal systems still restrict the ability to engage women in decision-making activities even in the progressive institutions.

Another important finding of the study is significant variance in empowerment and confidence between the levels of education with the faculty respondents scoring higher than the students. This disparity is correlated with greater exposure to leadership elements and decision making duties among the study professionals, which is corroborated by Deem and Morley (2006) [8], who found that the empowerment of women tends to go with the academic seniority and experience. The large difference in group empowerment also confirms the fact that higher education is a participatory social space whereby exposure to participatory practices develops political consciousness and confidence (Unterhalter, 2017) [33]. On the whole, these results prove that education does not only increase the level of women knowledge but also changes their ability to impact government, to become leaders and to be involved into the political decision-making process.

5.2 Implications
The implications of this finding are manifold and they include policy implications, institutional practice implications and research implications. Among the implications is the need to empower gender-inclusive policies in institutions of higher learning that favour women

leadership and their participation in the governance process. The fact that institutional support is a major predictor of empowerment explains why universities should adopt systematic mentorship initiatives, leadership, and gender equity models (Morley and Crossouard, 2016) [19]. Formal mentorship networks may also make young women access role models and advice to encourage them to have increased confidence in taking leadership in leadership avenues. Moreover, learning institutions must establish platforms, which encourage gender equity discussions, whereby the female voices are heard in every governance procedure (Sperandio, 2011) [27].

The other significant implication is connected with curriculum and pedagogy. Civic education, leadership and gender studies should be incorporated in the curriculums of institutions of higher learning to enhance political literacies and help women to become influential participants in the process of social and institutional governance (Aikman and Unterhalter, 2005) [1]. The institutions are also encouraged to conduct workshops and seminars on leadership, negotiation, communication and strategic decision making to develop leadership capacity of the women students and the faculty. Additionally, the socio-cultural barriers can be handled holistically and not just through academia. Educational institutions should collaborate with policymakers to break the stereotypes and promote inclusive leadership cultures that will appreciate the role of women in institutional and political life (Madsen, 2012) [16].

In the policy arena, the results show that the implementation of gender equality policies should be based on the need to provide access to education and empowerment through participation. The national and institutional systems must provide women with representation in the decision-making organizations, study councils, and the policy committees (UNESCO, 2016) [32]. Accountability and inclusivity can also be enhanced by the establishment of gender audit mechanisms and equal opportunity cells in the universities. As well, the collaboration between government bodies, higher educational establishments, and feminist groups may enhance the lobbying of the equity of leadership and political engagement.

The implications of the results to the general discussion on women empowerment in developing nations are also made. Higher education can be the means of social change because it can result in empowered female leaders to tackle the current power relations and lead to inclusive governance. This is consistent with the findings of Batliwala (2010) [4] who contends that the best way to empower people is to change the institutional power relationships and not just to enhance access. Thus, through empowering women to make decisions and to be politically literate, higher education institutions can serve as the core within promoting gender equality and democratic empowerment at institutional and society-wide aspects.

5.3 Limitations and Scope for Future Research
Although this research is quite useful in terms of understanding how higher education, political empowerment, and decision-making confidence are interconnected, one must admit that some restrictions are present. The study is based mostly on self-reports and this can be vulnerable to social desirability or response bias. The respondents may have exaggerated their magnitudes of empowerment or confidence because of the demands of

their institutions. Mixed research designs including surveys and interviews or focus groups could be used in the future to learn more about the lived experiences of women in leadership in higher education (Elliott, 2014) [9]. The other constraint is the cross-sectional design, which is a point in time view of empowerment. There is need to conduct longitudinal research to study the effect of educational exposure on the trajectories of empowerment with time (Tembon and Fort, 2008) [30].

The research was also constrained by having a few institutional and psychological variables, and left out other factors that could be important to the study, like the organizational culture, peer networks, and family support systems. Such a project might take a more complex design incorporating these variables in the future to learn more about the complex nature of women empowerment (Luke, Meara, and Gouda, 2014) [15]. Also, the sample might not be generalizable due to the geographic focus. Comparative analysis of countries or regions on a cross-cultural level would reveal differences in contexts and find optimal practices to empower women around the world (Panda, 2018) [22].

The other limitation is on the under-researched role of policy interventions and leadership development programs. Although this research found institutional support to be a major ingredient, it did not evaluate the effectiveness of a particular empowerment program. The programmes to be considered in the future research include gender leadership fellowships, mentorship networks, and participatory forms of governance with respect to how they affect the outcomes of women empowerment (Tadros, 2011) [29]. Conclusively, although this research used a quantitative research method, qualitative research design would imply a more detailed social, emotional, and cultural comprehension of the concept of empowerment that cannot be entirely reflected by figures. The use of narrative/ethnographic approach would be of more value to the study as it would help understand how women think of and use power and confidence in academic institutions (Cornwall and Edwards, 2016) [6].

Finally, although this research is helpful in comprehending how higher education empowers women and gives them more confidence in their decisions, these shortcomings can be overcome by conducting longitudinal, cross-cultural, and mixed-method research that will help in better and more detailed understanding. This kind of future work will not only broaden the theoretical base of empowerment, but also inform evidence-based policy and institutional reforms that would support gender equality and institutional inclusion of leadership in higher learning institutions.

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