


## 2.22 WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND NUTRITION

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Women's empowerment is considered crucial for improving nutrition outcomes. Since women are often primary caregivers, they can influence their children's nutrition indirectly through their own nutritional status as well as directly through childcare practices. Several studies have demonstrated the important associations between women's empowerment dimensions and their own nutrition as well as that of their children. In Pakistan, women's intrahousehold status (measured by age at first marriage, percentage age difference between woman and spouse, difference between woman's and spouse's years of education, woman's income, and unearned income from remittances) was positively associated with food security among their children. Women's empowerment was measured by a score for women's involvement in major decisions. In South Asia, Africa south of the Sahara (SSA), and Latin America and the Caribbean, women's social status in the household and community were also found to have a positive impact on the nutritional status of children and cross-country studies have demonstrated that improvements in women's education were responsible for almost 43 percent of the total reduction in children underweight between 1970 and 1995. On the other hand, women who are not empowered are more likely to have more time constraints, lower mental health, less control over household resources, lower self-esteem, and less access to information about health services.

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