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Cultural Constraints To Female Higher Education In Malakand Division, Pakistan

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Abstract

The current study was aimed to analyze the Pakhtun cultural constraints in the way of female higher education. For this purpose, the data was collected through a survey instrument by snowball sampling and selected 384 respondents from Malakand division, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The collected data were analyzed through SPSS. A Chi-Square test was applied in order to find out the association between independent (Pakhtun culture) and a dependent variable (low female higher education). The results show that there is a high and significant relationship between the low ratio of female higher education and sub-dimensions of Pakhtun culture i.e. early puberty, conservatism, *Pardah*, home related factors, Son preference, male dominancy, lack of freedom of expression for female, early/child marriage, non-involvement of female in decision making, spending money of parents but benefits goes to husband family, non-acceptance of co-education, living in hostel of female and cultural interpretation of religion are various risk factors for low female higher education in Pakhtun society. The study recommends that the government should focus on women education, create awareness regarding female education and provide better educational facilities and incentives for women. Besides, more employment opportunities should be created to enhance female higher education.

Keywords: Pakhtun Culture, Female Higher Education, Male Dominancy, *Pardah*.

تلخیص

موجودہ مطالعے کا مقصد خواتین کی اعلی تعلیم کی راہ میں پختون ثقافت میں موجود رکاوٹوں کا تجزیہ کرنا تھا۔ اس مقصد کے تحت، اعداد وشمار ایک سروے کے ذریعے جمع کئے گئے جس میں تدریجی نمونہ بندی کے تحت پاکستان کے صوبے خیبر پختونخواہ کے مالاکنڈ ڈویژن سے ۳۸۴ جواب دہندگان کو منتخب کیا گیا تھا۔ جمع کردہ اعداد و شمار کا ایس پی ایس ایس کے ذریعے تجزیہ کیا گیا ہے۔ جبکہ پابند متغیرہ

(خواتین کی کم اعلی تعلیم) اور آزاد متغیرہ (پختون ثقافت) کے درمیان نسبت کو تلاش کرنے کے لئے کائی اسکوائر ٹیسٹ استعمال کیا گیا۔ نتائج سے معلوم ہوا کہ پختون ثقافت اور خواتین کی اعلیٰ تعلیم میں کمی کا آپس میں انتہائی گہرا تعلق ہے۔ خواتین کی جلد بلوغت، قدامت پرستی، پردہ، گھر سے متعلقہ عوامل، بیٹے کو ترجیح، پدر شاہی نظام، خاتون کے لئے آزادی اظہار کی کمی، فیصلہ سازی میں خواتین کی عدم شرکت، فرسودہ خیالات جیسا کہ لڑکی کی تعلیم پر خرچہ والدین کریں جبکہ فائدہ شوہر کو ہو گا، مخلوط نظام تعلیم کی عدم قبولیت، لڑکیوں کا ہاسٹل میں رہنے اور ثقافت اور مذہب کی ملی جلی تشریح کی وجہ سے پختون معاشرے میں خواتین کی اعلیٰ تعلیم کی راہ میں رکاوٹیں حائل ہیں۔ مطالعاتی تجویز یہ ہے کہ حکومت خواتین کی تعلیم پر توجہ دے، خواتین کی تعلیم کے بارے میں شعور پیدا کرنے اور خواتین کے لئے بہتر تعلیمی سہولیات فراہم کرے اور ان کی حوصلہ افزائی کرے۔ اس کے علاوہ، خواتین کی اعلیٰ تعلیم کو بڑھانے کے لئے روزگار کے مواقع پیدا کیے جائیں۔

کلیدی الفاظ: پختون ثقافت، خواتین کی اعلیٰ تعلیم، مردوں کی اجارہ داری، پردہ۔

Introduction

Education plays a vital role in empowering and making women independent. Women education is important for the development as educating a girl will serve the entire generation (Ghulam, 2006; Alderman, 1998). Women are not only part of human society, but also the central pillar of the origins of human beings. Women can play a pivotal role in the social, financial and cultural promotion of communities (Haq, 2007; Shahid, 2000). However, traditional and cultural values hindrance between women and their prospects for education. Due to this reason millions of girls in various societies live without education and deprived of many other opportunities in their lives (Begum, 2002). It is far necessary to invest in girls' education and their skill development. As one of women's organization narrates that the girl is considered a liability, as parents know that their daughter is the temporary member of their family. In this way, they believe that education and skills, will benefit her in-laws after marriage instead of parents. Women living in Pakistan are facing problems since they born. The birth of a girl is often disappointing and even matter of anger and blame put on the mother to give birth to a girl baby. In general, girls face deficiency in food, less chances of education and gets minor health care than boys. Consequently, mortality rate for girls is high due to insufficient care (Mehretu, 2001). In past, education was considered for male only, and women have to live in private spheres. While, Islam gives equal rights to both sexes to be educated (Lindsay & James, 2005). It will be more accurate that not only education but also modern education is compulsory for both the sexes without any discrimination (Mishra, 2005). Unfortunately, some societies are still conservative regarding female education. When a man is educated, it means only one person of the society is educated but when become educated then it is truly said that a whole family will be educated. Because a

woman is not only a single person but she is also an institution within herself. Society accepts change when both male and female are educated (Shahid, 2000).
Pakistani society is male-dominated and possessing patriarchal system (Himayatullah & Parveen, 1990). This situation is even worse in Pakhtun society as a priority and social power granted to male at all level than female. Financial matters are settled and governed by men, female cannot intervene and they are found dependent (Kotwal, 2006). They do not have the right to intervene in societal, monetary, political and kin matters. The educational, employment, recreational and political activities are completely gender-based in which higher positions are given to men (Jamaluddin & Khan, 2008).

These constraints in the way of female higher education across the globe can be observed. There are certain studies in Africa and in South Asia that this issue is common in the developing countries. A study was conducted in Tanzania to study girl's performance with workload. Girls showed better performance when they were enrolled in hostel. Because these girls were free from all sort of domestic issues and were fully focusing on their studies. However the discriminating factors include gender disparities as there is different treating girl child in Tanzanian society also. This discrimination starts even from naming of an announcement of the child. Even they treat health care differently. This deprivation continue to the schooling phase of these girls. As a result Tanzanian rural areas girls do not attend pre-primary schools. So greatly affect these girls and they perceive from their early life that they possess second category in society (Meena, 2018). Another study was conducted in African country Ethiopia. Men and women perform same functions differently, because boys and girls are considered differently, exposed to different actions, and so may attain different cognitive skills. Motive behind this attitude are the social and cultural factors which may affect the job of men. In the Ethiopian educational setup, females have setting up of modern education in the country to the most recent few decades (Mergo, 2017). In 1994, Bangladeshi government had taken an initiative to promote girls education. They started stipends for girls in rural areas. Consequently number of girls for getting higher education increased from 14% to 25%, apart from this there was significant effect on the girl's marital life also, i.e. decreasing early marriages and having small number of children after their marriage, causing a control of population. Even they found chances of finding male counterpart more well of than uneducated girls. Furthermore, these conjugal girls were more authoritative than illiterate girls, while dealing their financial and domestic issues, health facilities and dealing with relatives at various occasions. They were eligible to work in multi-sectors instead of agriculture and earning through some handicrafts. This means that such stipends in especially in rural areas can produce chances of better life for the local girls (Hahn et al., 2018).

Another study conducted in rural India to investigate about women education. This study found that shortage of female teachers is another hurdle for female to get higher

education. These girls will get high grades if they are taught by a female teacher instead of a male teacher. There is lack of female teacher at primary, secondary and even at University level. A study of Indian textbooks found that men were the main characters in the majority of lessons. These lessons reflect that men are more intelligent and challenges accepting and more target oriented. Conversely, women has characterized as fragile and dependent, often facing mistreatment and corporal punishment. Rural children also face shortage of modern facilities and services, such as transportation, electricity, awareness, cleanliness, health care, and right of entry to education. To overcome these problems in 1994, India passed a widespread female education bill that offers benefits for parents which includes access and penalty for keeping a girl out of school. Results were quite interesting and now many government and non-government. organizations are working in this field(Jain et a., 2017).

The primitive structure of Pakistani society places women as housewives and takes care of family activities (Gulati, 2006). In addition, a majority of Pakistani, especially Pakhtun society has further strengthened their restrictions on women's social, economic and educational empowerment. As this empowerment of women will make them careless in dealing with family members such as spouse and children (Ghulam, 2006). Possessive attitudes and objections of husbands and in some cases family responsibilities and social constraints also prevent women from obtaining an education. Consequently, women's struggles are discouraged and they are barred from educational, political, economic, recreational and social participation in the community (Kotwal, 2006).

Now more women are entering in job market due to the educational attainment even though women have subordinate employment and less working hours than men. There are some studies which reveal a gender gap in settlement to education, but a consensus seems to be emerging that the principal source of the college gap lies in gender differences in the non financial costs of education. Gender gaps in social and behavioral skills come into view to promote early–girls begin school with more advanced learning skills than boys, and this benefit grows over time (Lundberg, 2017).

Female literacy rate in Pakistan is considered very low even in the 21st century. There are a lot of areas in Pakistan, particularly in Pakhtun Society in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where female education ratio is low. Why this scenario is persistent? This quantitative nature of the study is an effort being made to highlight the various cultural factors of the low ratio of female higher education in Pakhtun Society in Malakand Division, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

Literature Review

Women play central role in the advancement of the nations. The societal development is highly reliant on collective efforts carried out by both men and women in various segments of the development. Education is the most significant factor for the development, where female cohort can contribute and make a use of its dynamism to bring changes in communities. The importance of education, especially female education, presently, can be well judged by the comments given by a woman who had left behind all of their positions (Alam, 2017). He further stated that the only thing they had brought in was what had been in their minds, what they had been learnt, according to their education. They have lost all the facilities but they still have the education, which cannot be taken from them.

Education is the fundamental right of both sexes (Terry & Thomas, 1997). Knowledge and skills can be transferred broadly to the society and these can be attained through education. The main purpose of education is to share our know-how with others. The level of self-confidence put learners themselves in the middle of their own knowledge and skills. Their ability to change information into knowledge and knowledge into novelty is significant features for the innovative knowledge society. When we made conversation about rules and plans, it should be assumed that assets and programs must be there for both genders. It is observed that illiterate women victimization of violence more as compared to the literate females because of illiterate women don't know their protection rights (Heise et al., 1999). Females' higher education can contribute a lot in the economic growth of the nation. It is also observed that where both men and women work, then their economic growth get also flourished (Stephan, 2002). Furthermore, Pakistani educational policies were also reinforcing socio-economic development, technical and professional education. In the case of Pakistan, different estimates of private returns to schooling are available. These returns to schooling achievement are low as compared to other developing countries because revenue increases are linked with the level of education, and mainly investments made in female education increase outstanding fringe revenue as compared to males (Jamal 2015).

Different statistics show that Pakistani society is gender-segregated society. Women have to face socio-cultural difficulties to obtain an education. Across the globe, a consensus has developed through the Millennium Development Goals to eradicate gender inequality in the field of education. The agencies working on gender equality contend that everyone has equal rights of getting education irrespective of the gender discrimination, because development of the society is closely linked with the education of both male and female. Some studies have confirmed that gender discrimination in education has a significant impact on rural poverty in Pakistan, while female literacy is imperative for poverty alleviation (Farah, 2007; Alam, 2017).

Pakistan has one of the lowest rates of literacy in the world and even the lowest among countries of relative resources and social/fiscal similarities. Education provides strong foundations for socio-economic development (Memon 2007). Pakistani girls are restricted to avail further education and gender segregated disparity in education is also prominent, consequently, females are lagging behind in almost every profession. Additionally, there are also some other reasons that hinder the females' higher education, such as gender injustice, posting at distant from their own locality, transportation problems, political insecurities and unnecessary political intervention.

In traditional society, women should only perform housework and take care of their children's, leading to lower investment in the parental education of their daughters, thus hindering girls from entering higher education. The fewer opportunities for women to be educated are directly related to socio-economic conditions (Alam 2017). Narrow-minded parents generally do not want to invest on their daughter's education, because of the outdated thinking that the main role of professional and social is a choice for men only. They believe that girls are more motivated to household work at home (Colclough et al., 2000). Some parents also misunderstood the concept of co-education. They believe that the common education is not to educate girls and boys but to destroy them in the name of liberalism. In some additional common situations around the world, women are considered useless except for material objects that satisfy the male sexual desire (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).

Cultural Constraints

The Pakistani society is a typical society. It has old-fashioned cultural norms. Women are included in the category of mothers and housewives. Men are included in the family leadership category. Women are confined to their daily work and completely obey the wishes of their life partners and in-laws (Tichy, Becker et al. 2009). Often parents recognize that leadership is limited to social male members. Therefore, women should not indulge in higher education. This kind of discrimination started in childhood. When girls were doing homework, they received training and always sacrificed for male family members, making them habitual habits. When they are constrained, so is higher education. They are being informed that you (girls) will be married off and then studies will be of no use (Keng, 2004). People who are thought to be well-educated are more likely to find creative that will have to exercise for fruitfulness. This is another definitive health determinant. In addition, the impact of education is often accumulating throughout the life process: as time passes, small influences can be amplified and ultimately make a great contribution to a happy life (Mirowsky, 2017).

Another barrier in the way of female higher education is their early marriage due to parents' unawareness. After marriage, young girl's right to gain entrance to formal and

even non-formal education is exceptionally restricted due to house management responsibility, childbearing and societal customs that view marriage and education as conflicting (Mathur, et al, 2003). Early practices of early marriages among girls are very common in Pakistani society. Most of stereotype parents consider their daughters a burden on them and they want to get rid of this burden as soon as possible. Early marriage put a lot of responsibilities on their shoulders, facing restrictions which confine them to the house and they have no right to use wealth and face financial constraints (Jain & Kurz 2007). Generally, in such cultures males are supposed as earning hands and females as the caretakers of home. Female are not equal to their male counterparts, thus they have to generate a new role for themselves in society(Glaeser 2014).There are resilient political, societal and cultural pressures that form the male governing society of Pakistan with inflexible traditions and conservative thinking patterns; for example, it is considered against the family honour if females go for higher education, especially, in co-education system. In Pakistan, the willingness of families towards females' higher education is very low because of the deleterious thinking.

These families prefer Islamic education for females should and females are confined in homes in the name of Islam and culture.

Ignorant Family members

Presently conducted studies describe various characteristics regarding the facilitative and hindering perceptions relating to female education. Like study carried out by Farah (2007) about parents perception on girls' education in six districts of the Punjab province, articulated that both parents give importance to general education, while a large number of parents gave much more position to professional education for boys than girls.

One of the tragedies that occur to women, mostly in rural areas, the fortune of the women are entirely determined by their parents, especially when parents are illiterate or ignorant, in all walks of life, whether in education, marriage or professional life. In this way, sending women for education especially, the higher level is considered a violation of the parents' honor. Illiterate parents are reluctant to send their daughters to the university, and at a very young age, let her realize that she is only a temporary member of the family. The families of girls not allow them to learn any of skills because the benefits will not benefit them. Few parents are more willing to send their daughters to vocational centers (Begum, 2002). The latest report of Pakistan's 2015 Social and Living Standards Measurement (PSLM) survey highlighted 60% of the literacy rate, compared to 58% in 2014.

While in 2015 literacy rate was 70 percent and for a female, it was 49 percent, that shows that there is 21 percent difference exists and needs to be well-adjusted with the

existing resources. Illiterate parents give preference to boys as a lucky symbol for them and girls as a liability, therefore girls get fewer chances to be educated (Jamaluddin & Khan, 2008). Unaware parents are keen on the education of boys and consider the girls as a liability, so that their investment in girls' higher education is very little and inadequate. Qureshi (2012) used Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey (PSLM) 2005-06 to explore gender inequality in school registration and its influence on revenue to the education system in Pakistan. Linking education with income, researcher summarized that revenue rises with growth in the level of education from primary to secondary and from secondary to tertiary level, for both genders and the rate of increase was found higher for females than males. The societal beliefs and practices of the family leader in Pakistan i.e. male decide that whether girls should go to attend an educational institute or not (Keng, 2004; Buchmann & Hannum, 2001). Modernization is the process of transforming the old traditional societies and nations into modernity in the field of economics, technological, business and social development. Education is a great force in modernization. Education is a stimulus for bringing social change. Additionally, education can affect the phase of social change among the weaker subdivisions of the societies. Furthermore, education can initiate and speed up the process of change by changing the approach and beliefs of man. It can change man and his style of living and hence can change the society as a whole, especially towards promoting female higher education.

Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in Malakand division Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Data were collected through snowball sampling techniques by a sample size of 384 respondents which is enough for maximum population size (Krejcei & Morgan, 1970). The data was collected through a well thought out interview schedule while keeping in view the Pakhtun cultural values (purdah) so trained females were recruited for data collection. Significance relationship dependent variable (Female higher education) with independent variable (Pakhtun culture) was determined by using the Chi-Square test as a statistical tool by Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Results and Discussion

Relationship between Pakhtun Culture and Low Female Higher Education

Table-4.1 reveals the relationship between Pakhtun cultural factors (independent variable) and low female higher education (dependent variable). The results show that there is a highly significant relationship ($p=0.006$) between early puberty of females and low female higher education, followed by a high connection ($p=0.005$) between conservatism and low female higher education. The results are in line with UNESCO

report that cultural attitudes and conservatism strengthen the norm that girls do not need further education after primary school (UNESCO, 2009). Furthermore, socio-cultural factors were the main reason for gender discrimination in higher education (Kareem & Jamil, 2016). These results conform to a similar research study done by Erulkar, (2004), that blames the socio-cultural setup as mainly responsible for rendering out unequal treatment to the females aspiring for higher education. Female respondents put slightly more weight to home-related factors as compared to other factors. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), cultural taboos and social norms don't approve of females getting out of the security of their homes and work therefore their higher education is not considered important enough. Apart from a few urban areas, in most of the KPK, the society puts checks on female mobility even if it is for getting education (World Bank, 2011).

Furthermore, there is a significant relation between strong *Pardah* in Pakhtun culture and a low ratio of female higher education (p=0.050). In most rural areas the Pashtunwali code of ―either *Kor or Gor (*Home or graveyard*)* is still in practice, but this is not the case in urban Pashtun areas. Even Pashtuns are very sensitive to women's identity and picture. Sometimes they will not take their wife to the hospital because other men may be able to see her (Jamal, 2014). Moreover, a high significant relationship between home related factors and low female higher education (p=0.001). These results are in agreement with the researchers that home related factors and socio-cultural factors are two factors for gender discrimination in higher education (Kareem & Jamil, 2016). These results conform to a similar research study done by Erulkar, (2004), that blames the combination of home related factors and socio-cultural setup as mainly responsible for rendering out unequal treatment to the females aspiring for higher education. Female respondents put slightly more weightage to home related factors as compared to other factors (Erulkar, 2004). Moreover, a high significant relationship between son reference and low female higher education (p=0.001). According to the researchers that maternal-son preference were found to be the main aspects that directly or otherwise affect gender discrimination in higher education (Kareem & Jamil, 2016; Erulkar et al., 2004).

In addition a significant relationship was found between male dominancy and low female higher education (p=0.007). In Pakhtun culture, men are dominant on women's lives from an early age and play an important role in issues ranging from education to the selection of husbands. After marriage, a woman's husband and in-laws can control her own life. They could decide issues such as the number of children she will have, what her role in the community will be, and what her limits are in seeking education or employment (Mann, 2005; Jamal, 2014). A highly significant relationship between lack of freedom of expression and low female higher education (p=0.001). In addition, a highly significant relationship between early child marriage and low female higher education (p=0.002). Early marriage is the reason behind limited female higher education

(Ara, 2012). The researchers argue that marriage often seems to be the best way for parents to protect their daughter's future and lessen the financial burden on each other (Myers & Rowan, 2011). This result is seconded by the research study based upon the Amhara region of Ethiopia where the researcher asserts that thirty percent of the females were denied higher education due to the fact that they were married at a very young age (Erulkar, 2004). Moreover, a highly significant relationship between non-involvement of female in decision making and low female higher education (p=.000). Due to non-involvement of women in especially in rural societies women are fail to achieve education (Kareem & Jamil, 2016).

A highly significant relationship was found between spending of money on female education is not beneficial for parents and low female higher education (P=0.000). In the poor households, investments are done in the education of male children because the son is supposed to be the future bread earner of the family while daughters are to be married off to other families. Yourke (1999) in a research study endorsed the idea that the ambitions and aspirations of the parents is a decisive factor in providing equal higher educational opportunities to the children (Yourke, 1999, Sunita, 2012). Parents may think that daughters' education is a waste of money because daughters eventually live with their husband's family and parents will not directly benefit from their education. In addition, more educated daughters may have higher costs of dowries because they want a well-educated husband. However, education sometimes lowers the dowry of girls as the husband's family sees them as an asset (Dreze& Sen, 1995; Khan et al., 2014). Furthermore, a highly significant relationship between non acceptance of co-education system in Pakhtun culture and low female higher education (p=0.043). Social norms and taboos in most of the societies, where the behaviors of the citizens are motivated by a desire to conform to the shared social expectations of a collective group don't approve of females getting education alongside males in the universities (Heise, 2013). A similar research was done in Saudi Arabia which point outs the fact that females in Saudi Arabia are restricted by social norms to have an easy access to transportation and thus accompanied by a male in their daily commute to and from the educational institution (Sabbagh, 1996). Moreover, a highly significant relationship between living of female in the hostel is not acceptable in Pakhtun culture and female education (P=0.006). A similar research was done in Saudi Arabia which point out to the facility of hostel and boarding is available to the female students, it is not considered appropriate to allow the females to live outside their homes (Sabbagh, 1996). In addition, a highly significant relationship (p=0.001) was found between the cultural interpretation of religion in Pakhtun society and low female higher education. In terms of culture, most of the population directed religious sermons and lectures against women's education, and the role of ignorant and untrained religious scholars also to a certain extent dominated, leading to the deprivation of women's education (Naz, 2012).

Table: 4.1
Relationship between Pakhtun culture and low female higher education

Pakhtun CultureObstacles (Dependent variable)	Low female education (Independent Variable)	χ^2 (P-Value)
Early puberty of females	Low female higher education	14.523 (0.006)
Conservatism	Low female higher education	16.247 (0.005)
Strong Pardah	Low female higher education	11.274 (0.050)
Home related factors	Low female higher education	53.395 (0.001)
Son preference	Low female higher education	43.266 (0.001)
Male dominancy	Low female higher education	17.679 (0.007)
Lack of freedom of expression	Low female higher education	58.183 (0.001)
Early/child marriage	Low female higher education	37.613 (0.002)
Limited decision making	Low female higher education	44.674 (0.001)
Belief that "spending of parents but benefits goes to husband family"	Low female higher education	48.718 (0.000)
Non acceptance of co-education	Low female higher education	11.869 (0.043)
Hostel boarding for female	Low female higher education	17.643 (0.006)
Cultural interpretation	Low female higher education	76.332 (0.001)

Conclusions

The study concluded that the risk factors for low ratio of female higher education are early puberty of females prohibit them from higher education in Pakhtun culture, conservatism, *Strong Pardah*, home related factors, son preference, male dominancy, lack of freedom of expression for female, early/child marriage, non-involvement of female in decision making, spending money of parents but benefits receive by husband family, non-acceptance of co-education, living in hostel of female and cultural interpretation of religion are various risk factors for low female higher education in Pakhtun society. Majority of the factors can be found in the South Asian countries while

in some other countries they were also experiencing step parents issue. Poverty and separate educational institutes are also some of the factors influencing female higher education. Studies also reveal that higher education produce more opportunities of employment and can act as population control agent. Even these educated girls are more empower in deciding their domestic issues and settle their financial matters, this educational level also prevent them from illegitimate/premature sex. Furthermore, the above analysis suggested that it is necessary for all the social institutions to arrange and support awareness about the importance of female higher education through various government and NGOs, proper arrangement for motivation, mobilizations, and for this purpose media can also play positive role in the propagation of the importance and need of female education along with sharing successful stories of educated females and religious scholars are also requested to highlight the need for female education along with true religious boundaries.

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