

# Pakhtun Social Structure and its Impacts on Women's Education

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## Abstract

The current study analyze the social structural dimension of Pakhtun society emphasizing on the cultural, economic, physical, religious and political factors to women's education. A quantitative approach was adopted and the data was collected from 323 male and female respondents of eight Union Councils of District Dir lower using stratified random sampling (proportionate method) and interview schedule. The data was analyzed using SPSS and discussion was made over the collected data. The empirical results show that there exists a strong relationship between the structural impediments including, system of patriarchy, male dominance, customs and traditions, religious misinterpretation, feudalism etc and women's education. The analysis further suggested that a comprehensive strategy including provision of education, the role of mass media, policy making in regard to women's empowerment and religious knowledge and the role of religious leader is basic for brining equality at the educational spheres.

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**Index terms**— patriarchy, male dominancy, traditionalism social structure, physical, economic, religious, political, impediments, empowerment.

## 1 Background of the Study

ducation is the key to empower women and brings control on their lives. Women education is an acknowledged fact for development and to educate a girl is like educating a family (Alderman, 1998). The importance of female education and its dissemination to all sections is the existing and emerging problems of the society (Carolyn, 2004) and to educate a mother is perceived to contribute to the household because members might come to her for advice ??Choudhry, et.al, 2001). Female population constitutes 49.6% of the total population in Pakistan (Choudhry, 2009) and thus ignoring female population will be fruitless for country progress ??Berhman, 1997 andHaq, 2000). In this regard Naz (2011) expound that women in Pakistan suffer mostly and the most serious is perhaps the denial from educational rights. Similarly, male preference is common and they usually dominate the socio-cultural, economic and political aspects while E-mail : hod.sociology@uom.edu.pk in contrast, females are discriminated educationally, in contrast, females are discriminated educationally, economically, politically and socially ??Colclough et.al, 2000).

Education in this context is a key to overcome various barriers and has been of central significance for development of human society (Haq, 2000). However, in Pakistan the status of women education is not homogeneous at the primary, middle, secondary and higher level and differences are there in the rates of enrollment of boys and girls (Dollar and Gatti, 1999). The primary school enrolment for girls stands at 60 percent as compared to 84 percent for boys ??UNESCO, 2005 and2006). The secondary school enrolment ratio is even more discouraging, 32 percent for females and 46 percent males. Regular school attendance for female students is estimated at 41 percent while that for male students is 50 percent. The Population Census of (1998) shows, the overall literacy rate in Pakistan was 45 percent. The number of literate females increased from 0.8 million in 1961 to 11.4 million in 1998 -97. The growth rate for male's literacy was 5.1 percent per annum. It may be noted that the overall literacy rate in Pakistan is lower when compared to other countries in the region (El-Gibaly, 2002). The reason for this diversity in the education of male and female is the cultural setup which

promotes male education on priority (Gaskell et. al, 2004). Besides, in the rural areas, the situation is more miserable for female as schools are in far flung areas (Women in Pakistan, 2000). The nature of constraints to women education differ from culture to culture and society to society (Gulati, 2006) and to Mishra (2005) there is no acceptable excuse for denying female education opportunities and to develop her potential. Similarly, gender equality does not necessarily mean equal numbers of men and women or girls and boys in all activities, nor does it mean treating them in the same way (Foley, 1995) while the same refers to equal opportunity for both male and female to lead equally and fulfill their needs (Forbes, 2000) and in general context gender equality to Khalid & Mujahid (2002:10) include education for all which is the source for women economic, political and social liberation (Haq, 2000).

Studies show that schools, teachers and text book in the education system also produced discriminatory characters at the end (Kabeer, 2005), the larger masses (Khan, 2005). Parents usually bear the costs for books, clothing, and even spent for other minor activities of the children, where the children are also not available for household chores and wage labor (Khalid, 1996). Girls perform more chores at home than boys, thus their educational opportunity is comparatively less than boy (Latif, 2007). Another constraining factor is the perception that the investment in educating a girl will not benefit her parents once the girl gets married (Latif, 2009) is prevalent in the social structure of the country therefore parents are often reluctant to allow their daughters to be sent to schools (Haq, 2000), and their isolation is a culturally approved pattern (King and Hill, 1993).

The social and cultural context of Pakistani society is predominantly patriarchic and men and female are conceptually divided into two separate worlds that are masculine and feminine (King, 1990), and thus divides the role of both male and female into productive and reproductive domains (Naz et. al, 2011). Further, the domestic sphere is woman's legitimate ideological and physical space, while a man dominates the world outside the home. The false ideological demarcation between public and private, inside and outside worlds is maintained through the notion of honor and institution of purdah in Pakistan (Naz, 2011). Since the notion of male honor and izzat (honor) is linked with women's sexual behavior, their sexuality is considered a potential threat to the honor of the family. Besides, the traditional values, i.e. the ideology of purdah (veil), negative social biases, cultural practices, concept of honor are linked with women's sexuality (Qureshi and Rarieya, 2007). Restrictions on women's mobility, strict custom and traditions, conservatism, misinterpretation of religious values and hold of patriarchic values becomes the basis for gender discrimination and disparities in most of the spheres of life particularly in education (Women in Pakistan Report, 2000). Further, low school enrolment and patriarchal social structure along with intensive poverty affecting women's education to a major extent as argued by Khan and Ali (2005), Latif (2009) and Robison-Pant (2004). Thus the above discussion highlighted that Pakhtun social structure is male dominated and the traditional values are highly prevalent along with religious misperception which is leading towards women's educational disempowerment.

## 2 II.

### 3 Statement of the Problem

This study analyzes Pakhtun social structure and its impacts on women education in District Dir lower with particular emphasis on social, cultural, economic, political and religious aspects. Previous studies show that patriarchic social structure, centuries old customs and traditions, and observance of Purdah negatively influence women's education (Naz, 2011). The sociopolitical context have been dominated by male oriented values and the role of masculinity is hindering women's empowerment as Qureshi and Rarieya, (2007) illuminates that Pakistan in general and Pakhtun society in particular women is laying at pathetic condition regarding their education in comparison to male as stated in Women in Pakistan (2000) where the status of male and female in the educational sector is not homogenous and diversity exists not only on the regional level but also at the national level. Similarly, the preference for sons is one of the reasons to mobilize most of the household resources in their favor and hence they are given better education and are equipped with skills to compete for gaining resources in public domain. However, female members as compare to male are imparted domestic skills, i.e., to be good mothers and wives etc. In this connection Pande and Astone (2001) expresses that parents prefer to invest more over males' educations as their old age social security is attached with better economic ability of their sons because sons in a traditional society usually shoulder the economic responsibility of the family. Similarly, women have very limited access to education, health, recreation, and other basic facilities of life and thus become dependent for ever (Rafiq, 2000; Mehta, 2005). This not only contributes in women subordination rather it devalues her status in the larger social context and increase women's illiteracy (Sattar et.al, 2000) and further to Gaskell et. al (2004) the lower economic conditions of people also lead to resist women's education because it is difficult for the parents to afford the educational expenses of both male and female.

## 4 III.

Objectives of the Study 1. To identify socio-economic and physical constraints to women's education 2. To investigate the religious and political barriers in the way of women's education IV.

Hypotheses of the Study 1. Socio-economic and physical impediments have close association with women's education. 2. Religious and political obstacles affect women's education.

## 5 Methodology of the Study

This study was undertaken in Tehsil Adenzai of District Dir lower focusing on eight union councils. The total population of mentioned union councils is 156641 (DSR, 2011) in which data was collected using interview schedule and stratified random sampling technique (proportionate method) from 323 educated respondents (both male and female) selected from 1356 target population.

## 6 Study Model

The theoretical discussion elucidate that sociocultural constraints are prevalent including the system of patriarchy, centuries old customs and traditions, feudalism, prevailing system of Purdah gender bias social structure, Pakhtun codes and male control over decision making process which directly influence women's education. In addition the socio-economic impediment consists of poverty, unemployment, extravagances and low income, limited means of livelihood, unpaid labor, female restricted mobility and lack of infrastructure facilities such as transport, communication system, lack of female schools, lack of female teachers, lack of higher education for female and other school related facilities has an adverse impacts on women' education. The modular form of the study is given as under:

## 7 Results and Discussions

The results of the field data has been analyzed with the help of statically derived tables along-with their observation and percentages. Besides, theoretically discussion on the field data has been made with statistical co-relations and statistical test to determine the validity of the given hypothesis.

## 8 VIII.

## 9 Socio-Cultural Constraints

The statistical analysis highlights that majority of the respondents are in favor of patriarchy, centuries old custom and traditions are the sources of making women's inferior and subordinate in deprivation of their basic right of education. Similarly Pakhtun codes and female domestic involvement are also favor by majority of the respondents as the causes of female illiteracy while a portion of the field data suggest that the prevailing Purdah system and the feudalistic way of demonstrating education to female contribute to some extent in women's illiteracy. The hypothetical statement has been judged with the numerical findings and statistical test i.e. chi-square test and correlation which signifies a strong relationship between the socio-cultural factors and women's literacy in the area. The value of chi-square test is  $P=.000^{**} < .05$ , with the Chi-square value  $2 = 3.623$  and the degree of freedom value D.f. =7, shows highly significant association among the independent and dependant variable. Further the correlation technique validate the result in a manner that (  $^{**}$  Correlation is highly significant at the 0.01 level (2tailed),  $r(323) = .0956$ ;  $p < .01$ .  $r^2 = 0.932$ , since 87% of the variance is shared, the association is obviously a strong one), which conclude that cultural obstacles is a threat to women education.

## 10 IX. Physical and Economic Constraints

The role of physical and economic facilitation is playing a dominant role in the dissemination of education to both male and female. The field information explicitly demonstrate that means of livelihood and utilization of resources and family income is used for imparting male education in the area. Similarly, a remarkable portion of the population support technical education and income generating resources for male strata of the population. Besides, the majority of population support that due to lack of infrastructural facilities, schools, transportation and high expenses over education family support is meager for female education (see table-II) ( $P=.000^{**} < .05$  there is only significance relationship between physical, economic constraint and women education, ( $2 = 4.531$ , D.f. =7)

The statistical analysis in the form of chi-square test express as ( $P=.000^{**} < .05$ , with the Chi-square value  $2 = 4.531$  and the degree of freedom value D.f. =7), the relationship of dependant and independent variables is highly significant that validates the proposed hypothesis. Further the correlation analysis authenticate the results in the context of economic obstacles to women education describes as (  $^{**}$  Correlation is only significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed),  $r(323) = .915$ ;  $p < .01$ .  $r^2 = 0.84$ , since 84% of the variance is shared, the

## 11 Religious Impediments

The information in regard of religious constraints obtained from primary data argues that there is a complete misperception regarding women's education in Pakhtun society. Culturally, majority of the respondents interpret the religious values against women's education. Similarly, a greater number of respondents linked women deprived position in education with strict customs, traditions, and other such values. Besides, a major chunk of the population direct the religious sermon and speeches against female education while the role of ignorant and

untrained religious scholars is also to some extent dominant which causes women's deprivation in education (see Table-III). ( $P=.000^{**}<.05$  there is significance relationship between religious constraint and women education,  $2 = 5.871$ , D.f. =7 )

In relation to the above facts the application of chi-square test and correlation techniques validate the hypothetical statement and demonstrates that there is highly significant relationship among religious constraints and women education which is statically coded as ( $p=.000^{**}<.05$ ,  $2 = 2$ , D.f. =7). The correlation further validate the alliance of religious impediments and women's education in compile numerical form as ( \* Correlation is only significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed),  $r(323) = .862$ ;  $p<.01$ .  $r^2 = 0.71$ , since 77% of the variance is shared, the association is noticeably a strong one). Correlation ( \* Correlation is only significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed),  $r(323) = .862^{*}$ ;  $p<.01$ .  $r^2 = 0.74$ ) (Since 74% of the variance is shared, the association is obviously a strong one) XI.

## 12 Political Obstacles

The political structure is mainly headed by a patriarch or male at the local, regional and national level in the area under discussion. The policy which recommends for improvement in women's education as per the collected information is not favoring women's education. Similarly, the area under study is ruled by traditionalism, patriarchy and male dominated values

## 13 XII. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study palpably concludes that the custom of patriarchy and male dominance is a deeply rooted phenomenon in the research area that is impeding women's education. Besides, the male dominated social structure treat women as they want, they are only engaged with house hold chores and can not go outside of their home as it was thought against the women honor. The traditional, religious and cultural values or Pakhtun codes define the way of life and the role of male and female and thus the dominant male perspective is the outcome of such mind set.

Apart from socio-cultural constraints there are also economic constraints such as women's economic dependency; women are economically dependent on male members of society they have no share in the economic spheres of life which is earned by male member of society and further decreases the status of women in regard of education. Similarly, the prevailing poverty, low monthly income of family and preferences to male member to education for gaining further benefits are regarded as the most triggering factors contributing in women's deprivation. In addition, the political structure, policy making and governmental role is weaker in term of women's educational empowerment which makes them dependent over male.

The study recommends that the government should invest more in girl's education in order to promote women status in Pakhtun society. Similarly, awareness through educational seminars, campaign regarding "education for all" in light with the teaching of Islam and relevant to the cultural traditions of the area should be propagated properly so that the mental horizon of the common people become widen for acceptance of women's education. Besides, the government should adopt gendered balanced policy in education and scholarships or rewards scheme for encouragement of vulnerable strata of the community for their encouragement.

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Figure 1:

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Socio-Economic and Physical constraints	Pakhtun social structure Political and religious constraints Women's Illiteracy	
Socio-Economic and Physical reforms	Political and religious reforms	( D D D D )
	Women's Educational Empowerment	

[Note: E(\*\*Correlation is highly significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed),  $r(323) = 0.932^{**}$ ;  $p < .01$ .  $r^2 = 0.87$ ) (Since 86% of the variance is shared, the association is obviously a strong one)]

Figure 2: Table 1 :

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Figure 3: Table 2 :

3

Figure 4: Table 3 :

Political Constraints to Women's Education		Frequency	Percent
Lack of governmental interest		53	16.4
No political intrusion		77	23.8
Male dominated policies		72	22.3
Lack of women political participation		72	22.3
Year	Vested interest group	49	15.2
Total		323	100.0
(P=.001 Women Education		Political	
		Obsta-	
		cles	
Women Education		Pearson Cor-	1
		relation	.897 *
		Sig. (2-	.080
		tailed)	
		N	323
Political Obstacles		Pearson Cor-	.897
		relation	*
		Sig. (2-	.080
		tailed) N	323
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[Note: \* 2. Arif, G.M., Saqib, U.S., and G.M. Zahid. (1999), "Poverty, Gender, and Primary School Enrolment in Pakistan", *The Pakistan Development Review*, Volume. 38. No.4, pp. 979-992.]

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