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Men's Adamancy vs. Women's Fidelity; An Anthropological Analysis of Men's Perception Regarding Women's Empowerment in Pakhtun Society

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Abstract - The current study is an anthropological analysis of men's perception towards women's empowerment based on quantitative and qualitative approach. Chakdara town of District Dir (Lower), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan was ethnographically selected and a survey of 4564 households has been analyzed which was conducted during the PhD field study in 2008, where data was collected through semi-structured interview schedule from a total of 100 respondents including religious scholars, educated males and females. Besides, the researchers have enumerated the issue under the extensive study pertaining relevant communal and global literature dealing with Pakhtun culture with a theoretical framework including Gender and Development Model and Women Empowerment Forum. The study highlights the negative perception of men among Pakhtun as a major obstacle in women's empowerment.

Keywords : perception, empowerment, patriarchy, pakhtunwali, gender, obstacles.

1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Since, the emergence of human species on this universe, their lives and existence are being a gendered classified observations and studies (Naz and Rehman, 2011). Biological factors play a vital role in division of humanity into two categories, e.g. male and female; however, it is social experience, cultural conditioning, and socialization process, which assigns certain tasks to male and female (Goldberg, 1974, Naz, 2011). This disparity between male and female is both biological and learned while it is not restricted to a single culture or area (Chaudhiy and Nosheen, 2009). Division of labor is highly dominated by cultural environment rather than biological factors because there is no such

Similarly, the perception and behavioral pattern of male and female has a varying nature depending upon socio- historical evidence, which illuminates that every culture has similar division of labor (McEwan, 2003; Naz, et al, 2012). cultural environment (CGE, 2000). Studies show that cultural conditioning plays a dominant role in defining social roles of male and female (Mead, 1930). Similarly, male dominance in their perception has also been supported by anthropologists and link it to universal condition (Harris, 1977), while some studies support the subordination of female as hidden in the social fabric (Goldberg, 1974; Kongolo and Bamgose, 2002). However, both of the arguments have been supported by evidences from the history and what the case maybe, discrimination in human practices and treatment of female exists and mostly in developing countries, women suffer a lot, both at the domestic and private spheres of life (Khan, 2011, and Khan and Naz, 2012).

Similarly, if we peep into research studies conducted on gender based differences, the perception of male counterpart is playing a dominant role where specifically the negative male perception is regarded as the most damaging element in women's empowerment (Longwe, 2000, Jiyane and Mostert, 2008; Naz, 2011 and Daraz, 2012). There is an evident relationship between males' perception and women's empowerment in all societies and the empowerment of women has been recognized as basic human right (Al-Lamky, 2004). Research of the scholars (Kabeer, 1999; Fonjong, 2001; Bartlett, 2008) strongly support the participation of both male and female in the development process and it is believed that males' positive perception towards women's participation at the grass-root level paints a true picture of the empowerment. In this regard Oakley (1991) adds weight to the argument and asserts that participation and positive attitude can assist in provision of support to the disadvantaged people and enhance their development. Similarly, Fonjong (2001) believes that participation and attitudinal acceptance of male and female are the pre-requisites for genuine empowerment in general as well as women in particular. In addition, scholars argue that

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empowerment is a multidimensional and complex process based upon both the physical and psychological acceptance of the community members including both male and female (Kabeer, 1999; Malhotra, Schuler and Boender, 2002; Mosedale, 2005).

The perception and psychological pathway of the empowerment according to Kabeer (1999) is the expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them. Moreover, Mosedale (2005) stresses that women's empowerment redefines and extends what is possible for them to be, however in most of the situations, they have been restricted through negative perceptions by their male counterparts (Naz, 2011). At the global level in general and in most of the developing countries in particular, there is disparity between the status of male and female which is attributed to the negative perception of men (Khan and Naz, 2011). The decision making process and the opportunity to determine the course of their destiny on issues pertaining their employment, health, education, politics and other related aspects of their development are obstructed by the system of patriarchy, male dominance and conservative attitudes of the people (Naz and Rahman, 2011; Naz et al, 2012), which determines the level of women's empowerment.

The discussion made so far leads to an argument that male perception is one of the major driving forces in providing a road map to the empowerment process in most of third world or countries having male dominance and patriarchic social structure governed by traditionalism and conservative ideologies. The current study is an attempt to analyze and evaluate the socio-cultural, political and economic dimensions of women's empowerment with the stance that how it is obliterated by the perceptions of male strata. In the current study, women's discriminated positions have been focused in relations to majority of male perception that how they view and analyze the position of women with regard to their overall empowerment and analyses of the various aspects are judged with all the possible factors including traditions, male dominance, religious norms and values, political power structure and even with the liberal and conservative strata of the people.

II. THE ARGUMENT

Perception in psychological literature refers to the organization, identification and interpretation of sensory information in order to represent and understand the environment. However, we can mold and divert the same for male and female as they interpret and respond to one another in a different way. Factors, including both biological and social, play a dominant role in shaping the perceptions of both male and female, but the socio-cultural conditions as argued

by Goldberg (1974) are playing a vital role in shaping gender perception. The current research is an attempt to explore the negative perception of male regarding women's empowerment in *Pakhtun* society. However, the social structure of *Pakhtun* society is patriarchic where women mostly reside within ideological domain of four walls, which is said to be her religious as well as moral space (Naz and Rahman, 2011).

There are two types of perceptions regarding women's empowerment found in research area, i.e. old traditional approach (which is an outcome of long historic process and cultural conditioning) that restricts female only to domestic life and modern one (which is an outcome of social change and modernization) that wants to bring balance between male and female at both domestic and public levels (Naz, 2011). The phenomenon of empowerment means to provide opportunity of decision-making to women, to work for their improvement and sustenance, however, it has differently been perceived by local people. Usually male members do not talk about issues and problems of women in public and they mostly bury serious issues, i.e. honor killing and other pre-marital relations under carpet. Issues of women's education remain controversial and different attitudes towards its attainment are adopted. In addition, caste and ethnic differences also shape the perception of people in respect to their ethnic affiliations.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To explore the males' perception towards women's educational empowerment
- To pinpoint people's perception regarding women's economic empowerment
- To analyze males' perception regarding women's political empowerment

IV. ASSUMPTION OF THE STUDY

Women's educational, economic and political empowerment is directly associated with males' perception among Pakhtuns

V. METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The current study is a blend of quantitative and qualitative approach towards the events and issues related to males' perception regarding women's empowerment in different spheres of life including education, economy and politics. With respect to the mentioned purpose; the researchers have ethnographically selected *Chakdara* town of District Dir (Lower), *Khyber Pakhtunkhwa*, Pakistan as a focus of research. In this connection, a survey of 4564 households has been analyzed which was conducted during the PhD field study in 2008, where data was

collected through semi-structured interview schedule from a total of 100 respondents including religious scholars, educated males and females (having qualification up-to graduation and above) and *Jirga* members of the community. Besides, the researchers have enumerated the issue under the extensive study pertaining relevant communal and global literature dealing with *Pakhtun* culture.

The current study has been framed under two developmental models i.e. Gender and Development model and Women Empowerment Forum (WEE, 2005; Oberhauser, and Pratt, 2004). Similarly theoretical support has been obtained from studies and scholarships in the field i.e. Mathaulula (2008), Parpart, et al, (2000:52), Boserup (1970), Alinsky's (1971) which deal with the idea of women's power, social relations, power relations, economic and political development (UNICEF, 1994; Saiyid, 2001). Besides, the emergence of the phrase 'women in development (WID)', dependency Marxists stances of Frank (1969, 1979) and Amin (1974) provide a direction to the current study in terms of exploitation of women while the WAD (Women and Development) move the matrix towards meeting the challenges of patriarchic world for women's social integration (Parpart, 1989; Zaman, 2000). However, the study has been finally supported by the GAD as adopted by Moser (1989) who focuses on either of the needs of men and women and by Molyneux (1985) and Haq (2000) for both practical and strategic gender needs. In order to change women's status, the need is to change women's position and that requires to address the way gender determine power, status, and control over all the resources.

VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results and discussion of the study have been made under various headings as suitable and

VII. PERCEPTION REGARDING WOMEN'S EDUCATIONAL EMPOWERMENT

Perception Regarding Educational Empowerment	Level of Agreement		N=100 Total
	Disagree	Agree	
Perception about Women's enrollment	15%	85%	100%
Availability of institution	20%	80%	100%
Women's education is considered as social stigma	08%	92%	100%
Source of liberalism	14%	86%	100%
Negative effects on prevailing Purdah system	19%	81%	100%
Creation of liberal and secular ideas	10%	90%	100%
Chi-square = 5.324 Significance = 0.000**	Lambda = 0.35		Gamma = 0.030

($P=.000^{**} < .05$ there is highly significance relationship between perception and women's educational empowerment, ($\chi^2 = 5.324$, D.f=7)

In addition, the chi-square test is applied to test the proposed hypothetical statement, the numerical value of the mentioned test equate ($P=.000^{**} < .05$ there is highly significant relationship between people perception and women's educational empowerment, $\chi^2 = 5.324$, D.f=7). The value of chi-square test expresses

inaccordance to the objectives and theoretical framework of the study.

a) Perception Regarding Women's Educational Empowerment

The field information about women's educational empowerment reflects very pathetic condition in the research. The overall scenario regarding female enrollment is discouraging in the area as the collected information depicts. There are various kinds of perceptions associated with female education in the area that reflect the mindset and level of understanding of local people. The data shows that a major chunk of males perceive that formal education for female is against the cultural traditions where they favor domestic and informal religious education for women. They argue that female education negatively affects cultural norms and traditional set-up and education (particularly school education) to them is a source of independence and liberalism, which brings change in role of women, i.e. in domestic domain. In this connection, women shall remain inside home (*Pa Kore Ke*) as wife (*Khaza*), sister (*Khore*) and mother (*More*) because women's mobility for educational purposes is regarded as a social stigma. In addition, information reflects that it brings changes in the prevailing *Purdah* system, which then becomes source for women's liberation. Resultantly, women's education is perceived as a source of modernity, which in turn brings liberal and secular ideas to community while such types of ideas are not good for females and are a threat to family's honor.

highly significant association and relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Further, the Lambda and Gamma authenticates and proves the proposed hypothesis at the confidence interval of ($\alpha=.05$).

Correlation

		Educational Empowerment	People Perception
Educational Empowerment	Pearson Correlation	1	0.985**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	100	100
People Perception	Pearson Correlation	.985**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	100	100

***Correlation is highly significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed), $r(100) = 0.985^{**}$; $p < .01$. $r^2 = 0.97$ (Since 97% of the variance is shared, the association is obviously a strong one)*

The correlation further authenticates the results in manner (**Correlation is highly significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed), $r(100) = 0.985^{**}$; $p < .01$. $r^2 = 0.97$, since 97% of the variance is shared, the association is obviously a strong one.

b) Perception about Women's Employment and Income

Male among Pakhtuns are the ultimate earners who dominate most of income-generating activities and at times, they negatively perceive women's income and employment. The ratio of women's employment in formal sector is negligible; however, females perform minor jobs related to knitting, embroidery, tailoring and other activities to earn for their survival.

Pakhtuns as the rigid and self centered segment strongly condemn women's participation in

economic activities and refer it to as a stigmatizing act. Women's mobility for the sack of earning is extremely abhorred and dealt negatively. The overall males' perception among Pakhtuns reflects that women's employed status is abominable that is perceived as a threat to the communal solidarity and social structure. Furthermore, the centuries old customs and traditions of Pakhtun social organization declare that women's economic involvement is the violation of cultural norms and values that are insatiable to be tolerated. The empirical information patently show that almost all the Pakhtuns have a firm belief that the economy, income generation and earning for the survival and support of family is the task of males while female must live inside the four walls and should take care of the household activities such as cooking, washing, knitting and caring of the children.

VIII. PERCEPTION REGARDING WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Perception Regarding Women's Economic Empowerment	Level of Agreement		N=100 Total
	Disagree	Agree	
Stigmatizing family's honor	22%	78%	100%
Women's involvement in economic activities	12%	82%	100%
Women's employed status	15%	85%	100%
Women's domestic involvement	09%	91%	100%
Women's employment is against cultural norms	11%	89%	100%
Economy is male responsibility	21%	79%	100%
Chi-square = 5.786	Significance = 0.000** Lambda = 0.24		Gamma = 0.020

*($P = .000^{**} < .05$ there is highly significance relationship between people perception and women's economic empowerment, ($\chi^2 = 5.786$, D.f=07)*

Further, The Bivariate is used with the help of chi-square test in order to test the hypothesis. The values of chi-square test ($P = .000^{**} < .05$ there is highly significant relationship between people perception and women's economic empowerment, ($\chi^2 = 5.786$,

D.f=07) at the confidence interval of ($\alpha = .05$) shows that there is strong association and correlation between the perception of people and women's economic empowerment.

Correlation

		Economic Empowerment	People Perception
Economic Empowerment	Pearson Correlation	1	0.945**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	100	100
People Perception	Pearson Correlation	.945**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	100	100

*(**Correlation is highly significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed), $r(100) = 0.945^{**}$; $p < .01$. $r^2 = 0.89$ (Since 89% of the variance is shared, the association is obviously a strong one)*

The correlation further validates the results as (**Correlation is highly significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed), $r(100) = 0.945^{**}$; $p < .01$. $r^2 = 0.89$, since 89% of the variance is shared, the association is obviously a strong one).

a) Perception about Political Empowerment

On political level, people are generally ignorant having no such political awareness that lead their perception towards negativity in terms of women's politics. The political set-up, both formal and informal is male dominated and they have hold over both local and district political system. Traditionally, they perceive political system as one of important kind of rival groups system, i.e. they are *Tarboors* (agnatic rivals) to one another where women's participation in this regard intensify the familial rivalries.

Women's politics in the area is related to reproduction of liberalism among the masses that

according to the Pakhtun codes is blasphemous for communal integrity. In addition, political hold is considered as a source of hegemonic power generation, which in turn is the task of men among Pakhtuns. Information of research shows that there are also negative repercussions of males and majority of males perceive political participation of women as against *Pakhtun* code of life and religious teachings. Traditions of area restrict women's mobility and do not support female politics. *Pakhtunwali* overshadows women lives and only allow them to tackle and shoulder responsibilities of domestic domain. They perceive that women involvement will disturb domestic life, familial and personal identity of women. Not only cultural values, but most of males perceive that women have no such provision of politics in Islam. In this regard, the real place of women is home (*Kore*) and they must reside there till end of their life (*Marg*).

IX. PERCEPTION REGARDING WOMEN'S POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT

Cultural Constraints	Level of Agreement		N=100
	Disagree	Agree	Total
Politically ignorant	23%	77%	100%
Politics is male dominated	14%	86%	100%
Women's politics create familial rivalry	19%	81%	100%
Politics reproduce liberalism	20%	80%	100%
Politics generate hegemonic power	16%	84%	100%
Women's politics is against traditions and religion	10%	90%	100%
Women's politics disturbs domestic domain	11%	89%	100%
Chi-square= 2.34, Significance=.000**	Lambda= .026		Gamma=.1

($P = .000^{**} < .05$ there is highly significance relationship people perception and women's political empowerment, ($\chi^2 = 2.34$, D.f. = 7)

With respect to the mentioned observations and analysis of different variables in different tables along-with the strong support of respondents and the application of Chi Square test authenticate the proposed hypothesis. The results of the applied test palpably show that the independent variables are in a strong

connection and association with dependant variable. The value of chi-square test is ($P = .000^{**} < .05$, with the Chi-square value $\chi^2 = 2.34$ and the degree of freedom value D.f. = 7, Lambda, .026; Gamma, .011) shows highly significant association among the independent and dependant variable.

		Political Empowerment	People Perception
Political Empowerment	Pearson Correlation	1	0.932**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	100	100
People Perception	Pearson Correlation	.0932**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	100	100

(**Correlation is highly significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), $r(100) = 0.932^{**}$; $p < .01$. $r^2 = 0.87$) (Since 86% of the variance is shared, the association is obviously a strong one)

Further the correlation technique validates the result in a manner that (**Correlation is highly significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), $r(100) = 0.0956$; $p < .01$. $r^2 = 0.932$, since 87% of the variance is shared, the association is obviously a strong one), which conclude that people in the area have negative perception regarding women's political empowerment.

X. CONCLUSION

In order to conclude the research, the ethnographic details about women's empowerment and male perception are very much obvious and clear from discussion that females among Pakhtuns have no such sources for empowerment in respect of education,

employment, economy and politics. They have been deprived of their basic and fundamental rights that in collaboration with the traditional structure suppress their empowerment. Besides, local people perceive women's empowerment as an evil and a kind of liberalism and that will disturb not only familial life but in large would destroy the social structure of the area. However, few of the males perceive women's education and political empowerment as compulsory for women's self empowerment, decision-making and other familial issues but there is no such overt discussion and these voices are curbed under *Pakhtunwali*, traditionalism and religious misperception. Thus, it is crucial that women as the fundamental members of community afford the chance to make inputs regarding their real needs. Failure to involve women in issues of their empowerment impacts negatively on their advancement and also retards the growth of the communities they reside in. Women's empowerment in this regard is primarily apprehended through the negative perception of their males' counterparts towards their educational, economic and political stability.

XI. RECOMMENDATIONS

This research study highlights the fact that children, youth, women, men and community leaders have considerable knowledge on women's empowerment issues. Such knowledge must be properly harnessed and deployed to develop interventions that address women's empowerment issues. The empirical findings of the research demonstrates that creating platforms where children, youth, men, women and leaders collectively deliberate on societal problems could lead to better and more comprehensive understanding. Such understanding might lead to improved social cohesion which is a fundamental primer and determinant of sustainable community development. This confirms the need for policy makers to meaningfully engage and respect the views of a broader range of community members on issues that affect their livelihoods.

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