

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL BARRIER TO FEMALE EDUCATION IN BALUCHISTAN; AN ASSESSMENT STUDY WITH FOCUS ON DISTRICT PISHIN

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ABSTRACT

Aristotle said “The educated differs from the uneducated as much as the living differs from the dead.” If we want to understand and live life we need to seek education. Education in its general sense is a form of [learning](#) in which the [knowledge](#), [skills](#), and [habits](#) of a group of people are transferred from one generation to the next through teaching, training or research. Female education is very important in changing character, mind and personality. Female education and gender equality are two of the major aspects without succeed we can’t achieve intended progress. In Pakistan education as a right is denied to many children, the state of literacy, particularly of females is dismal in its most deprived province, Baluchistan with as much as 70% girls dropped out of school. Female literacy in Baluchistan is one of the lowest in the world. Most girls are not allowed to acquire education. Baluchistan literacy rate is 37%, which is much below that of the other three provinces of Pakistan, as well as its national average of 53%. The women in Baluchistan have no access to

education, due to cultural barriers and lack of resources as well. Cultural barriers to female education in Baluchistan are a major issue. Women in Baluchistan have no expectation and dreams as there are very rare opportunities and many cultural barriers for them.

Key Words: Cultural barriers, Social barriers, Female Education, Women education, Girls education

INTRODUCTION

This paper intends to reveal the social and cultural barriers to female education in Baluchistan. Aristotle said “The educated differs from the uneducated as much as the living differs from the dead.” If we want to understand and live life we need to seek education. It is also rightly said that education is the cheapest defense of a nation but Pakistan seems to be extremely weak even in that. The government authorities and the whole society need to realize that education is a strong power of nation that can not only solve incapacity issues but also eradicate social evils from society and is the major cause of revolution through evolution. (Reggie, 2015)

Education in its general sense is a form of [learning](#) in which the [knowledge](#), [skills](#), and [habits](#) of a group of people are transferred from one generation to the next through teaching, training or research. Education frequently takes place under the guidance of others, but may also be [autodidactic](#) (Dewey, 2008)

Female education is very important in shaping personality, character and mind of an individual. Unfortunately, female education in this part of the world does not receive proper time and resources. Pakistan and its least developed province Baluchistan is no exception. There are certain issues

associated to access, lack of required educational facilities, supportive environment and restrictions imposed by cultural values.

Illiteracy is one of the major problems still prevailing in Pakistan. Pakistan has allocated only 2.3 percent of the budget for education which is 0.3 per cent less than in 1999. Nine percent of government spending is on education, placing Pakistan 113th amongst 120 countries on the education development index (NNI, 2013)

There are numerous issues in the educational field that are yet to be dealt with; such as misuse of educational institutions and the ever-increasing corruption. This has resulted in extremely poor infrastructure, such as ghost schools, insufficient furniture and infrastructure, political pressure, inadequate or no career and moral counseling of children. Millennium Development Goals will not be achieved by 2015 and especially not the important targets on gender and equality that the international community set itself. Crucially, we will fail the millions of girls whose lives are so severely impacted by war and its aftermath (Gaag, 2008). Women's access to services are far behind that of men's whether in education and health. The reasons are lack of infrastructure accessible to women, cultural values that restrict women from going out to seek help, restrictions on mobility etc., and also at the same time dearth of women teachers, women and other women field officers. (Rai, 2007)

Female education and gender equality are two of the major aspects without which any country or nation cannot prosper, succeed or achieve progress, in any walk of life. The educational policies of both India and Sri Lanka introduced gender equality and worked towards female education. As a result of which they are progressively developing and flourishing. Women must be provided with equal opportunities whether occupational or educational. They must be provided opportunities and

equally empowered as men. According to the World Bank Report 2011, a high output is obtained by educating girls in the developing world. It is the best investment of any nation. Therefore, it is very crucial that women be provided education. (Worldbank, 2011). Education is a right denied to many children across Pakistan, but the situation of literacy, particularly of females is gloomy in Baluchistan with as much as 70% girls dropped out of school. The statistics show a dark picture, with less than two percent rural women educated and only 26 percent overall female literacy in the province (SHAH, 2014).

In Pakistan Women and girls are facing problems related to poverty, illiteracy, malnutrition and discrimination. It is well understood that women in the country can't become fully active members of the society without providing gender supportive environments. To realize women's potential in society, initiatives are being taken to reduce gender disparities in all spheres of life. Education is a major force for eliminating gender inequalities in the society, but addressing inequalities in the education system is great challenge (AHMAD, 2008).

Baluchistan is considered to be least developed and masses are considered backward and less civilized. The prevailing situation reveals that lack of access to basic services is a general issue for the whole inhabitants of the province. Yet the fact remains solid that among the entire population, female gender is the most deprived segment of the society. Female literacy in Baluchistan is one of the lowest in the world. Most girls are not allowed to acquire education. Baluchistan literacy rate is 37%, which is much below that of the other three provinces of Pakistan, as well as its national average of 53%. In Baluchistan the literacy rate for women was estimated to be 20%, with only 10% women in the rural areas acquiring education.

(PAKISTAN: Balochistan's girls miss out on education) The current situation now at the end of 2015 is not very much changed.

RATIONAL OF THE STUDY

Women face a wide range of problems in Pakistan, from poverty, illiteracy, diseases, malnutrition, and insecurity to gender discrimination, female infanticide and lack of participation in law or decision-making. GMR (Global Monitoring Report) shows that girls to boys' ratio at primary level are 8:10 respectively. And it is even less at the secondary level. The deteriorating law and order situation of the country further causes adverse effects on the women education programs and pushes the government further away from achieving the EFA goals (Go, 2010). Child-labor, socio-cultural norms, poverty, restrictions, put on women bounding them to stay indoors, shortage of infrastructure at schools, lack of proper female teachers, low budget and fun allocation and shortage of schools are some of the main problems hindering the pathway to educational progress of the country.

Women in Baluchistan have been suffering from various issues in equipping them with quality education. The problems increase and reach up to the high extent in the rural areas of Baluchistan. The literacy rate directly depends on two important factors:

- a) Easy access to facilities
- b) Social motivation

Both these factors are concomitant to each other. Facilities generate motivation, and motivation creates the atmosphere to develop facilities (Abbasi, 1990). The population of Baluchistan is poor both in facilities and motivation in terms of women education.

In Baluchistan Men are shown as a symbol of power, strength and bravery. They are portrayed as the skillful and dominating member of society,

while women are depicted as weak, timid, home-confined, submissive, and less intelligent ones. In this way, and many more, they are discouraged, humiliated and pressurized to leave education and that it is not meant for them. Women are constantly deprived of their rights to be educated due to various reasons e.g. the government is reluctant to oppose the religious extremists and the male-dominated system has suppressed women's rights.

In rural Baluchistan around 90% of girls are deprived of schooling, said rights activist, educationist and veteran politician. (Butt, 2011). The women in Baluchistan have no access to education, due to cultural barriers and lack of resources as well. Cultural barriers to female education in Baluchistan are a major issue. Sometimes they are forced to stay home rather than encouraged to compete with men out in the world. Women in Baluchistan have no expectation and dreams as there are very rare opportunities and many cultural barriers for them.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

To highlight the social and cultural barrier to women education in Baluchistan.

To propose suggestions for the promotion of female education in Baluchistan.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The main purpose of this study is to highlight the social and cultural barriers to Women in Education in Baluchistan.

Type of Research

Qualitative research approach has been adopted for the study. No such research has ever been conducted before to overcome the issue in the area. The research, no doubt, highlighted the nature and intensity of the problems for the first time.

Universe

District Pishin is the geographical universe of the present study. However from among the entire district, three Union Councils from three Tehsils were selected for the primary data.

Tools for Data collection

Key informant Interviews and focus group discussions were used as tools for primary data collection.

The secondary data for the study was focused on desk review from grey literature and peer reviewed literature.

Sample size

Below tabulated details of sample size for primary data

Tools	Key Stakeholders of District Education Department		Community Representatives		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Key informant interview	05	05	06	06	11	11
Focus group discussion	1	1	3	3	4	4

After the data collection, the data was analyzed using the qualitative tools so that the appropriate result could be drawn about social and cultural barrier to women education in Baluchistan.

Limitations of the Study

Any financial support was not available for the study, as the researcher was to travel all over the district in order to get the data, so there was greater need of the financial resources so that more geographical areas of the province could be focused.

Conducting FGDs and key informant interviews with female was as other constraint as social and cultural values of the areas are against meeting female for taking information/opinions.

SUGGESTIONS

Based on findings of the study combined with review of relevant literature and intellectual discourses with stakeholders the following suggestions can be made.

This situation needs to be changed while adopting the following suggestions.

Government and actors of civil society organizations must first of all address the issue of mass poverty through pragmatic efforts such as micro credit schemes. Initiatives must be taken to improve the already available means of livelihoods such as agriculture and livestock production. Improved and sustained means of livelihood would definitely help in increasing ration of education, particularly of female.

Efforts need to be made to bring about changes into mindset of men about importance of female education for themselves and their upcoming generation. Cultural trait such as the tradition of polygamy, vulgarity, early and forced marriages must be stopped altogether by the young educated class and well-off segment of population.

Community elders should be made aware to come forward and facilitate efforts of female education. Jirga may be called to achieve participation and consent of all tribal leaders in promoting female education efforts.

Educated women should take a lead initiative to become a role model at community level by taking parts in efforts of female education. This would definitely help promote female education, as it is said and believed that “seeing is believing”. We male counterpart will see the contribution of educated women in their communal affairs, they will become convinced to strive for improved rate of female education.

In today’s globalized world, media and information technology has a major role to play. Writers and intelligentsia must write on need and significance of female education. On electronic media intellectual debate and discourses need to be arranged to change mindset and prevailing situation of low female education.

Actors of civil society organization must come forward and join hands to advocate the case, lobby around the issue to influence view / opinion makers, law makers and policy / decision makers. Such actions could develop and implement programs and projects that can improve female education in the province.

At village level, for achieving active community participation committees such as Parent Teacher School Management Committees PTSMCs need to be formed. Such committees should be given adequate exposure visits and excursion tours to access the situation of improved female education and adopt those mechanisms in their respective villages and areas.

Equally important is to bring the issue into political arena. In this regard political parties need to be analyzed about their due role on female education for making it part of their constitutions and election manifesto.

Political parties can take the issue to levels of policy and decision making to make the environment women and female education supporting.

Parents, particularly educated mothers should play their due role by negotiating and dealing with male counterparts over the issue of female education. The role that an educated mother can play in her girl child education; no one else can play that.

Non-Governmental Organizations should focus more intense social mobilization and launch different awareness campaigns regarding women rights and against gender based violence in the province.

Issues and problems should be addressed with having inside depth about its type, nature, intensity and impact over masses. Research and scientific investigations must be made a prior task for implementation of any program and project.

In order to really work towards female education, and improve its standards, the government of Pakistan must increase funds to be allocated regarding this sector, oppose extremist groups, provide safety to students and provide with financial aid to those students who are in need.

They must also increase awareness among people of women rights and their need to get educated. In this way they can be a part of social, political and economic change in the country, and work towards the nation's success, prosperity and their own too.

DISCUSSION

Despite of many initiative and efforts female education in Pakistan is remained real challenge in Pakistan. Most of the Initiatives launched for the promotion of education have never achieved its desired results, disparities in education especially among women, are very visible. The

government of Pakistan is unable to translate their words into action because of various political, economic, social and cultural barriers.

Broadly speaking, in order to bring about a promising change into current deplorable situation of female education, it is imperative to assess the entire situation in its totality. Mass poverty has a strong link with rigid mindset of male counterpart. Religious leaders and clergymen are influential in areas where poverty exists in its ugliest face. And since majority of population belong to poor segment of society, female education does not receive proper attention of communities and their local leadership. This gives birth to an environment which is biased towards female gender. The disparity is evident not only in the field of female education, but in all spheres of life cycle of a woman. Women have no say in decision making, in resisting the biased decisions of men and all matters of her life. Therefore she is forced to live and obey her male counterpart and his biased treatment.

In Baluchistan great difference in literacy between the urban and rural areas exists. The divides on the basis of gender and area show that a large number of the population has no opportunities for obtaining education hence the process of development is very slow...

The situation of female education in rural areas of the country is very dark and depressing due to many reasons. I.e. poverty, absence of educational institutions, lacking facilities, social and cultural issues. In the rural setups of Baluchistan religious, social and cultural grounds for female education are very rigid. Where female education is strictly prohibited. The misinterpretation of Islam, mindset of male dominant society and lack of attention of government to female education are major causes revealed during the study.

During the collection of primary data many cases came in front of the researcher when girls were interested to go to school but due to social and cultural restriction they could not go to schools.

Baluchistan is lagging behind to provide primary education to its female population. Low enrolment, high dropout indicates that very large number of children is out of school in the province. In Baluchistan the future of many school-going children is at risk due to gender disparity, bad governance and absence of schooling facilities and rigid culture. Baluchistan is a typical tribal society where girls are limited inside the boundary wall and have very rare mobility and access to schools. Education department in the province has been without any specific education policy for years. Due to many reasons absence of rural areas of the province, the issue of female education and gender disparity can be addressed.

Equally important is to discuss non supportive role of Pesh Imam and semi-literate clergymen. Clergymen never support female education while preaching poor communities during their preaching of Islam at any occasions let be Friday prayer or any other religious gatherings. Rather they condemn it while justifying cultural values such as Purdah (veil) and women mobility. As per the literature the situation of female education is very critical in Baluchistan, in Baluchistan the female literacy rate is around 3 percent in some of its districts. To control over society local landlords are opposing the education in the areas. But government is taking a single step to prevent them to do such. Government is not taking steps for the promotion of girls' education in rural areas of Baluchistan.

CONCLUSION

Towards the end of this study, the researcher has come to the conclusion that biased treatment of male counterparts and mass poverty are the two major impediments that hinder the pace of efforts with regard to improved rate of female education. Besides these two major hindrances, there are certain other issues that further contribute towards less proportion of female education. For instance, since majority of the populace of Baluchistan represent poor segment therefore getting education has never been their top priority. Women are considered as only consumers of the available resources, therefore investing on female education is considered a luxurious task, which a poor family cannot simply afford.

Cultural values that have more masculine features have never been supportive to female education by creating a supportive environment, sharing into already shrunk educational facilities and resources.

Lack of supportive environment for female education is prevalent. None of the Government school has any set of community support to monitor school, attendance of teachers and students. That is why the ratio of drop out is never questioned by the parents or community in general. Apart from complete absence of community support there are other social and cultural reasons too. Early marriages, for instance is one reason. Parents prefer to marry their girl at an early age, which in most of cases are economic burden of girls over their poor parents.

In the culture of Baluchistan lot of expectation is made from a boy child, but very limited and strict types of expectation is prevailing from girl child, which in itself stops a girl child to continue her education, adopts any profession and continues comparatively an independent life in the area. Efforts with regard to improve female education if based of well-

coordinated efforts of public, private and civic sector along with the active participation of communities will definitely improve the situation. However, it is more important to address associated issues of lack of interests and awareness and mass poverty among masses with regard to importance of female education.

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