

**SOCIO-CULTURAL PROBLEMS FACED BY FEMALE STUDENTS IN HIGHER
EDUCATION IN KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA**

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ABSTRACT

The present study is survey research mainly focused to test different hypothesis, a series of related past researchers were studied to identify the objectives of the study. Various research questions were formulated to show the relationships between variables of the study. Universe of the present study was two different government universities, namely Bacha Khan University Charsadda and University of Malakand. Self-administered matrix designed questionnaire of three points scales was used for collecting data for the study. Sample random sampling technique was used by the researcher; using proportional allocation technique. Data was collected from 200 respondents through questionnaire. The collected data was presented in two types' first descriptive statistics which contains frequencies, percentage and table and secondly researcher has used Chi Square test in inferential statistics to show the relationship between formulated hypotheses. The collected data was analyzed through SPSS and presented in tabular form. The study reflects the low ratio of female higher education in the area and concludes that women of the area face numerous problems in getting higher education. The study suggested increase in the number of female higher education institutions equipped with required facilities, motivation and mobilization for female higher education, media positive role, religious leaders, restriction on early marriages, freedom of expression and more opportunities of female jobs in order to overcome the issue.

Keywords: Patriarchy, Customs, Conservative Attitudes, Denial, Higher Education

INTRODUCTION

Women are considered inferior at large. The subordination of female is observed in various forms in different societies (Bari, 2005). Women comprise the worlds fifty percent and still they lag far behind men while seeking education (Yasmeen, 2005). It is believed that higher education generate critical thinking and rational approaches in students towards problems of the society. It also enables citizens to be law-abiding and useful to another (UNESCO, 1998). To pursue education at college and degree level is known as higher education (Nath, 2014). The enrolment ratio of women in higher education institutes in Pakistan is very low. Only 5.1 percent of the students aged 17-23 avail the opportunity of reading at universities and women comprise 2.5 percent of it (UNESCO, 2014). In Pakistan, as compared to male members female members do not get access to education not only at higher level but at lower level too. Women are treated as commodity in the villages and underdeveloped areas of Pakistan. They are discriminated at different levels i.e. political, social, economic and domestic. Education is the only tool which can equip women to safeguard their due rights and contribute to society in an efficient way. If female are properly educated alongside men, it can be hoped that other discrimination with female will automatically end. Almost huge proportion of the females with secondary education has very limited access to higher education. Various factors are responsible for female limited access to higher education in the current universe i.e. social, economic, geographic, war against terrorism, '*Pakhtun*' culture and other reasons for their. However, significance of female higher education is never denied in the history. This current study was thus; identify the various problems faced by female students in higher education of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To identify '*Pakhtun*' social structure as a barrier for female in getting higher education
2. To investigate various cultural norms that obstruct female from higher education
3. To analyze the role of family in female higher education

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURES

In Pakistan higher educational institutions faced intricate problems such as rapid expansion in population, private sector cannot participate, lack of resource, lack of experienced man

power, political instability, contradiction in the strategies of various government, wastage of assets, inefficient educational administration system and depressed implementation of programs and policies (Hayes, 1987). After partition of India in 1947, there has only one public university: Punjab university in Lahore and there was no private university at the time. Growth has been witnessed the last three decades but quality of education has never been the theme (Hoodbhoy, 2009). Women literacy ratio in Pakistan was 36 percent which is very low as compared to neighboring countries such as Sri Lanka where women literacy rate was 78 percent and 38 percent in India. Enrolment rate of female students in Pakistan universities is 2.9 percent, because government of Pakistan gives importance to professional, vocational and technical education of women but now day's continuous improvement has been found in women higher educational sector (UNESCO, 2014). Major reasons for low enrolment of students in higher education is lack of progress may lie in the fact that in 2006–07, Pakistan was spending only 2.5 percent of its GDP on education which is considerably below the South Asian regional average and UNESCO's recommendation of 4 percent (Government of Pakistan, 2009).

FEMALE HIGHER EDUCATION IN KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA

Currently in Pakistan 189 universities are functioning. A number of institutions of higher learning are active in Pakistan but the higher education commission recognizes 179 institutions. Total 33 universities are functioning in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. According to PSLM report 2010-11, the literacy rate for men is 65 percent and 28 percent for women in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. According to fresh data, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa literacy rate is 50 percent (Rehman, Jingdong & Hussain, 2015). Male literacy ratio is 68 percent and female literacy rate is 32 percent, which shows that almost two out of three women are deprived from getting education (National Commission for Human Development Ministry of Professional & Technical Trainings, 2012).

Since 1972 to 1998, variation exists in literacy ratio of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was 15.50 percent and 35.40 percent, while in 2012, 2013 and 2014, it was 60 percent, 52 percent and 53 percent respectively. In the year 2012, highest ratio of literacy was recorded 60 percent. Due to security threats, families always concerned about sending their children to school (Government of Pakistan, 2006). Despite providing free textbooks and monthly stipend to the students of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 0.8 million students get benefits but majority of the

students remain absent from the educational institutions daily. It means that 21 percent of the total students in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa remain absent (Dawn, 2015).

WORLDWIDE CHALLENGES FACED BY FEMALE STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

In real sense democracy means full participation of both genders in entire field of life. Similarly a country can never become real democratic when its half population is excluded from all sectors (IDEA, 2004). Similarly, Bano (2009) demonstrates that all over the world socio-economic challenges are a main barrier to female higher education. Female excluded from higher education on the basis of various socio-cultural factors (Bari, 2005). There are various factors in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa that obstruct female from obtaining higher education which includes the following, customs and tradition, norms and values, patriarchy, '*pardah*' (veil) and house of queen (Ansari, 2012). However, following are the various socio-cultural challenges to female higher education.

PATRIARCHY OR MALE DOMINANCY

Patriarchy means male domination in various sectors of life that differentiates men and women on gender base role (Eisenstein, 1984). In this connection, Nabaneh (2010) illustrates that the patriarchy system justified women as second class folks. However, patriarchal structure of a society deprived the participation of women in decision making process (Shvedova, 2005). A study conducted by Abena (1991) and Atayi (2008) illustrate that in African societies parents compel girls to remain at home. Female responsibility was to take care of the children and help with mother in preparation of meals and female don't need to get education.

CULTURAL FACTORS

Cultural norms restrict women to their homes (Nabaneh, 2010). According to the IPU (2004) these limitations and restrictions can be found in various cultures and religion of the world. In Pakistan and especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa same situation exists where female are barred from higher education due to the cultural resistance as (Save the Children, 2005) has the view that in these societies' traditional values and religious beliefs affect female from making their own decision to continue their studies. According to Jeffery (1982) examines that many cultures give priority to male education as compare to girls' education. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa discrimination has been observed regarding female higher education.

THE CONCEPT OF PURDAH (VEIL)

'*Purdah*' (veil) is a main indicator behind every activity and considered key obstacle to female higher education. The concepts of veil are not only practice in Islamic society but in European countries exercise the practice of veil (Jeffery, 1982). In this context, Khan (2010) elaborates that '*Purdah*' (veil) restricted women mobility limit to home. Majority of the Muslim countries separate women from men on the basis of veil (Ghuman, 2003). The practice of veil is responsible for the women servitude (Khan, 2010). Movement of women is limited on the basis of veil and their poor conditions are responsible due to the practice of veil (Jones, et. al. 2006). In further addition Hoffman (1987) states that proper veiling women secure her honour and raise their self-esteem. Veils consider a sign of dignity and veiled women are more powerful in entire life (Fernea, 1998).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The current study was based on quantitative approach using chi square tests. Moreover, Earl (2007) explained that quantitative study used to generalize research facts. Questionnaire was use as a tool of data collection because the entire study population was educated. The data was analyzed quantitatively where chi square test was applied through computer based software SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). At uni-variate level the data was analyzed with the help of frequencies and percentages to lay out the picture of the data. Moreover, at bi-variate level chi-square test was used to draw association between independent and dependent variables (Leedy, 1993). This research study was limited to two different government universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa i.e. Bacha Khan University Charsadda and University of Malakand at District Dir Lower Chakdara.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data regarding present study "understanding problems faced by female students in higher education (a case study of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) was collected, organized and interpreted by using the computer programming SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). This chapter is divided into two sections as in the first section uni-variate data analysis technique were while measuring central tendency through mean, median and mode.

In the second section bi-variate analysis were carried out for the purpose to draw association between dependent and independent while using the chi square test statistics.

UNI-VARIATE ANALYSIS

This chapter contains the description of the variables at general level, frequency and percentage is derivative which was support by literature in the existing study.

Table-1 Frequency, Percentage and Measure of Central Tendency Distribution of the Socio Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Classification	Frequency	Percent	Measure of central tendency		
			Mean	Median	Mode
Age group of the respondent					
Below 20 years	40	20.0	1.9550	2.0000	2.00
21 to 23 years	129	64.5			
Above 24 years	31	15.5			
Total	200	100.0			
Education					
B.S (4-years)	137	68.5	1.4450	1.0000	1.00
MA/MSC	38	19.0			
M.Phil	24	12.0			
PhD	01	0.5			
Total	200	100.0			
Area of Residence					
Urban	65	32.5	1.6750	2.0000	2.00
Rural	135	67.5			
Total	200	100.0			
Language of the Respondent					
Pashtoo	189	94.5	1.0550	1.0000	1.00
Urdu	11	5.5			
Other	00	00			
Total	200	100.0			
Family Types of the Respondent					
Joint family	102	51.0	1.6350	1.0000	1.00
Extended family	55	27.5			
Nuclear family	43	21.5			
Total	200	100.0			

Parents Profession					
Government employee	109	54.5			
Business man	23	11.5			
Shopkeeper	6	3.0			
Farmer	9	4.5	2.5300	1.0000	1.00
Labour	21	10.5			
Any other	32	16.0			
Total	200	100.0			
Monthly Income					
Less than 10 thousand	10	5.0			
10,000 to 20,000	33	16.5			
20,000 to 30,000	40	20.0	3.7800	4.0000	5.00
30,000 to 40,000	25	12.5			
Above 40,000	92	46.0			
Total	200	100.0			
Marital Status					
Unmarried	186	93.0			
Married	14	7.0	1.0500	1.0000	1.00
Total	200	100.0			

Source: field Survey, 2017

Age of the respondents is one of the important factors in any research activity as it reflects the background of the respondents regarding the problem. The above table showed that age wise distribution of respondents in which majority 64.5% of the respondents found in 21-23 years of age category. According to Khan (2010) age of the respondents is important in a sense that the data collected from the respondents, provide better understanding of the problem.

The data in the present study collected from the educated female, as they have understood the problem of female higher education. The above table explicate that out of 200, 137.0 (68.5%) female were B.S (4-Year) students. Out of 200, 38.0 (19.0%) female were M.A/M.SC students. Out of 200, 24.0 (12.0%) female were MPhil students and 1.0 (0.5%), out of 200 was PhD female students. Majority of the female students 68.5% were studying in B.S (4-Year). The overall literacy ratio of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province was 50% (Rehman, Jingdong & Hussain, 2015). Male literacy ratio was 68% and female literacy rate was 32%, which shows that almost two out of three female were deprived from getting education (National Commission for Human Development Ministry of Professional & Technical Trainings, 2012). Majority of the female student's i.e. (67.5%) belonged to rural areas. Data

indicates that out of 200, 189 (94.5%) female students speak Pashto language in university campus as well as in home environment. The above table shows that 51.0% of the female students lived in the joint family system. Similarly, Kamal (2013) states that Joint family system frequently exist in ‘*Pakhtun*’ culture. Data showed that out of 200, 109 (54.5%) of the female students parents were government employees.

Majority of the respondents out of 200, 92.0 (46.0%) of the respondents answered that their monthly income was above 40,000. Same situation was also observed by Khan, (2010) in their research study which states that the highly income female have acrimoniously participate in the higher education. Same analysis observed by Khan, (2010) in his research work. Most of the respondents 93.0% were unmarried and the remaining 7.0% were married.

BI-VARIATE ANALYSIS

The association between independent variables and dependent variable was determined with the help of using bi-variate analysis procedures, to expose the direction of the responses. This type of analysis described the responses either favoring or opposing any aspect of variables under study. The relationship between the variables (independent and dependent) was tested by using chi-square outlined by Mc Call (1975). The details are given below:

Table-2 Association of Socio-Cultural Aspect and Denial of Female Higher Education

Factors	Attitude	Denial of Female Higher Education								Statistics
		1	1.125	1.25	1.375	1.5	1.625	1.875	Total	
Observance of ‘ <i>pardah</i> ’ (veil)	Yes	8	37	10	14	5	1	0	75	$\chi^2=21.070$ P =.049
	No	7	45	26	19	9	3	0	109	
	Uncertain	3	5	5	1	1	0	1	16	
	Total	18	87	41	34	15	4	1	200	

Entrenched norms and values of 'Pakhtun' society	Yes	7	34	11	8	4	0	0	64	$x^2=14.141$ P =.292
	No	8	26	20	18	6	3	0	81	
	Uncertain	3	27	10	8	5	1	1	55	
	Total	18	87	41	34	15	4	1	200	
Female higher education requires effective time management	Yes	6	25	4	5	4	2	0	46	$x^2=21.442$ P =.044
	No	9	60	36	28	11	2	1	147	
	Uncertain	3	2	1	1	0	0	0	7	
	Total	18	87	41	34	15	4	1	200	
Prevailing patriarchy	Yes	14	82	38	29	8	4	1	176	$x^2=31.282$ P =.002
	No	3	5	2	5	7	0	0	22	
	Uncertain	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	
	Total	18	87	41	34	15	4	1	200	
Educated female do not care about 'purdah' (veil)	Yes	2	14	5	5	3	1	0	30	$x^2=9.439$ P =.665
	No	15	70	36	28	11	2	1	163	
	Uncertain	1	3	0	1	1	1	0	7	
	Total	18	87	41	34	15	4	1	200	
'Pakhtun'	Yes	16	63	27	22	9	2	1	140	$x^2=7.757$

tradition	No	1	18	11	9	4	2	0	45	P =.804
	Uncertain	1	6	3	3	2	0	0	15	
	Total	18	87	41	34	15	4	1	200	
Female outdoor activities are considered taboo	Yes	10	73	37	30	12	4	1	167	$\chi^2=22.817$ P =.029
	No	7	13	2	4	1	0	0	27	
	Uncertain	1	1	2	0	2	0	0	6	
	Total	18	87	41	34	15	4	1	200	
Female higher education violate male dignity	Yes	7	42	20	16	6	1	0	92	$\chi^2=8.932$ P =.709
	No	9	43	19	18	9	3	1	102	
	Uncertain	2	2	2	0	0	0	0	6	
	Total	18	87	41	34	15	4	1	200	

The above table shows the association of various factors that restrict female from getting higher education. Results showed that a significant association has been found between observance of 'Purdah' (veil) ($P= 0.049$) and denial of female higher education. The results deduced that 'Purdah' (veil) is one of the important norms of 'Pakhtun' society, and due to its observance it is very difficult for women to continue higher education, and also restrict women interaction with men while most of the higher education providing co-education, which could also stand as a barrier in the way of female higher education. In this regard, Burn (2000) and Nuamah (2001) stated that in some parts of Northern India women strictly observe 'Purdah' (veil) and it decreased her participation in the society. In contrast, a non-significant association ($P= 0.292$) identified between entrenched norms and values of 'Pakhtun' society and denial of female higher education. Although it is believed that the present social structure and normative order of 'Pakhtun' society has experienced slightly changes and have somehow liberal outlook which could be observed in

the context of female higher education. It could also be the reason that the data was collected from those respondents which were already enrolled in higher education institutions. That is why they may not face such sort of difficulties which is generally observed in the '*Pakhtun*' social structure. These explanations have similar relevance to Alam (2012) finding that '*Pakhtun*' strictly follow their cultural values and bears no change in it.

Contrary to the above, a significant association ($P= 0.044$) extracted between female higher education requires effective time management and denial of female higher education. The study findings showed that '*Pakhtun*' society is in transition where joint family lost their structure and its outcome is observed in nuclear family, where no one assists each other. Similar conclusions were derived by Moghadam (2005) and Nabaneh (2010) who stated that lack of effective time management is one of the hindering factors for females to participate in higher education.

Moreover, a significant association ($P= 0.002$) existed between prevailing patriarchy and denial of female higher education. The ideology of patriarchy is used by men against women to put them in the classified sphere of residence as mothers, sisters, wives and men positioned him in the universal sphere through that reason females are excluded from higher education. These findings had close similarities to Bhasin (1993) who explained that in patriarchal systems, men are the unconditional and supreme leaders of women and other folks.

Moreover, a non-significant relationship ($P= 0.804$) observed between '*Pakhtun*' tradition and denial of female higher education. These findings suggest that parents treat both genders equally and a slight change modifies in '*Pakhtun*' tradition regarding female rights of getting education. Currently the findings showed that '*Pakhtun*' tradition favors females to take admission in higher educational institutions as well as in co-education setups. Similar situations were observed by Dale, Shaheen, Fieldhouse and Kalra (2002); Ahmad, Modood and Lissenburgh (2003) who elaborated that women's status in Asian countries are considered to be specified for domestic labor and not allowed to participate in outside activities in conservative societies.

Contrary to above, a significant relationship ($P= 0.029$) explored between female outdoor activities are considered taboo and denial of female higher education. Customary practices of the '*Pakhtun*' society are against the co-education environment and consider female enrollment in co-education systems against its reputation. Similar conclusions were also

derived by Heise (2013) who stated that in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, women are considered to be socially and culturally inferior to men and societal prejudiced norms and taboos regarding the education of female always leave them at the mercy of men.

Contrary to above, a non-significant association was observed between female higher education violate male dignity ($P= 0.709$) and denial of female higher education. The findings of the present study highlighted that in '*Pakhtun*' society women get prestige position of dignity and honor. Woman is entitled to survive with dignity and with freedom from desire and from terror. Studies shows that societies in which discrimination is greater have more poverty, slower economic growth and a lower quality of life than do societies with less discrimination (Rai, 2011).

CONCLUSION

This research study concluded that mostly the respondents faced '*Pakhtunwali*', patriarchy, customs and traditions and cultural restrictions on female outdoor activities which restrict female from higher education. It was further concluded that significant relationship were identified between denial of female right of higher education and '*pardah*' (veil), effective time management, patriarchy, restriction on female outdoor activities act as a barrier to female higher education. Results also showed a non-significant association between entrenched norms and values of '*Pakhtun*' society, educated female do not care about '*pardah*' (veil), '*Pakhtun*' tradition, female higher education violate male dignity and denial of female higher education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Keeping in view the study results, the following recommendations are proposed to overcome with the issue at hand. The Government should take positive steps to make possible higher education free for all. The government should take effective steps to build separate educational institutions for both the sexes in the area to avoid the '*pardah*' (veil) as an obstacle in the way of female higher education. The Government should specify that female can do particular activities for the improvement of her status, while those tasks should be banned on male i.e. Specific areas should be specified only for female businesses.

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