

Socio-Economic Determinants of Low Female Literacy Rate in Province Punjab, Pakistan: (An analysis of Rural Areas of Tehsil Jaranwala, District Faisalabad)

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ABSTRACT

Women are an integral and indispensable segment of human society. They make almost half of the globe. They have literally complemented the man in every civilization. The status of women in Pakistan had been remaining as a domestic wife continuously; even Islam gave them significant status and role in the society. Education attainment is the fundamental right of every individual. After independence, the constitution of Pakistan shows the provision to attain the education for both male and female equally, but it could not be applied the same due to some social and economic factors in Pakistan. The study deals with socio-economic determinants of low female literacy rate in the rural areas of Pakistan. Low rate of female education at the time of independence and persistent obsession of parents, planners and community leaders that first available educational facility must be reserved for boys and girls be treated as a second preference. In Pakistan, negative and adverse effect of these factors is very high which is evident of Low Female Literacy Rate. Rural people emphasize on cost and benefit analysis and they think that over all benefit of the investment on the girls' education goes to their prospective in-laws. Most of the rural areas in Pakistan, people did not send their girls to get education because of some social and economic factors. Social factors like lack of awareness regarding importance of female education, social insecurities, and rural people are only contented with informal education. Economic factors like, poverty and less per capita income which also affects the female literacy rate. Inadequate provision of physical facilities in schools, shortage of funds, poor standards of health and nutrition, costly text-books, exercise books, poor condition of school buildings are some other factors involve in low female literacy rate. Overall male literacy rate is higher i.e. 56% than the female i.e. 44%. Hypotheses of the study is highly accepted, higher economic status and high level of awareness promote the literacy rate in the area. Low economic status also negatively affects literacy rate in the area. Chi-square value (26.44) tells a highly significant ($P=.000$) association between monthly income and literacy rate. Gamma value (26.44) shows a strong positive relation between the two different variables. Negative association observed between cultural rigidity and literacy rate was reflected by the chi-square value (47.08) shows a highly significant ($P=.000$) association between cultural rigidity and female literacy rate. Gamma value (47.08) shows a negative relation between the variables. So there is lesser cultural rigidity, more would be the female literacy rate in the area.

KEY WORDS: Literacy rate, socio-economic determinants, formal education

1. INTRODUCTION

Only 26.4% of the 100 million people living in Pakistan are literate. There are sharp differences between urban and rural literacy rates, literacy rates in the four provinces of Pakistan, and the literacy rates of men and women (with females constituting the largest group of illiterates in the country). Politically there has been a great deal of articulation of the need for educating the masses. However, this has remained a superficial concern. Governmental funding, alone, will not suffice to bring about an appreciable rise in Pakistan's literacy rate. Literacy efforts in the future have to have a social rather than a bureaucratic base in order to succeed. A project which has met with a great deal of success in Pakistan is the Adult Basic Education Society of Gujranwala, established in 1948. The low drop-out rate of this project's students is a result of sensitive planning, monitoring, and administration of literacy programs. There is no denying the fact that education is of immense importance regarding the socioeconomic development of a country. The training of a human mind is not complete without education. Education makes man

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a right thinker. It tells man how to think and how to make decision. Despite such an importance of education Pakistan has not performed well regarding literacy and education. "During the last 30 years literacy rate has increased from 21 to 43 percent, less than 1 percent per annum" (Social Development in Pakistan, Annual Review, 2002-03).

In addition to low literacy rate there are rural-urban, regional and gender disparities in literacy and education. Although literacy rate is low in rural areas both for males and females yet the gender gap in literacy is even greater in rural areas. "According to estimates based on the primary data of PIHS 2001-02 male and female literacy rates are 57 and 29 percent respectively.

High premium is placed on marriage in Pakistani society, especially the marriage of girls. Finding a suitable spouse for the daughter is extremely important for the parents so whenever parents find a suitable boy, they get their daughter married to him disregarding her age and completion of her education. "Where female autonomy is considered unstable and risky, early marriage is used as a means of securing daughters' future. This massively impedes the educational progress of girls" (EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2003-04, p.123). Widely held notion in Pakistan is that education is for the sake of employment. Mostly marriage of girls leads to termination of their education. Moreover, in the wake of little employment opportunities for the girls, (mostly, owing to non- technical education), parents give more significance to learning of skills, by their daughters, that help them in the performance of home chores such as sewing, stitching, cooking and learning of embroidery and handicrafts that may also help them augment the family income. Additionally, possession of these skills may also improve their chances of finding better husband. "Whether schooling going daughter is deemed while she will be influenced by perceptions of the effects of schooling on jobs and on acquisition of better husbands" (Bowman, 1980, p.14). In case of schooling, girls have to forego learning of the skills which are imparted usually at home. So complementary effects of forgone learning and forgone production increase parents perceived cost of girls' education.

Opportunity cost of educating the girls is greater compared to that of the boys especially in rural areas of Pakistan. Girls' share in the domestic labor is greater than that of the boys. Girls also have a sizable share in out of home, on farm and informal waged labor such as cotton picking and wheat harvest. "In rural Pakistan it appears that boys take wage work only when their income contribution is necessary to household subsistence, whereas girls take wage work even when household could survive" (Bhalotra, 2000 cited in EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2003-04, p.121). Their contribution to their families increases as we go down the socioeconomic classes, increasing the opportunity cost of their schooling.

In rural areas of Pakistan, girls are often held back at home instead of sending them to school. There are also seasonal demands of girl's labor during harvest of cotton and wheat, in rural communities. "How girls perform in school is affected by the same factors that determine initial access. If girls, more often are kept at home to help with chores and if they do housework after school while brothers are allowed time for homework, girls actually have less access to education" (Bowman and Anderson.1980.) Performance of home chores and schooling put conflicting demands on girls time. As a result they find lesser time to devote to their studies compared to boys, which lead to their lower performance in studies and greater dropout. Currently, 51 percent of boys and 59 percent of girls leave school before reaching grade 5, in Pakistan. Social Development in Pakistan, Annual Review Report (2002-03).

In rural areas especially sparsely populated rural areas distance from home to school is greater than the reasonable limit of 1 km. Since women's modesty has an extreme value in Pakistani culture, parents' concerns regarding their girls' security and modesty increase in such a situation. Parents' don't want their girls encounter males on the way to school. Moreover, in case of distant school the risk of sexual harassment increases. Encounter with males on the way to school and sexual harassment are threats to family honor and reputation of the girl which may influence her marriage prospects. "More important is the disutility associated with having a child farther from home. This disutility may be particularly important in case of girls because of cultural prohibitions against girls being out in public or outside the protection of male household members" (Alderman et al., 2001 p.308). These circumstances make distance an important factor regarding parents' decision to send their daughter to school. Thus greater distance from home to school increases the parents' perceived social cost of educating girls. "According to PIHS (2002), only 66 percent villages had a school for girls within 1 km of the village centre. Around 55 percent of the girls in rural Sindh and 66 percent in rural Balochistan don't have a school within 1 km of their village" (Social Development in Pakistan, Annual Review, 2002-03).

The quality of education has always been an issue in Pakistan. The situation is worse in rural areas. Primary school system in Pakistan is characterized by high teacher absenteeism, recruitment of teachers on political basis, teachers' indifferent attitude towards students learning and poor physical conditions of schools. "A significant portion of the gender gap in Pakistan may be explained by supply side quantity and quality constraints" (Sawada,

2001.p.17) All these factors contribute towards poor quality of education. Therefore, parents may view it of a little benefit to keep their daughters in school. Thus poor quality of education increases the opportunity cost of girls' schooling. They view it as wastage of time and money and place lower value on the education of girls compare to household activities for girls. "The opportunity cost of staying at home for child bearing and rearing increases as women become more educated" (Kingdon, 1999).

1.1 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

In this era of science and technology, education has assumed great importance for the socioeconomic development of a country. Moreover globalization is creating tremendous opportunities, but only for the highly skilled labor. Educational profile of Pakistan is alarmingly poor despite that much importance of education. Almost half of the population of Pakistan is illiterate. Regional, rural urban and gender disparities are also there. Females are lagging behind males in terms of literacy and education. The situation is even worse in rural areas where majority of the population of Pakistan lives. This study is intended to investigate socio cultural and economic barriers in the way of female literacy and education in rural Pakistan. High level of political will and commitment is required to improve literacy and education among women. Although female literacy is on the government agenda yet it needs research based guidance for effective planning and implementation. So the findings of this study may be useful for the policy makers. This study may add to the existing body of knowledge and will have implications for the theory under consideration.

1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To explore how greater opportunity cost of girl's education in rural areas, contributes to their lower literacy rate.
- To explore the reasons that why parents think that investment on girl's education is for their prospective in-laws.
- To find out that how much extent return comes from the girl's education to the parents.
- To find out that how economic conditions of the household affect the literacy rate especially in female.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Household survey was used as research design for the study. The study was conducted in the rural areas of Tehsil Jaranwala, District Faisalabad and this was considered as universe for this study. As far as the justification to select this tehsil as a universe, tehsil Jaranwala is located in District Faisalabad, province Punjab which was approach for the researcher. Tehsil Jaranwala has been selected because this tehsil is the biggest Tehsil in Pakistan. It has 57 Union Councils which comprises on urban area as well 260 ¹Chakooks and 14 ²Mousaat (rural area). Tehsil Jaranwala has the big rural geographical area. Like other facilities of daily life, educational facilities are also very rare especially for female in rural areas. People of the rural areas are very simple and they are bound to spend very simple life. Multi-stage probability sampling procedures were used to draw the sample. At the first stage, sample of 04 union councils were drawn from the sampling frame of the 57 total numbers of union councils of that Tehsil in the rural area. At the next stage, a sample of 04 villages was drawn from the sampling frame of the villages of the selected four union councils. At least, 200 hundred households were selected as a sample from the selected union councils. 50 respondents from each selected union council (because every union council has equal population, Devolution plan 2002) in the selected rural areas. Heads of the households were the respondents for this study. Interview schedule were exercised to collect the needed data. As far as data analysis is concerned, first, the descriptive statistics such as measures of central tendency and measures of dispersion were used, and then multiple regression analysis were employed to analyze the data.

3. RESULTS

Frequency distribution test is used to calculate the percentages of the response variables and Chi-Square test is used to check the association between the variables of hypothesis. Out of 200 respondents, (88%) respondents were belong to the nuclear families and (12%) were belong the joint family system with (33%) have the family size ranging 1-5 children, (43%) have 6-10 children and (20%) have 11-15 children. Educational statuses of the respondents were also investigated, only (37%) respondents were literate and remaining (63%) respondent were

¹ Term used for village in local language Urdu in Pakistan

² Term used for a the area smaller than a village in local language Urdu in Pakistan

illiterate. Majority, (8%) of the respondents belongs to Zameendara profession, (15%) belongs to jobs and remaining (5%) have their own small businesses as a source of income in this area. People of this area are found very poor status, when researcher probed their family income, (70%) of the respondents earn less than Rs. 10,000 per month, (14%) respondent remain between Rs. 10,001-15,0000 and only (16%) respondent earn between Rs. 15,001 and above. As for as educational facilities in the area are concerned, most of the respondents (66%) told that educational facilities of primary level are available to (67%) people, while the remaining (44%) told that have no educational facility at all. Most of the respondent i.e. (93%) told that they are not able to arrange the higher education for their children which is available to them at long distance because of their low income. There are number of reasons were pointed out for this discrimination towards girl's education, (88%) respondents told that low income (poverty) is one of the major reason in the way of education, while remaining (42%) respondents told the non-availability of the educational institution in the area. Educational discrimination was observed at high level in the area, (76%) of the respondent were against the girl's education while the remaining (24%) respondent were found positive in the favor of girl's education. There are number of reasons which stop the people to send their girls for education such as insecurity told (35%), long distances told (42%) and cultural rigidity told (23%) of the respondents. (94%) of the respondents were against the jobs of the girls and investment in female education is the wastages of resources told (84%) because overall benefit of girl's education goes to their prospective in-law. Majority (85%) respondents were in the favor informal education for the girls instead of formal education because they have different fears in their minds regarding the girls, like run away and fashion. (65%) respondents told that informal education is sufficient for character building while (35%) were not satisfied with informal education for character building of the girls. Although people are against the girl's education due to different reasons but majority (71%) of the respondents told positive response that educated girls would be the good mothers in future and (94%) respondents were agreed that educated female can do better socialization of their children as compared to uneducated female. Majority of the respondents i.e. (92%) were agreed that breakdown of marriages is due to education (low and higher education) in rural areas. (85%) of the respondents told that if financial support and approachable educational facilities are provided to them, they would become ready for their girl's education which solves the problem of low female literacy in the area. Hypotheses of the study is highly accepted, higher economic status and high level of awareness promote the literacy rate in the area. Low economic status also negatively affects literacy rate in the area. Chi-square value (26.44) tells a highly significant ($P=.000$) association between monthly income and literacy rate. Gamma value (26.44) shows a strong positive relation between the two different variables. Negative association observed between cultural rigidity and literacy rate was reflected by the chi-square value (47.08) shows a highly significant ($P=.000$) association between cultural rigidity and female literacy rate. Gamma value (47.08) shows a negative relation between the variables. So there is lesser cultural rigidity, more would be the female literacy rate in the area.

4. DISCUSSIONS

The family size most of the selected families were not too much large, they have reasonable number of children (2-4 children), but only a few percent families have large family size which is over to ten children. It means that fertility rate in the rural area decreasing, which is the positive sign for the development of the rural areas. Overall it is seen that rural people do not against the girls' education but there are many social and economic barriers which create problem for the rural people to educate the girls. It is concluded that the major thing which is very alarming till now is that literacy rate in the rural areas is very low, especially in female side. It is concluded that education level of the family of the respondents is mostly primary but some of the respondents belongs to the middle level education. There are no cases that have metric or intermediate level of education. This is only due to the lack of educational facilities and the low economic conditions of the rural people. The economy of the rural people mostly depends on the agricultural land. This thing is also very painful for the rural people that they have misconceptions that there is no need of education for their occupation, so they do not send their children to schooling. They think that it is wastage of time and resources. Only few respondents related with the job occupation. Majority of the people have earn less than Rs. 10,000 per month in the area, so with this earning they are even unable to meet their daily expenses because of the high prices of daily utilities, so how they can bear the cost of education of their children? So less earnings is also a major cause to stop the rural people to send their children in schools.

5. CONCLUSIONS

It has been concluded that lack of educational facilities also a big reason of low female literacy rate, most of the village still remain without the school facility in Tehsil Jaranwala, especially for female schools. It is because

when Pakistan came into being established societal concept was male dominant society so the Government opens the male's schools in majority. The second thing which is very painful for rural areas is that wherever school are existed, they remain at primary level still now, Government did not try to improve them not even at the middle level. So in most of the rural areas people have only primary level educational facilities.

It has also been concluded that people in the rural areas are not very strong financially, so that they do not spend money for children's education especially in female's cases. It is because they think that over all benefit of girls education goes to their prospective in-laws at the end.

It has been observed that people living in the rural areas were interested in the female education but circumstances stop them to do the same. Because families are very conservative and some people think that education for the girl is in not very important because of their innocence. Low income is the major economic factor in the rural areas in the way of education and other reason is non availability of the school in the area. Most of the respondents showed that they feel some sort of social insecurity, when their girls go out side the home for education. They feel fear that their girls will do run-away marriage, become ultra-modern and fashionable and they become out of control because of education.

It is also concluded that distance of the schools from the homes is also a major reason in low literacy rate and especially for female. When the school is situated very far away from the homes it is impossible for the girls to go schools, it has been observed that there is no body in most of the families who drop the girls to school and pick them. So this is the huge hurdle in way of girls' education. It is also observed that due to long distance between the schools and the homes, girls face many problems during traveling. However, most of the respondents think that without education nobody can survive, so education is important than all other activities.

It is also observed after the analysis that most of the people have awareness that informal education is not important than formal. Formal education furnishing the life of the individual so that's why formal education is very important, especially for female. It means that only domestic education or informal education is not sufficient for the smooth survival of the life for the people. Moreover, most of the people are satisfied with the formal education because formal education is very important for the good character building of the people. It is also concluded that most of the people think that educated girls would be the good mother in future and they will play a significant role in the process of socialization due to education.

Poverty of the rural people also affects the education of their children. Majority of the rural communities are based on agricultural land which provides them semester wise or annual basis income. No highly paid jobs for the rural people because of their low education, so that they are not economically rich, they are very poor. This is the main reason of the low literacy rate. It is also concluded from the analysis that if financial support is provided to the rural people they will get ready to send their girls for schooling. If the school facility is provided to rural areas near to homes of the people, this will increase the literacy rate in the effected areas. Some of the family values restrict the girls to go school. Parents feel embracement when their girls go out side the home but such cases are very rare. They are strictly orthodox people.

Finally it is concluded that female literacy rate in the rural areas is low because rural people prefer domestic work over female education and they prefer education for boys only because they think that over all benefit by the female education goes to their prospective in-laws while the investment on the male education will return to the parents when they will be old ages. The other factor which affects the female literacy is the poor economic conditions of rural people. Rural people are not very strong financially because they have no handsome jobs and only depend on the agricultural land, which fulfill their basic needs like food and shelter.

6. SUGGESTIONS

- As the education is primarily the responsibility of the provincial Government, so Central Government should collaborate with the local Government to improve the education especially female education. Basic education institutional facility must be provided in the rural areas.
- Gender discrimination at the job level should be eliminating so that people must educate their girls.
- Government must pay attention to social insecurity both in rural and urban areas.
- Some sort of income generating activities should be activated in rural areas, which improve the economic condition of the rural people.
- Awareness campaigns should be arranged for the rural people to aware them about the importance of female education.
- New schools should be opened and classrooms will be added in the existing schools based on objective demographic criteria. Preference shall be given to female schools.
- District Education Authority shall be responsible for monitoring and supervision.

- Compulsory Primary Education Ordinance should be strictly enforced in the areas where Primary schooling facilities exist.
- Additional teachers should be provided to upgraded schools.
- Free textbooks, note books and uniform should be provided to needy and deserving children who are left outs or drop outs at primary level because of poverty.
- Relaxation of qualification where female teacher are short in supply.
- All new primary schools should be opened with the ratio 60:40, 60 for female and 40 for male. Similarly the female-male teacher ratio during new appointments must be according to number of students.
- In order to attract and retain female teachers in rural areas special incentives including monetary incentive should be given to female teachers.
- Incentive package for private institution is being developed to encourage private sector to supplement the government efforts in the field of education.
- Teacher absenteeism should be reduced through consistent monitoring especially in rural female schools.
- School management committee should be strengthened to assist the school administration in school functioning.
- Proper transportation facility should be provided to rural people if the school facility is not available in the village.
- Up gradation of the existing educational institutions must be necessary especially in the rural area.
- Scholarships should be announced especially for the female so that parents feel easiness to send them for education.
- Government and private organization (NGO's) can play an important role to eliminate the social barriers and social insecurities.
- Provision of incentives for girl's students to attend schools and for teachers to take up teaching duties with commitment and devotion should be encouraged.

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