

Girls' Struggle for Education: An Exploratory Study from Tehsil Balambat, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to highlight women's struggles in succeeding higher education. The previous studies focuss on a special facet of the phenomenon. This study addresses the issue in a holistic manner. A sample of 375 middle and high school students were selected via proportional allocation method. Chi-square statistics was our main hypothesis testing tool. The results indicate that socioeconomic, cultural and infrastructural constrictions within education ,affect the participants of this study in a significant way. Study confirms that strict traditionalism, gender disparity, expensive education, early marriages, low budget of the government, reproductive role, poor monitoring system , unavailability of proper transportation, poverty, and inferior status of female in society have a strong influence on getting higher education. Participants expresses that they are not given due importance for gaining higher studies. This study recommends that the policy makers should revisit the budget constriction, infrastructure and schools facilities. Transport facility should be provided for female to get higher education easily.

Keywords: socio-economic, cultural, infrastructural, constrictions, female education, KP

Introduction

According to United Nations charter on human rights (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 2015), it is the right of every human to get education and it is also a part of sustainable development goals (Goal 4 | Department of Economic and Social Affairs, n.d.) which compels governments to ensure quality education as well as to create gender equality and equality of opportunities. Gender has a strong effect in educational targets because an educated woman can act confidently and education in itself has the capacity to empower women. Education is directly associated with the improvement of the society and country. But it must also be kept in mind that education doesn't constitute simple training, rather it embodies a complete organization of mind, body, ideals and morality, hence a means to aware masses of their purpose and its achievement (Saeed, 1987). So, although, an ordinary approach may be

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to learn to read and write, the inherent purpose directs at more practical aspects.

The UNICEF (Girls' Education, n.d.) strives as a fundamental notion for education of women and terms it their integral human right. It is believed that governments are required to give education to women irrespective of their internal situation. Regardless of many years of attention to the problem, round 121 million kids are out of school, sixty five million of them are women (Ara & Aziz, 2013). Several previous studies highlighted and empirically proved that education/schooling has strong positive effects on the socio-economic development of society (Becker, 1962; Becker et al., 1990; Azam & Ahmed, 2010; Khan et al., 2015; Barro & Lee, 1992; Bakar et al. 2014; Azam and Raza, 2016; Azam & Ahmed, 2015; Khan et al. 2017; Khan et al 2016; Khan & Haseeb, 2017).

Although, education has received a lot of importance, female education has been a grey area which needs special attention. In rural setups of the society, women are regularly the first to rise and the last to fall asleep (Shaheed & Mumtaz, 2017). Ahmed (2017), defines a Pashtun as a model of distinctive feature, chastity and loyalty" (p. 78). A woman is expected to live according to existing societal norms, cultural values as well as the tribal code of life. The general observation show that woman faces discrimination due to these norms, values and codes (Sen, 2018). Majority of the female at state and region level, fail to pursue their career and educational goals. In most cases, their education is stopped in the middle. It is due to these facts, that the subject of women attainment of education has been the focus of many studies (Maqsood & Masood, 2012; Shaukat, 2015; Khan, 2008; Naz et al, 2013). It is far more important for a female to get literate because as Eisner (1994) defined literacy as the capacity of a character to express meaning in any cultural shape, makes it obvious that a highly literate woman can give her life a true purpose. In our neighboring, majority Pakhtun setup, Afghanistan, (Hayward & Karim, 2019) points towards efforts for the improvement of higher education, as very effective but in a limited scope.

After studying the literature, we found that in recent past, studies related to economic constraints was done by (KHAN et al., 2019). Earlier, the focus was on social structure (D. A. Naz et al., 2012) which was also carried in later years in a comparatively cultural context (Jan et al., 2018). There was a study on socio cultural and economic constraints (Mehmood et al., 2018) which did not provide any empirical testing and relied on descriptive statistics. This study is also in the same connection with a different approach. It also focuses on the same area as (KHAN et al., 2019) but with a woman only sample. The purpose of this study is to

examine the social, economic and infrastructural constriction/constraints to female education in UC Balambat, District Dir Lower, KPK in an empirical manner.

Objectives of the Study

This paper aims to assess social constrictions to female in getting higher education; to explore the economic constraints to female higher education; to find out the Infrastructural constriction to female higher education; and to give recommendations in the light of study.

Literature Review

It is a developed thought in developed countries that women are related to inner household while men to outer world and politics (Ram, 2004). Pakistan falls in the lowest education budget countries. The share could not rise from 2.4% of GDP from the last three decades. Though the budget has increased recently but there are other direct costs which fall upon the (Glick & Sahan, 2000).

In Pakistan, women are much less referred in men's activities (Khan, 2008). According to Khan (2013), there is more investment into boy's education than woman in Pakistan. Pakistan has been a global outlier in gender gaps in schooling. Girls lag in the back of boys in schooling (Tembon, 2008).

Khalid and Mukhtar (2002) refers to other costs besides tuition fee as a hindrance in getting enrolled. This explains higher school drop-out rates amongst grown up women (grade 4 & five)" (Maqssod et al., 2012). The study of Sattar and Yasin (2012) concludes that government expenditures on education is visibly very low. There are also other reasons like distance of school from home, the safety of girls on the way and in the institute (Daraz, 2012; Naz et al, 2012). So it is not just the socio economic status but non-existence of educational institutes at close proximity to houses which disables them to get educated (Anwar, et al., 2014). In first world countries like the USA, students cannot find the money for college, they are offered economic resource, loans, and scholarships. (Mashriqi, 2016).

(Mehmood et al., 2018) concludes that socio-cultural and economic situations effects girl's higher education in Pakistan. (Jan et al., 2018) focused on the effect of Pakhtun culture and female higher education and found a significant relationship between sub-dimension of Pukhtoon culture and the low rate of the female in higher education. The variable of the study were, conservatism, early puberty, pardah, preference to male child, internal home factors, dominancy of men, the lack of the freedom of expression for female, child or early age

marriages, less or no say of female in decision making, coeducation taboo, and unwilling to let a girl live in hostel etc.

In a study by (KHAN et al., 2019) a highly significant relationship was found between female higher education and indicators variables viz prevalence of poverty, loan issues and lack of scholarship, low budget allocation, costly education, and patriarchy.

(Hayward & Karim, 2019) refers to the works regarding improvements in higher education for women in Afghanistan which consists of greater access, the creation of a more welcoming and open environment, the eradication of sexual harassment, and tough measures against discrimination and violence which showed success on a smaller scale. In Pakistan, women are still facing hardships in acquiring education (Naich et al., 2020). (Rashid et al., 2020) stressed the need for sensitization of society about female rights and (A. Naz et al., 2020) considers higher education a good way to empower women against social and economic hurdles. There are variations across Pakistan. Like female's education in the district Bajaur erstwhile FATA, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where higher education institutes are very few, female staff is scarce, poor or no transport and early marriages hinders female higher education (Ullah et al., 2021). (Tusińska, 2020) too refers to lack of access to education and spatial inequality of girls in Pakistan. This concludes that the issue is still an important topic for empirical research.

Sampling

All the high and middle schools of tehsil Balambat, district lower Dir were our universe of the study. The total number of students was 1157 of which 375 was calculated by sample formula (1) and then the respective samples from each school was calculate by proportional allocation method (2) (Chaudhry, 2008).

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2} \quad (1)$$

$$n_i = \frac{N_i}{N} n \quad (2)$$

Table 1

Sampling

Name of School (Tehsil Balambat)	Total students	Sampled
Govt. Girls High School Kandaro Balambat, District Dir (L)	332	79

Jamia Daruloloom School Walai Kandow Balambat, Dir (L)	322	77
GGMS Khema	122	29
GGMS Malakand BALA	92	32
GGMS Malakand (P)	139	33
GGMS Shatai 150	150	36
Total	1157	375

Results and Discussion

Higher Education and Social Constraints

Association between patriarchy as a constraint to higher education of female was significant (table 1) which confirms Khan et. al., (2013). Early marriages, Pardah, traditionalism, reproductive role of women, preference to male, are all associated with female higher education. The results shows that there has been no such change over years in the situations as recent researches too points to these constraints (KHAN et al., 2019; Ullah et al., 2021). Parents' discrimination and Pakhtun code of living though is not significant, but their carelessness and sensitivity towards harassment stops girls from getting higher education. We find same conclusion in Naz et. al., (2012) and Daraz, 2012. So there are issues related to harassment, however, Pakhtun culture is changing contradicting (Jan et al., 2018).

Table 2

Social Constraints Female Higher Education.

S. No	Statement	Chi-square (χ^2)
1	Patriarchy	$\chi^2=346.07^*$
2	Early marriages	$\chi^2=261.2^*$
3	Pardah	$\chi^2=163.3^*$
4	Traditionalism	$\chi^2=369.4^*$
5	Parental discrimination	$\chi^2=4.6$
6	Household responsibilities	$\chi^2=133.2^*$
7	Preference to boys	$\chi^2=410.36^*$
8	Reproductive role	$\chi^2=199.2^*$
9	Illiteracy	$\chi^2=1.88^*$

10	Inferior status f female	$\chi^2=355.55^*$
11	Limited involvement of girls in decision making	$\chi^2=474.5^*$
12	Pukhtoon code of life	$\chi^2=7.35$
13	Fear of sexual harassment	$\chi^2=297.57^*$
14	Co-education	$\chi^2=349.37^*$
15	Parent's carelessness	$\chi^2=269.2^*$

Note: *shows significance at 5%.

Economic Constraints Female Higher Education

Table 3 confirms (Gerbord, 2004; (KHAN et al., 2019) that poverty is highly associated with higher education. (KHAN et al., 2019) notion of lack of scholarships is also found as a significant factor. The Government has started some area specific scholarship at university level but for higher level studies at schools and colleges, the availability is very low. Another associated and linked to scholarship too, is less income which was also significant in Maqsood et. al. (2012) study. Hence income is still the constriction. Glick and Sahan (2000), Sattar and Yasin (2012) and (KHAN et al., 2019) and this study considers inadequate budgeting of the government as a hurdle, however the hold of men on family budget is also a constraint which was rightly pointed out by Khan et al. (2013).

Table 3

Economic Constraints to Female Higher Education

S. No	Statements	Chi-square (χ^2)
16	Poverty	$\chi^2=268.55^*$
17	Lake of scholarship	$\chi^2=264.9^*$
18	Expensive education	$\chi^2=252.86^*$
19	Strict rules for students' loan	$\chi^2=361.77^*$
20	Limited income of the family	$\chi^2=30.68^*$
21	Inadequate budget allocation	$\chi^2=564.88$
22	Wealth management by male	$\chi^2=258.7^*$
23	Lessor allocation of governmental funds	$\chi^2=427.4^*$
24	Inadequate resources mobilization	$\chi^2=5.58$

Note: * shows significance at 5%.

Infrastructural Constraints and Female Higher Education

We can confirm from table 4 that lack of teachers, and transport, unavailability of proper teaching material and library hinders girls from progression, which is reported by (Memon 2007; KHAN et al., 2019; Ullah et al., 2021) as well. The result proves that not only a credibility of schools but the poor monitoring of schools are also a hindrance to girls' higher studies. Earlier studies (Memon (2007; Tusińska, 2020) are evident too and the situation is still similar. (Tusińska, 2020) and (Ullah et al., 2021) and this study confirms that a remote school is a constraint for the higher study of a girl. . In most cases, the institutions are opened on political basis not in proper location, making it hard for women to get education.

Table 4*Infrastructural Constraints Female Higher Education*

S. No.	Statement	Chi square χ^2
25	Lack of female teachers	$\chi^2=363.172(p=0.00)$
26	Unavailability transportation	$\chi^2=410.354(p=0.000)$
27	Lack of library	$\chi^2=13.133(p=0.011)$
28	Lack of water facilities	$\chi^2=10.844(p=0.028)$
29	Lack of well-trained teachers	$\chi^2=501.338(p=0.000)$
30	Deficiency of proper teaching materials	$\chi^2=293.411(p=0.000)$
31	Poor monitoring system	$\chi^2=509.943(p=0.000)$
32	Remoteness	$\chi^2=404.164 (p=0.000)$
33	credibility of governmental schools	$\chi^2=364.043(p=0.000)$

Note: * shows significance at 5%.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

This study confirms that there are not only economic and infrastructural but social constrictions to girls' higher education in Pakhtun rural areas. Women are less involved in decision making, are not a budget holder, fear harassment, cannot go to a far-away school, pardah restrictions, and are mostly not allowed to coeducation. It is also evident that mostly poor people study in government schools who are short of money and are mostly devoid of scholarships at schools levels. We conclude that there is an inadequate infrastructure, less trained teachers and low availability of study materials. It is therefore, recommended that education may be made less costly, there may be girls' quota is scholarships, transportation for them and the government to give education more share in budget

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