

EDUCATION AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AT HOUSEHOLD LEVEL: A CASE STUDY OF WOMEN IN RURAL CHINIOT, PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

Gender equality is considered to be the vital concern in the process of development. Therefore, investment in women's empowerment is the key element in improving the economic, political and social conditions in Pakistan, particularly for Punjab in the context of sustainable development. The present study aims at understanding the impact of education on women's empowerment in rural areas of Chiniot. Due to education, women are becoming more aware about their rights, obligations, freedom, and many more. For the present study 113 women were sampled from four villages of Tehsil Chiniot for elaborate research. The results mentioned below showed a positive relationship between education and women's empowerment at household level.

Keywords: Education · Women · Empowerment · Household · Rural Area · Chiniot · Pakistan

INTRODUCTION

Recently many social scientists have paid their attention towards women's empowerment not only in developed but also in developing countries. Although, technological advancement, globalization, internationalization of media and effort made by international institutions, including international non-governmental organizations have create some space for women who are living to compete equal footing but situation is unfortunately still much unsatisfactory. The subordinate position of women in society, even though this position is somewhat attenuated in higher social classes, has well-known manifestations: limited representation in the formal political system, a large share of the economy's informal sector and other types of labor with reduced financial rewards, almost exclusive responsibility for family and children, and the more subtle signs of narrow career aspirations and low self-esteem. Not infrequently, subordination is also manifested in unwanted pregnancies and wife-beating. Women in many societies, particularly in Latin America, have relied on "networks of reciprocal exchange" (Lomnitz, 1977) that provide information and assistance from family, friends, and neighbors to obtain basic services such as health, childcare, food, and even services such as loans and job procurement. These networks operate within all social classes, the poor as well as the elites (Lomnitz, 1977 and 1984).

Informal networks constitute a valuable source of assistance for women. But at another level, these structures create mechanisms of social control through the maintenance of notions of

femininity and masculinity, and through deference to authoritarian, patriarchal rule. If subordination has many facets, so has empowerment. Empowerment is a socio-political concept that goes beyond "formal political participation" and "consciousness raising." Empowerment includes cognitive, psychological, political, and economic components. The cognitive component refers to women's understanding of their conditions of subordination and the causes of such conditions at both micro and macro levels of society. It involves understanding the self and the need to make choices that may go against cultural and social expectations, and understanding patterns of behavior that create dependence, interdependence, and autonomy within the family and in the society at large (Hall, 1992).

It involves acquiring new knowledge to create a different understanding of gender relations as well as destroying old beliefs that structure powerful gender ideologies. The cognitive component of empowerment involves knowledge about their sexuality beyond family planning techniques, for taboos on sex information have mystified the nature of women and men and provided justification for men's physical and mental control of women. Another important cognitive area involves legal rights. In most countries, including democratically advanced nations, legislation for gender equity and women's rights is well ahead of practice; women therefore need to know which legal rights already exist in order to press for their implementation and enforcement. A more comprehensive and articulated type of knowledge needed for empowerment concerns elements that shape conjugal dynamics such as control of wives' fertility, sexuality, child bearing and rearing, companionship, feelings of affection and rejection, unpaid domestic work, and household decision-making. (Beneria and Roldan, 1987).

Women as individuals in Pakistan and further sets up ripples with the power to initiate significant changes in the direction of greater gender parity in Pakistani society. The promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment are viewed as key contributory factors towards achieving a range of high-priority humanitarian targets (United Nations 1996, 2000a).

In Pakistan, socio-cultural values and norms strongly influence women's position in society (Klein and Nestvogel, 1992). Though the patriarchal structure is not uniform across the whole country, in general, society is male-dominated. The gender gap is deep-rooted and violation of constitutional laws is widespread (Mehdi, 2004). Men tend to hold positions of power, while women are adversely affected in all spheres of life (Madhani, 2007). In South Asia, Pakistan is the country with the widest gender gap and discrimination against women continues to persist in all walks of life (UNICEF, 2006).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To analyze the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents
2. To analyze the level of education among women in rural area of Chiniot
3. To find out the level of women's empowerment
4. To find out the relationship (if any) between the level of education and women's empowerment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There have been a number of recent studies in other parts of the world that examine women's empowerment with respect to education at household level. Huyer and Witwer (1997) Africa, Southeast Asia, and Latin America contain some of the poorest countries in the world. These 3rd and 4th World countries are very similar in the problems they face due to extreme poverty, and are distinctive from developed countries with their high unemployment rates, food shortages, shortages in healthcare facilities and resources, and mortality rates, (Miller, W.E.B. DuBois Conference, 1976).

However, what also seems to distinguish developing countries from others is the severity of inequality in welfare between men and women, specifically in regards to health, life expectancy at birth, quality of life, workload, education, legal rights, and economic mobility.

Jiyane & Ocholla, (2004) documented that social isolation due to time and travel restraints prevents rural women from being able to get involved and be represented in the rest of society in order to change these policies and programs for their benefit.

In many developing countries, these women are essential to the national economy because they contribute the majority of the nation's food, and farm exports, and yet few of them own land because many countries deny women land and cattle ownership rights, especially in Africa, (PCC, 1988), (Ikoja-Odongo, 2002), (Mazumdar, 1979). This restricts their financial potential and creates severe inequality in opportunities between women and men, (Kiteme, 1992).

Rutakumwa and Krogman (2000) General discrimination against women results in lack of provision for female health needs in public programs and bad treatment from health practitioners, cheating them of what is actually available to them.

Malhorta et al. (2002) conducted a research to analyze women empowerment by using different approaches. In this paper woman empowerment was examined in different fields like economically, socially and demographically. Researcher also analyzed about women empowerment and its impact or consequences on development and poverty reeducation. The finding of the research was that if the women empowerment is low it will have terrible affect on development and ultimately it will increase poverty.

Senarath and Gunnawardena (2009) conducted a study on women's autonomy in decision making for health care in South Asia. The objective of this study was to discuss the women's autonomy in decision making on health care. Findings revealed that mostly decision of women's health care were without their participation. Women participation in decision making was significantly increase with the age, education and number of children. Women who were employed and earned were more powerful in decision making but those women who were not employed and earned were less participative in decision making. Rural and poor women were less likely to be involved in decision making than urban or rich women.

Acharya et al. (2010) conducted study on women's autonomy in household decision making in Nepal. This study aimed to explore the links between women's household position and their autonomy in decision making. In this study the researcher found out the socio-demographic factors that influence the women's autonomy decision making on health care, purchasing the goods, visiting the family and relatives. Women autonomy in decision making was related with their age, employment, and number of living children. The finding of research was that almost half (47.1%) of ever-married women took decisions on their own health care alone or jointly with their husband, participation in own health care decision making gradually increased by age.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study was conducted in Chiniot District to know the level education and women empowerment at household level. For the present study 113 female respondents were selected through non-probability sampling technique. Sample was selected from four villages of Chiniot Districts by using purposive sampling technique. A semi-structured interview schedule was developed by the researchers which contained different parts like a) the demographic profile of the respondents b) freedom c) women consultation and d) women decision making. Measurement tool was pre-tested from 12 respondents. After the collection of data from field it was edited, and computerized. Further, the data was analyzed by using SPSS version 16.0. Percentage and statistical test was used to draw the conclusion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Education is very important aspect to discuss here because it is a social institution through which society provides its members with important knowledge, including basic facts, job skills, and cultural norms and values (Macionis, 2006). Table no. 1.1 describes the educational distribution of the

respondents. 31.9% respondent's education was metric, 21.2% did bachelor and above. 28.3% women educational status was primary and middle. More than half of the respondents did metric and above level of education. Educated women also socialize their children properly because education does not mean just get the ability of reading and writing but prepare individuals to adjust in environment properly.

Table no.1.2 shows the number of children of the respondents. Majority of the respondents had 3-4 children which were 49.6% of the total respondents, 36.3% respondents had up to 2 child and only 14.1% had 5-6 children. The number of children represents the growth rate of a nation and help for policy making. Table no. 1.3 depicts the family monthly income of the respondent from all resources. Majority (40.7%) of the families of respondents had monthly income category was 15001-20000, 21.2% had 10001-15000, 15.0% had 5001-10000 monthly income while only 8.8% monthly income of the respondents was 20001-25000 and 1.8% had 25001-30000 and 30001 & above.

Table no.1.4 describes the age distribution of the respondents. More than half (52.2%) of the respondents had the age group of 21 – 30 years and 36.3% had 31 – 40, 8.0% had 41 – 50 and only 3.5% respondents had the age group of 51years and above. Age structure of the population plays a very important role in the county policy making and for the purpose of development.

The family is a social institution found in all societies that unite people in cooperative groups to oversee the bearing and raising of children (Macionis, 2006). Table no.1.5 represents the family structure of the respondents. More than half of the respondents were living in joint family system which comprised 55.8% of the total respondent. The other major portion was 30.1% of respondents who were living in nuclear family system and only 14.2 % respondents were living in extended family system. Table no.1.6 shows the husband occupation of the respondent. Mostly respondent's husbands went abroad which was 27.4% of the whole response, 22.1% respondent's husbands were doing private job, 19.5% had government employment and only 3.5% were doing labor.

Table 1 Demographic Characteristic of the Respondents

1.1 Education of the Respondents			1.4 Age of the Respondents		
Category	Frequency	Percent	Category	Frequency	Percent
Primary	15	13.3	21 – 30	59	52.2
Middle	17	15.0	31 – 40	41	36.3
Matric	36	31.9	41 – 50	9	8.0
Intermediate	21	18.6	51 & Above	4	3.5
B.A & Above	24	21.2	Total	113	100
Total	113	100.0			
1.2 Number of Children of the Respondents			1.5 Family Structure of the Respondents		
Category	Frequency	Percent	Category	Frequency	Percent
Up to 2	41	36.3	Nuclear	34	30.1
3 – 4	56	49.6	Joint	63	55.8
5 & Above	16	14.1	Extended	16	14.2
Total	113	100	Total	113	100.0
1.3 Family Monthly Income			1.6 Husband's Occupation of the Respondents		
Category	Frequency	Percent	Category	Frequency	Percent
Up to 5000	12	10.6	Govt. Employee	22	19.5
5001-10000	17	15.0	Private Job	25	22.1
10001-15000	24	21.2	Businessman	18	15.9
15001-20000	46	40.7	Labour	4	3.5
20001-25000	10	8.8	Former	13	11.5
25001-30000	2	1.8	Went abroad	31	27.4
30001 +	2	1.8	Total	113	100.0
Total	113	100.0			

Table no.2.1 shows the freedom of respondents to buy new household goods. Majority (62.8%) of the respondents had to some extent right to buy new household goods. The other major portion of the respondents 25.7% had to great extent and only 11.5% had no right to buy new household goods. Table no.2.2 depicts the freedom of the respondents to spend money in daily life. According to data, Mostly (46.9%) females had to some extent freedom to spend money according to their own choice, 40.7% female were totally free to spend money according to their well and only 12.4% respondents had not freedom to spend money according to their choice.

Table 2 Women Empowerment at Household Level

2.1 Freedom to Buy new Household Goods			2.6 Freedom to Visit Relatives/Friends		
Category	Frequency	Percent	Category	Frequency	Percent
Not At All	13	11.5	Not At All	9	8.0
To Some Extent	71	62.8	To Some Extent	51	45.1
To Great Extent	29	25.7	To Great Extent	53	46.9
Total	113	100.0	Total	113	100.0
2.2 Freedom to Spend Money			2.7 Freedom of Expressing Views		
Category	Frequency	Percent	Category	Frequency	Percent
Not At All	14	12.4	Not At All	14	12.4
To Some Extent	53	46.9	To Some Extent	66	58.4
To Great Extent	46	40.7	To Great Extent	33	29.2
Total	113	100.0	Total	113	100.0
2.3 Freedom to go for Shopping			2.8 Freedom to Attend Social Obligations		
Category	Frequency	Percent	Category	Frequency	Percent
Not At All	7	6.2	Not At All	8	7.1
To Some Extent	43	38.1	To Some Extent	50	44.2
To Great Extent	63	55.8	To Great Extent	55	48.7
Total	113	100.0	Total	113	100.0
2.4 Freedom of Vote			2.9 Utilization of Health Services		
Category	Frequency	Percent	Category	Frequency	Percent
Not At All	18	15.9	Not At All	5	4.4
To Some Extent	44	38.9	To Some Extent	19	16.8
To Great Extent	51	45.1	To Great Extent	89	78.8
Total	113	100.0	Total	113	100.0
2.5 Decision about Size of Family			2.10 Consultation for Children Schooling		
Category	Frequency	Percent	Category	Frequency	Percent
Not At All	7	6.2	Not At All	6	5.3
To Some Extent	45	39.8	To Some Extent	21	18.6
To Great Extent	61	54.0	To Great Extent	86	76.1
Total	113	100.0	Total	113	100.0

Table no.2.3 describes the freedom of female to go for shopping. The major portion of females (55.8%) had to great extent freedom to go for Shopping, 38.1% had to some extent freedom while only 6.2% females had no freedom to go for Shopping. Table no.2.4 depicts the freedom of vote of the respondents. Majority (45.1%) of the females had to great extent freedom to cast vote according to their own choices, 38.9% had to some extent and only 15.9% had no power to vote of their choices.

Table no.2.5 explains the female right to take decision about their family size. More than half (54.0%) of the respondents had to great extent right to take decision about their family size, 39.8% had to some extent while only 6.2% female had no right to take any decision about their family size. Table no. 2.6 describes the respondent's freedom to visit relatives or friend's homes. 46.9% of the respondent had to greet extent freedom to visit their friends or relatives according to their own choice. 45.1% women had to some extent and only 8.0% respondents gave negative response about the freedom to visit their relatives and friends according to their own choice.

Table no.2.7 depicts the freedom to express their views about their family matters of the respondents. The major portion of females (61.70%) had to some extent freedom to express their view about their family matters, 26.60% had to great extent while only 11.70% females had not freedom to express their views about their family matters. Table no.2.8 describes the autonomy of females in the field of social obligations. 50.0% respondents had to great extent freedom to attend the social obligation i.e. (death, birth, marriage, etc.) according to their will, 44.2% had less autonomy to attend social obligation and only 7.1% female had no freedom to attend social obligation according to their own choice.

Table no.2.9 presents the utilization of health services by the respondents. More than half (78.8%) women were to great extent utilize the health services according to their need 16.8% women were to some extent while only 4.4% women could not utilize the health services according to their choice. Table no.2.10 depicts the consultation of the respondents about enrolment of their children in school. 76.1% respondents were to great extent consulted, 18.6% were to some extent and only 5.3% respondents were not consulted about the enrolment of their children in school.

Matthews et al. (2005) measured the women autonomy by the frequency of purchasing important household items. We found in this study that usually women purchase household items for daily use herself. In Pakistani society, usually women take care of house so they better know about the required appliances of household. That's why women are mostly purchase these items which show women autonomy because they can continue purchasing these things if they are not stopped by anyone from the household. In the study it was found that most women often buy household items.

Table 3 Level of Education and Women Empowerment at Household Level

Women Empowerment at Household level	Education of the Respondents			Total
	Primary	Middle	Matric & Above	
Low	2 (1.8%)	2 (1.8%)	5 (4.4%)	9 (8.1%)
Medium	5 (4.4%)	5 (4.4%)	33 (29.2%)	43 (38.1%)
High	8 (7.1%)	10 (8.8%)	43 (38.1%)	61 (54.0%)
Total	15 (13.3%)	17 (15.0%)	81 (71.7%)	113 (100.0%)

Table 3. depicts the level of education and women empowerment at household level. According to calculated data 71.7% respondents education status was metric and above, 15.0 % were middle and only 13.3% women were at primary level. While on the other hand, 54.0% women had higher level of empowerment at household level, 38.1% had medium level, while only 8.1% had low level of empowerment. It is concluded that education of women had greater impact on their level of empowerment. It showed the positive relationship between level of education and women empowerment at household level. The relationship of both variable was positive.

CONCLUSION

Education is important for everyone, but it is especially significant for girls and women. This is true not only because education is an entry point to other opportunities, but also because the educational achievements of women can have ripple effects within the family and across generations. Education s creating awareness about the right and freedom of women in Pakistani society i.e. political, social, domestic, economic, employment and religious. Women are empowering to participate in decision making of different matters in their everyday lives. The women's movement and a wide-spread network of non-Government Organizations should strong grass-roots presence and deep insight into women's concerns which is contributed in inspiring initiatives for the empowerment of women. It is the need of the day to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women and create environment through positive economic and social policies for full development of women to enable them to realize their full potential. There should equal access to education for women and girls will be ensured. Special measures will be taken to eliminate discrimination, universalize education,

eradication of illiteracy, increase enrolment and preservation rates of girls and improve the quality of education to facilitate life-long learning as well as development of occupation/vocation/technical skills by women. Reducing the gender gap in secondary and higher education would be a focus area.

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