Physical and Infrastructural Obstacles to Women’s Education in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pakistan

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Women’s education has been identified as one of the primary agents of transformation towards development. However, illiteracy among women is one of the major challenges facing most of the underdeveloped countries. This study investigates the physical and infrastructural impediments that hamper women’s education. The study was conducted in Amandara; sub-village of Malakand Division Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pakistan. A comprehensive survey was made with the help of pre-designed formula with structure questions. The data was collected from 250 respondents (educated female having graduation) with the help of purposive sampling technique. It has been concluded that physical and infrastructural obstacles contributes in women’s vulnerability regarding education. The study recommends that increase in female schools, colleges, transport and infrastructural facilities will promote women’s education in the area.

Keywords: women, education, females’ schools, colleges, teachers, transport and educational facilities.

Education is universally recognized as a dominant accelerating factor that benefits individuals to promote national development. In fact, education plays a pivotal role in capacity building and faculty development in terms of opportunities that are created and enhanced by educated members of the society (Chaudhry, 2010; Stephan, 2004; Appiah & Walter, 2002). In addition, educated females (in particular) produce socio-economic benefits to the society including increased economic productivity, higher family incomes and improved health and survival chances for infant and children (Nayak & Nair, 2005; Colclough et. al, 2000; Chaudhry, 2009). Education has always been regarded as a developmental tool that is directly associated with women’s empowerment and independence (Velkoff, 1998; Berhman, 1997; Alderman & King 1998).

The country has been susceptible to multi challenges since its existence among them education is regarded a top priority. Despite the various developmental plans and measures, the overall improvement in Pakistan’s literacy rate since its independence is 45 percent (56.5 percent for males and 32.6 percent for females, which is comparatively alarming in the region (ECS, 1998; Global Gender Gap Report, 2006). The rapid population growth has raised the literacy level at one hand, while on the other, the ratio of illiterate masses has been alarmingly augmented (Gulati, 2006) where females constitute more than triple (ABDR, 2000). Besides, the existence of gender discrimination in the context of education is obvious in rural-urban structures throughout the country (Jewkes, 2003; Naz, 2011).

The importance of education as argued by Haq (2000) is pivotal for empowerment in terms of oppression and suppression of women through customs and traditions while to Daraz (2012) and Khan (2012) its importance is necessary for solving the existing social evils in the society. Throughout the globe in general and the under-developed countries (UDCs) in particular, women are inadequately treated in terms of education, health, social status, opportunities, legal rights and employment etc (BEC, 2004; DeJaeghere, 2004; Kendall, 2006). Looking to the educational statistics among the poorest countries it has been calculated that in 1990, only 5% of adult women had any secondary education as compare to men, which has adversely affected the economic development of the country that has lowered the per capita income. While in contrast the richest nations have 51% of adult women secondary education that stabilizes the economic well being (Kane, 2004; Dollar & Gatti, 1999; World Bank, 2001; Schultz, 2002; King & Hill, 1993).

Deprivation of women in the educational sector can be linked to many of the physical, socio-cultural, religious, political and infrastructural factors (Naz et al, 2011). Physical and infrastructural impediments are the major threats to women’s education. In this context, the WEF (2000) report has stated that 113 million children had no approach to primary education in 2000, while Levine et al (2003) reflects that 880 million adults were illiterate. The assessment also indicated the need to look at girls’ education as a component of the global and national drive for education for all; it was learned that education of girls must be considered in the
According to the GMR (2005-06), women literacy has got the attraction of thinkers while addressing issues related to gender inequality. The World Bank (2000) reflects that among the 880 million illiterate adults and youth, 60 percent of them are women. According to an estimate of the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (2006), there are 781 million illiterate adults in the world where more than 64 % are women.

In order to conclude the discussion, it can be easily elaborated that the physical and infrastructural facilities negatively affect the education, while women are left at the marginalized state. Resultantly, women’s low input and output in the educational sector lead to cause hindrances in the social and national development.

The Argument

Standardized women’s education Pakistan has always been dreamt phenomenon where they are supposed to live inside the four walls while men are considered as the earning units. In relation to the argument Arif et. al. (1999) reflects that majority of girls instead of intelligence and potentials remain illiterate due numerous factors including physical and infrastructural facilities. Same is the case with Pakhtun culture where women are restricted within the four walls of their house, in-spite of this approach there is physical barriers to women’s education (Daraz, 2012). In this regard Kabeer, (2003) illustrate that traditional and customary approach towards female education adversely affect women’s enrolment while Naz et al (2011) stresses that lack of educational institution is among the causes of low women’s education.

Developing the arguments of physical and infrastructural obstacles in relations to women’s education; Ibrahim (2012) argues that it is well-known fact that in Pakhtun culture women are just like a statue of modesty and chastity. There is lack of female teacher and Pakhtuns did not allow women to be taught by male teachers. As Haq (2000) augments that South Asian culture place a high value on the chastity of girls, and therefore parents are often reluctant to allow their daughters to be taught by male teachers which adversely affect women’s status and creates an environment of illiteracy. In this scenario, the Population Census of (1998) shows, that lack of female school and teacher affect the overall literacy rate in Pakistan (45 percent). The number of literate females increased from 0.8 million in 1961 to 11.4 million in 1998-97 that accounts for a very low level of literacy in comparison (Kaur, 2006). Expressing the gender gap in education, as Latif (2007) argues that many factors exist about the diversity in female education including limited numbers of educational institutions in the country and accessibility to those that bring negative impacts on women’s education.

Women’s education in rural area, its status and position not satisfies the challenging needs of 21st century because there still exists barriers in sending females to schools.
situated at distance ABDR, 2000). In Pakhtun society the school is situated at far flung areas; with no transport facilities available in school and local area, parents are reluctant to enroll their female child in schools without separate facilities for girls, or to attend boarding schools in distant towns as similarly elaborated by Daraz (2012). In the context of the research locality; girls are traditionally expected to be married at early age, which affect their enrolment in educational institutions while those who are enrolled have deficient facilities in terms of infrastructure and social structure.

Objectives

- To investigate physical impediments which obstruct female education ratio among Pakhtuns
- To investigate infrastructural obstacles affecting women’s education in the research area

Hypotheses

- Physical impediments have strong correlation with women’s illiteracy
- Lack of infrastructural facilities decrease women’s education in Pakhtun society

Method

The study was conducted in sub Village Amandara Malakand Division Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pakistan. The total population of the Village is 6374, whereas the educational ratio of male to female is (45:09). In this connection, such a low percentage of female education in the area alarmingly reflects the prevalence of impediments. The active presence of physical and infrastructural hindrances in this regard adversely affect women’s education and status and The low percent of female (09%) educational ratio demonstrate the intensity of physical and infrastructural impediments to women’s education which adversely affect their status and leads to decrease the overall literacy ratio of the area. The target population of the study was defined (educated female having BA/BSC degree and above). To survey the Village, the services of technical expert had been utilized with the help of pre-designed Performa having structured questions. The data was collected from 175 respondents with the help of purposive sampling technique.

Results and Discussion

Results of the current study have been drawn on the basis of primary and secondary information. In this connection, the primary information has been related to the literary data in terms of agreement, disagreement and bridging the gap between theory and practice. The primary information has been analyzed in the form of tables along-with percentage mentioned against each variable. The tabulated data has further been described under each table for more authentication and clarification.
The table illustrates infrastructural obstacles to women’s education in Pakhtun society. In this context, Rafiq (2000) explores that major obstacles in achieving the goal of universal primary education are inadequate educational infrastructure and services due to the lack of resources with the government both in terms of material and manpower. The statistical analysis unveils that 22% respondents were of the opinion that lack of class rooms in schools and colleges adversely affects women’s education. 16 % respondents replied that lack of books also relegates women’s status in the context of education. As Robinson-Pant (2004) argues that students without standardized text books find it more difficult to ensure their study, which hinders their understanding of lectures. In addition, 23% respondents complained regarding lack of libraries, inadequate laboratories, non-availability of computers for students and lack of adequate resources to buy recent publications and order for the basic journals which necessarily put a heavy toll on women’s education (Tisdell & Regmi, 2005). The table further highlights the views of 18% and 21% respondents stating that there is no structure or shelter for children and they even lack basic amenities such as blackboard, chalk, chairs, desks or floor mats, and clean drinking water facilities. Such a condition, they conclude, highly discourages women’s education in Pakhtun society (Sathar et. al, 2000).

### Conclusion

Congregationally, the present research study assess that women’s education is a global dilemma that has been addressed by researchers throughout the globe. The hefty literature produced by scholars in multi-dimensions reflect that it has been a matter of concern for most the social scientists. This study (in particular) diagnosis that women’s education among Pakthuns is a predicament and observed at its worst stage. It has been concluded that there is immense scarcity of female teachers and schools while in some remote areas, schools have even no existence. Besides, the existing schools are pathetic condition in terms of poor roads and improper transportation makes them inaccessible. Such a pitiable condition of most of the schools is also caused by the lack of female teachers that adversely affect women’s education and diminishes their status in developmental process.

Apart from the mentioned obstacles, infrastructural limitations have also been identified as the obscuring factors in terms women’s education. In this connection, the study reflects that infrastructural facilities such as libraries, laboratories, audio-visual learning aids and conducive environment teaching further adds to the already damaged educational structure in the area. The primary information in relation with the literary data reflect that seating arrangements for students are in worse condition where even chairs are not available and the students use to sit on floor. Besides, the availability of black boards, chalks and other required stationary are also barely available that has undesirable effects on educational sector in the area while women education is specifically affected. In the nutshell the study reaches to the conclusion that women’s education in the target area is at the verge of decline and needs proper attention and concentration of the concerned authorities for betterment of the area and future endeavors.

### Recommendations

Quality assurance and objective achievements are the essential elements of an educational strategy generally being designed to ensure that boys and girls may explore, realize and boast their potential up to its fullest. In this respect, Local community organizations also help fill such gaps where government fails to provide educational services properly. However, providing viable and effective educational services is one of the main responsibilities of a state. In the current study’s context, whereby a huge gap in terms of the lack of broad level physical and specific level infrastructural level facilities concerning female education has been identified, there is an urgent need and expectation from the government to launch a comprehensive women’s education program countrywide.

### References


### Table-2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of class room</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of availability of books</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No availability of library, laboratory</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and computers for students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scarcity of black board and chairs</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of floor mate, chalk and clean drinking water</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>250</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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