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The Complexities of Masculinity and Femininity in Khyber Pukhtunkhwa, Pakistan

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Abstract

This article highlights historical background of Pakistani education system with special reference to gender relations and society. It further discusses the geographical location, population, demography and language of the country to understand the dynamics of masculinity and femininity in the province. The study outlines ethnic and religious dimensions of the people influencing the education system, with focus on Khyber Pukhtunkhwa[2]. Moreover, an analysis of some critical gender issues, regarding women status in the country is attempted. The study concludes that poverty, economic dependency, lack of social security system and a poor education infrastructure are some of the issues of masculinity and femininity in Pakistan. Gender empowerment is limited to slogans, as women access to education and her rights of Islamic inheritance and *Haq Mehr* (bride money) are altered by cultural discourses.

Keywords: Pakistan; culture; Society; Gender issues

Introduction

Pakistan's annual Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is 2.2%, slightly more than half of the desired 4%. Pakistan is one of the countries, spending the least amount of money on education in all of South Asia which has caused indicators of educational attainment around the country to be lowest. The 2006-2007 estimates for literacy were 45.7% for those of 15 years of age and older (59.8% for males and 30.6% for females). The country's rate for enrolment in education for those aged 5 to 24 is 36% (41.2% for males, 30.4% for females), and literacy and enrolment rates tend to be higher in urban areas (FBS, 2009:11).

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[2] Being an academician and native of this province, I choose writing 'Khyber Pukhtunkhwa' rather than the official spelling 'Pakhtunkhwa' in this study.

A Brief Historical Summary of Women Education in the Subcontinent

Historically, education in the Indian subcontinent, especially for the women population was religious and traditional only. In 712AD, Muslims came and brought their Islamic culture and education to India. Education was limited to *madaris* (mosque schools) and mosque-based religious scholars (Heyneman, 2004). The Quran and *Hadiths* were the main curriculum, along with the Arabic and Persian language and literature.

Any spread of education was thus a 'voluntary spontaneous growth' and was confined to metropolitan and urban centres (Qureshi, 1983: 174; cited in Hussain, 1995). Formal education for women was also limited to their native languages and literature and Quranic studies. In the absence of official schooling systems, the elite and upper-class women had private tuition at home, leaving middle and working classes women uneducated. This education system prevailed until the British education system arrived.

> Thus, education in the subcontinent was initially the privilege of the theocracy and the upper classes. Persian was the language of official business. Structure of learning throughout the Muslim world was substantially identical, till it was replaced in 1835 by a decision of the British to launch English education and western learning in India (Hussain, 1995: 47).

The change in the pedagogical structure of the *madaris* divided the people into two groups; traditionalist and modernist. The former were reluctant to send their women to English (modern) education, as it clashed with their culture and religion. Local languages lost their status: for example, Persian and Hindi were the only ones to be selected as elective subjects in the curriculum (Qureshi, 1983).

After the downfall of the Mughal Empire in 1857, Muslims were treated as an insignificant religious group. They were isolated culturally and religiously from all economic, social, cultural and educational developments. Muslim educational infrastructure was profoundly theological, while the English education was more secular and based on modern science. Education for the Muslims was religion based only, such as Quranic learning, translation and explanation, jurisprudence, logic, theology, metaphysics and medicine. Mosques were the centres of instruction and of literary activity. The *maktab* (school) or *madaris* sometimes hired houses to use as schools because they lacked the funds to erect proper buildings. People were reluctant to use the English education system, as they considered it to be the preaching of Christianity, rather than modern education (Qureshi, 1983; Quddus, 2008).

However, the prodigal Muslim thinker, Sayyad Ahmed Khan, who lived from 1818-1889, realized that the Muslims with all the educational and economic backwardness could not overthrow British rule in the near future. Muslim social and political development was very limited at the time, because of their isolation from the English education system. Therefore, Muslim thinkers concluded that Muslims should join the English education system. Gradually, Muslims started attaining an English education, which in turn amplified their socio-political awareness. Allama Muhammad Iqbal, the national poet presented the idea of a separate statehood, by joining the Muslim majority areas of the Indian subcontinent. His dream was fulfilled by Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, who politically mobilised the Muslims under the banner of Muslim League. Their struggle for independence succeeded in 1947 in the newly-formed nation of Pakistan.

The spread of education among women brought feminism into the politics of the Indian subcontinent. The national cause of freedom provided a joint venture to the Hindu and Muslim women, first for their fundamental social and legal rights, and then for their right to education. The partition of the subcontinent was a reaction against the British education policy, and was part of the new wave of consciousness for national freedom that drew the women in Pakistan, as well as in Khyber Pukhtunkhwa to struggle side by side with their male counterparts (Khattak and Hussain, 2018). Although women' participation in the province was very limited, when compared to the rest of the country, it was not insignificant (Shah, 1998). Interestingly, in the freedom struggle, men allowed women in this conservative society to support them without considering it a violation of cultural and religious norms such as *purdah* (veil) (Khattak, 2003). Hussain, (2001:49) argues that sociologists wonder how much it was due to the 'need of nationalistic movements rather than an acceptance of the oppressed state of women'.

Thus, women education was not given any importance because of the non-availability of Muslim schools as well as negative propaganda against western education. This blocked the way for women to actively participate in social and educational change in society. There were very limited opportunities for women's teaching and learning. Veiling in the public and private sphere was a religious and cultural tradition of India. Changes occurred with the introduction of western education, which commenced the redefinition of the traditional role of women in the subcontinent, but Muslims were still reluctant to enrol their daughters in English schools. The right to education was granted to women in 1819 by the East India Company (Phillips, 1940); in 1820, girl schools were established, which paved the way for women's higher education (Qureshi, 1983).

Western education came to Khyber Pukhtunkhwa (former NWFP) rather late in comparison to the other parts of India, owing to a number of factors. It was

many years after the British conquest of the province that modern education, which was in fact was 'Western education', spread among the people. Of course, the first attempts in this direction had been made by the Christian Missionaries too, but western education had no immediate effects on Khyber Pukhtunkhwa society because of the strong hold of traditional norms. The status of women did not improve much with the opening of the society to modernity. According to the Census Report of 1911, the proportion of the female population in the province was 817 women per 1000 males (Census Report of India, 1912). It reached 843 females per 1000 males in 1931 (Census Report, 1931). Literate males of all religions were 58 per 1000 and literate females were only 6 per 1000 (Census Report of India, 1931). Interestingly, only one Muslim female out of 1000 in the Frontier was able to read and write.

The unjust partition plan gave an unstable educational infrastructure to Pakistan. Most of the famous educational institutes fell within the boundaries of the territory of India: Pakistan received only two of undivided India's 21 universities. One was located in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and the other in West Pakistan, in Lahore (Hussain, 1995). In 1947, Pakistan possessed a total of 83 colleges, 3 engineering colleges, 108 teacher training schools and 71 assorted technical, industrial and agricultural institutions (Iqbal, 2000; Hussain, 2002; Qureshi and Rarieya, 2007 in Hussain, 1995). These educational institutes were very few in number, so the allocation of places in them went to men rather than women. Most of the institutes were located in Lahore (Punjab), and therefore very few women from far flung areas could afford to travel there for education. The legacy of 65 years is still prevalent in the province, as distance is still one of the major factors affecting womens' access to education. Pukhtun women were also discouraged from obtaining a contemporary education, and the cultural preference still leans more towards religious education.

The Language of Instructions

The education system of Pakistan uses two languages as medium of instruction: English and Urdu. Almost all the private schools are English-medium, where the subjects are taught in English; in government or public sector schools, Urdu is the language of instruction while, English is taught as core subject in the translation method of teaching. Using English as the language of instruction is often frequently criticised by the educationists because only the elite or upper-class has access to these English-medium schools. English medium schools provide better opportunities to become proficient in the English language. This gives their students access to Western education centres as well as the potential for increased social and economic mobility (Qureshi, 1983 in Hussain, 1995). Students, who are taught in Urdu at school, struggle when they get to universities where the medium of instruction is English. In addition, most of the reference books of higher education are available in English only. As a result, only those

students who have a good English language background can hope to obtain degree level qualifications. There are also *Dini-madaris* (Islamic Schools) for free Islamic-oriented education. They also provide free accommodations and food in the mosques or in affiliated *madaris*. Poor families prefer Islamic *madaris* because of their free facilities and incentive, where government schools are not available in the locality. The medium of instruction of these schools is usually the regional language. However, while the *Dini-madaris* are an important aspect of the education sector in Pakistan, they are not worth considering in detail, as this study concerns government and private school students and Islamic Studies is a core subject up to BA/BSc in the government and private schools.

> Proficiency in English is an important requirement for admission into Pakistani and foreign universities, as these schools require prospective students to pass competitive tests like the Scholastic Aptitude Test, Test of English as a Foreign Language and the Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT). These tests require a proficient command of the English language. When sitting these tests, students who have been educated in English have a considerable advantage over those who have been educated in Urdu (Hussain, 1995: 53).

English medium institutes are further divided into elite and non-elite English medium schools; however, the discussion about the elite English medium schools was only about who borrowed their curriculum from Oxford or Cambridge textbooks. They set good standards of education provision for the country. Indeed, these institutions are the most expensive in term of their fee structures. The Urdu medium schools have minimal admissions fees and teach only in the national language. Their educational standards cannot compete with the English medium schools because of the low standard vernacular provided by the Textbook Boards of the Provinces in the country. They do not upgrade the curriculum according to the children's needs; sometimes parents and children study the same syllabus in the schools. Thus, Urdu medium schools give more emphasis to rote memorisation instead of creativity or understanding the concepts of subject matter.

This linguistic complexity is fostering and reproducing the class system in society, where one school system produces high class executives and the other, lower class employees. Therefore, attaining education is very dependent on the economic status of the individual's family. Pakistan has a very low literacy rate as compared to the other developing South Asian countries, because of the allocation of low GDP (2.2%) and rarely produced up-standard material for the government schools.

Historically, education in Pakistan has developed as a privilege of the theocracy and the upper classes; a trend that has left visible imprints on the current educational milieu, class and the theocracy still maintaining a prominent stake in the politics and evolution of the process (Rehman, 2006: 89).

> Rehman further argued that this elite class had a better chance with the English language, which they adopted as a culture too, to differentiate and raise them over Urdu-medium or traditional (*Dini-madaris*) stakeholders. Above all, this is the kind of cultural capital, which has snob value and constitutes a class identity marker (Rehman, 2006). This study upholds the Marxist feminists' theory regarding education, because the education system in Pakistan is also cultivating and reproducing a class system in society by its dual language of instruction. Lower-middle and working-class people cannot afford access to those high-fee English medium schools. Therefore, the students from the working-class (male and female) are having learning difficulties and have difficulties in coping to the demands of higher education institutes.

The Social/Economic Class System in Pakistan

A social or economic class in this study is relatively a homogeneous group of people in the Pukhtun society. There are similar characteristics in terms of education and different income and occupations. The categorization of social or economic classes should be: upper, middle and working social or economic classes.

The upper social class are generally the high-income classes of the society. Most of the highly paid professions are top-class businessmen, those in management and leadership and entrepreneurs. They live in wealthy areas of the country; money is not a problem for them, and they are therefore educated in foreign countries in institutions like Oxford or Cambridge universities. They represent 2 percent of the total society and approximately 3.7 million people. They have 60 to 65 percent of the wealth the country (FBS, 2009).

The middle social economic class income is more modest; their houses are not too big, and they cannot afford huge houses in expensive areas. They are 28 percent of the total population, 53 to 54 million approximately (FBS, 2009). Their occupations are small businessmen, middle class management, and low-ranking government officers.

The working social economic class occupy the lowest-paid professional jobs of the society. They cannot afford to build a one- or two-bedroom house with their limited household resources, etc. They are 70 percent of the total population of Pakistan (FBS, 2009). They consist of small shopkeepers, skilled or semi-skilled and unskilled workers, lower ranked government staff (peons, drivers), and poor farmers. This social class system is one of the causes of women's lack of participation in education. Marxist feminism observes women's oppression linked to the division of class system within the society. This division of society into different social and economic classes has an immense impact on women's development. Marxist/socialists criticise education as an important means to maintain capitalism and patriarchal relations in western and eastern societies, and Khyber Pukhtunkhwa's society is one of the examples of capitalist women's oppression.

The divisions between the social and economic classes are flexible and difficult to demarcate. Since, it is impossible to draw clear lines between the classes; this has resulted in an imprecise depiction of the class system in this study. In the original study sample women fathers' income classifies them by economic class, not by social class as the social class included so many other variables, such as residential areas and living standards. The place of residence criteria was valuable, but it was not included in the main body of this study. Some upper-class people in Pakistan prefer to live in their big, old family houses while upper middle class people reside in luxurious bungalows in the cities.

The Structure of Higher Education

Higher education in Western countries is structured slightly differently than higher education in Pakistan, because Bachelor of Arts (BA) and Bachelor of Sciences (BSc) degrees area part of college education, although exams for these are given by the university but are not considered part of higher education. The University Grants Commission's (UGC)[3] allocation of funds to degree colleges is another problem that affects student efficiency (Mazari, 2007). Many of the degree colleges are in miserable condition because of poor infrastructure, lack of equipment, furniture and modern library books and laboratories. Student dormitories are also poorly maintained and insecure.

In such situations, parents do not encourage their daughters to enter higher education, although, in contrast, they send their sons to private colleges or other semi-government colleges with good facilities to other cities or provinces (Mazari, 2007; Khan, 2007; World Bank, 2005). Furthermore, the diversity of optional subjects and different subject combinations that are available at colleges

[3] Presently Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan.

produces un-economic class sizes, which have a negative effect on teacher and student efficiency. Too few teachers for too many subject options divide the students into small groups, which then have to be taught by a large number of faculty members. This adds to the financial and administrative muddle already in operation in higher education (Khan, 2007:13).

Moreover, the two years BA/BSc degree course was under continual criticism. According to Isani and Virk (2007) and the World Bank (2007), the National Educational Policy of Pakistan (1998) envisaged extending it to four years to keep with the international standard. Therefore, in 2018 the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan (HEC) demanded all the public and private universities to introduce four years bachelor's degrees on the semester system and completely discontinue the two years BA/BSc. and MA/MSc. programmes by 2020.

In Pakistan, there are seven gender studies centres at the moment. It is argued that these centres are lacking trained faculty and funding. Gender as a subject is not fully introduced in the academia yet the nation needs fully mastered human resources. The subject is interdisciplinary in nature, exploring major human endeavour through a gendered lens (Safdar, 2012). The academia and the society have foggy perceptions about the concept of gender. It will take time to digest gender as a subject. The Ministry of Women and Development is working ineffectively in the field of research on gender and education due to their lacking trained staff and funds (Safdar, 2012).

The Concept of Women-only Universities

The issue of having a separate university for women has been a burning issue for a long time. The country's religious class and most of the political parties' manifestos recommended this for the country, particularly for places like the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. After a long struggle by women activists, Fatima Jinnah University for Women was founded in Punjab in 1995. Following this example, each province of the country established at least a couple of women universities and women medical colleges. There are also a considerable number of post-graduate women colleges and some universities have women separate campuses. The Frontier Women University (renamed Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University Peshawar, in 2010) was founded in 2005. A temporary campus for the university has been provided in Frontier College for Women, but now it has a fully furnished campus at Larrama, Charssada Road Peshawar. Women universities provide segregated educational opportunities to female students in the region to increase women participation in higher education. However as compared to the other government (co-educational) universities, their numbers are not sufficient for the needs of the female population (Naz, et al.,

2011). Secondly, they are mostly located in far flung urban areas; therefore, only urban women have access to them. The Frontier Women University in the province is facing the criticism that they offer very limited subjects for MA/MSc and MPhil/PhD levels, and the hostel buildings are not spacious enough to accommodate a large number of out-stationed students and teaching staff.

Gender Inequality in Pakistan

The following is a brief list of some of the critical issues of gender inequality in Pakistan, with a special reference to Khyber Pukhtunkhwa.

Poverty: A Women's Face in Pakistan

Economic growth in the country is not strong enough to reduce the poverty of the masses in any serious way. The number of absolute poor has increased from 19 million in 1960 to 49 million in 2005 (UNDP, 2010). Gender analysis of poverty is very limited because of the limited amount of gender-specific data available. Poverty is higher in rural areas than in urban areas of the country; three quarters of people live below the poverty line (UNDP, 2010). ADB (2000:7) noted that 'feminisation of poverty is a global phenomenon and poverty in Pakistan has a woman's face'. Women are poorer than men and are in more vulnerable positions because of their dependency on men. There is inequality in the distribution of household resources among the male and female members of family. Women's access to economic and productive resources is very limited, and they also have very unequal access to education, health, and other social services (ADB, 2000). Khyber Pukhtunkhwa's rural women help their family men in agricultural labour. Urban women have some sort of liberty to study and work (within cultural limitations), but they are not exempted from their household responsibilities; they have to manage both at once. Poverty decreases both male and female access to education (Aslam, 2007).

Socio-cultural Imprisonment

The patriarchal structures in Khyber Pukhtunkhwa are stronger in the rural and tribal areas as compared to other provinces of Pakistan. The local customs and traditions are institutionalised towards male domination. The rural character is predominately uneducated and therefore patriarchal control of women in the province is stronger than in the rest of the country. Women's oppression varies across different economic classes and in rural and urban settings. A woman has limited power of choice over her marriage, education or work. She is bought and sold like a commodity in marriage contracts. It is indeed a dilemma that these socio-cultural factors shape male and female roles in Pukhtun society.

Although Islam is often blamed for shaping gender ideology in the country, the class divisions prevailing amongst the tribal traditions further institutionalises the subordination of women (ADB, 2000). Therefore, a recurring theme through this study is the specific form of the culturalisation of Islam in Khyber Pukhtunkhwa restricts women's access to education, and women's rights in general, more severely than in other parts of Pakistan.

Bourdieu's (1999) theory of social and culture reproduction is a sociological term describing it a 'process which sustains or perpetuates characteristics of a given social structure or tradition over a period of time (Bourdieu, 1999: 37)'.Cultural reproduction transfers the existing cultural values and norms from generation to generation (David, 1997; McDonald, 1980).

> Cultural reproduction refers to the mechanisms by which continuity of cultural experience is sustained across time which results (though not unproblematically) in social reproduction or the process of transferring or reproducing aspects of society (such as class, again, not unproblematically) from generation to generation (David, 1997: 119).

Cultural reproduction always manages to take place through hidden schemes and curricula. The society adapts cultural norms according to their needs and transmits certain aspects of behaviour to the next generation (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977). 'This interaction between individuals resulting in the transfer of accepted cultural norms, values, and information is accomplished through a process known as socialisation (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977:45).

In Pakistan, women's socialisation and social values are negatively interpreted by the society. A female will not endeavour to be a provider for her family, because it is the social and religious responsibility of men to do this. However, Islam does not stop or discourage a woman from working if she can spare sometime to raise her children and to comfort her husband. However uneducated parents do not encourage their daughter to work. They want to see her as a good wife and daughter-in-law. Educated parents, on the other hand, put their efforts into getting their daughters an education to equip them to handle future financial problems. Thus, parental education and parental control are two variables that will be tested through the sample group to explore causes of family encouragement and discouragement with regard to women's education and work.

The Dilemma of Social Security

Violence against women is the most powerful mechanism used by family, society, and state to silence voices of resistance to the existing gender-related

social order (UNIFEM, 2005: 13). Such violence has prevailed in the South Asian societies for centuries and is the basis of unequal power relations between men and women. Pakistani society gives authority over the woman to the man; this is a misinterpretation of the Quranic concept of '*qawamoon*' (this literally means 'active involvement or role to support family women'). Pakistani society essentially allows the violation of gender human rights. The different forms of the violence against women in Pakistan include physical and mental torture, murder and honour killing, sexual harassment and rape, the kidnapping and trafficking of women, and forced prostitution (UNIFEM, 2005: 15, cited in ADB, 2000). However, the report further says that it is difficult to assess these violent incidents because of the missing details; also, since the honour of the family is involved, a majority of such incidents are not reported to police.

Violence in Pukhtun society is hardly recognised as an issue, as it is deep-rooted in the culture of the province. Such domestic violence occurs in every class of society. Slapping, hitting, and kicking, and even murder are some common forms of domestic violence. Since society, police and law enforcement agencies view domestic violence as a private matter, it goes unnoticed until it takes the extreme forms of murder or attempted murder (UNIFEM, 2005: 15). Domestic violence takes place in approximately 80% of the households in the country (World Bank, 2002; WDRW, 2003).Women fail to report these incidents of violence due to their lack of education, unawareness of their rights, and fear of repercussion and social exclusion. This fear is one of the causes of parents' reluctance regarding women's higher education that their daughter will suffer in society; so they react over-protectively, taking measures such as not letting her outside of the house. Although higher education will empower women to take defensive measures against crimes, of domestic violence and rape etc. Thus, higher education would be a possible preparation for women's future challenges.

According to official statistics, one woman is raped every six hours in Pakistan (WDRW, 2003, cited in ADB, 2000). The report further says, marital rape is not considered a crime in Pakistani law, because the marital relationships between a husband and wife is a private matter, which often means that in practice, it is decided by the man. This means that women have no formal right over their own sexuality. As a result of tradition and culture, it is justified to claim that women can easily be exchanged—bought or sold—as a commodity; this is called *swarra* in the Pukhtun society. Another such practice is, 'marriage to the Quran', which is when a woman is forced into a marriage contract (*Nikkah*) with the Quran. This means that she is considered married and not allowed to marry a man, rather like a Roman Catholic nun, who is considered to be married to God. A difference is that where this tradition is observed within Islamic societies, as in rural areas of Sindh Province, Pakistan, women are forced into this 'marriage'.

Those women are unaware of their rights and they are silent due to the honour of their men and family.

There is no support for women against male violence. The government constructed *darul-amaans* (shelters) are only 13 in the country (FBS, 2008; UNIFEM, 2005). 'The living conditions in these shelters reinforce women's subordination and oppression by establishing control over their sexuality and mobility instead of providing them with a supportive environment, where they can rebuild their own lives' (UNIFEM, 2005:76). Women's economic dependency makes them vulnerable, so that they cannot protect themselves from being victims of violence. The legal system of Pakistan does not encourage women to apply for legal support, and the high costs and delays of legal action further discourage women survivors from seeking justice. Lack of education leaves them at the mercy of men and society's social structure. Malik and Courtney (2011: 31) maintain that women who gain access to higher education and afterwards enter employment experience a reduced amount of violence directed against them. They can manage their rights within the strong cultural and traditional values of society.

Disparities in Socio-economic Status

Women in Pakistan have restricted access to their economic resources. Rural women are involved in the agricultural sector, and a good number of women in the urban areas are working as domestic labour, running family businesses and doing other non-formal economic activities, but as such their presence is invisible (Patel, 2001).Women participation in serious economic activities is neither encouraged nor appreciated; in most cases, the country statistics do not even report it (Nasira, 2000; Cook, 2007).

Economically, Pakistan is an underdeveloped country. It is suffering from decades of internal political and economic instability. The country's economy relies on foreign aid. Women work largely in the agricultural sector, but they are unskilled labour: they have no proper training to use mechanical or technological agricultural aids. Clerical, secretarial and teaching jobs are considered suitable for women, so women can be seen as typists, secretaries, librarians, teachers and receptionists in urban areas while in rural areas female preference is to join teaching jobs in segregated workplaces, because only these are considered to be respectable in Khyber Pukhtunkhwa. Women are professionally represented more in health and education than any other sector; constituting 30% of the teachers and 20% of the doctors in the urban areas (PGR, 2008). Nurses and health workers are usually women. The percentage of women in non-traditional professions (management, executive, industries, law and commerce) is critically low in Pakistan.

Inequality in economic participation is a major factor explored by this study. How does it affect the economic and family status of women? To what extent does it have influence on their decisions about higher education? What sort of reactions do they face from their families? Do economically sound families have easy access to higher education?

> Together with the fundamental socio-cultural bias in favour of males, the economic factor, especially in terms of grinding poverty and hunger, is probably the most influential in adversely affecting female participation in education, especially in rural areas (Aslam, 2007:np).

In such harsh economic circumstances, parents are hardly willing to send their daughters to school because their parents need to buy books, uniforms and other resources while on the other hand they will lose vital help at home and on the land (Brook and Cammish, 1999).

> In most cases, the contribution of females is unpaid and they may have little or no experience of handling of money, which further reduces their status and power, but increases their vulnerability. Because of the patriarchal and patrilocal predominance, investment in a girl's schooling is considered wasteful since it benefits the family into which a girl marries rather than her own (Brock and Cammish, 1999:37).

Aslam and Kingdon (2010) explored the household expenditure in Khyber Pukhtunkhwa of families with children aged 5-25 and found that they spent more on boys (4.5%) as compared to girls (1.6%). They further argue that the elite and upper classes invest in their women education, but preference is always given to their daughter's marriage as soon they get a suitable proposal. Vocational education in the country is very weak and under-valued (Aslam and Kingdon, 2010).

In other words, the men of the Khyber Pukhtunkhwa society could not survive on their own; they survive on the invisible work and support of their women. The upper classes demonstrate a range of values and attitudes, ranging from the highly conservative rural aristocracy and the urban absentee landlords to the industrialists (Aslam and Kingdon, 2010). The elite and upper classes are strongly influenced by the west and they can easily acquire education in English private schools as well as travel abroad. Most of these women do not observe *purdah* and are allowed free access to the mixed-gendered public sphere.

Thus, the variations in class in life opportunities for women in Pakistan are due to their class and geographical location. Tribal and rural traditions mean women from urban, upper and middle classes have greater access to development opportunities (Heyneman, 2004) and these classes have easy access to education, health, and income-generation in the public sphere. In the words of Brock and Cammish, (1999: 37), 'the socio-economic status of parents seems to be the crucial factor in deciding whether girls go to school/college/university or not. It is poverty, which is the main hurdle'.

Injustice in Education

Women's educational opportunities are limited as compared to men in Pakistan. Statistics of women enrolment are significantly lower than men, at all levels of education, with rural and urban divisions in the country. Furthermore, gender disparities are very strong within the provinces. Khyber Pukhtunkhwa performance is particularly poor with its pitiable female literacy rate (ADB, 2000; MoEGP, 2002b; Ahmad and Sajjad, 2003). This is the case even though girls' education can give a higher rate of return than any other investment (Ahmad and Sajjad, 2003).

However, the literacy rate in Pakistan is lower than the other developing countries of South Asia. The reasons could be that there are inadequate educational institutions in the country as well as inadequate access to them. Investment in a girl's education is advantageous in a long run for her financial independence and security, poor infrastructure, the absence of basic facilities, and insecure educational settings make parents reluctant to send their daughters there for education.

> To remove these supply-side blockages, unwavering support and coordination between all stakeholders (politicians, bureaucrats, government departments, planners, implementers and community organizations) is required (Isani and Virk, 2007: 322).

Pakistan's educational policies since independence aspired to increase the enrolment of girls in educational institutions, but poor financial and social investments stopped the policy from being properly implemented, hence, the horrendous state in which the deprived women of Pakistan find themselves (Ahmad and Sajjad, 2003). Gender indicators of inequality in education can be found in the following table. It shows some extent of the gender inequality in enrolment, teaching staff members and student-teacher ratios.

Table 2: Data sheet showing number, enrolment (in thousands) teaching staff and student/teacher ratio (students per teacher)

Type	1999-00	200-01	2001-02	2002-2003
Number of Primary Schools (Total)	162.5	147.7	149.1	150.8
Female	58.7	42.9	43.5	43.9
Enrolment in Primary Schools (Total)	19148	17135	17529	18220
Female	2044	6893	7167	7519
Teachers in Primary Schools (Total)	366.4	408.9	413.9	433.5
Female	127.2	183.6	183.5	191.7
Students Teachers Ratio	52.3	41.9	42.4	42
Teacher per School (Total)	2.3	2.8	2.8	2.8
Teacher per School (Female)	2.2	4.3	4.2	4.4
Student per School	117.8	116	117.6	120.8
Percentage of Female Teachers	34.7	44.9	44.3	44.2
Number of Middle Schools (Total)	18.4	25.5	26.8	28
Enrolment in Middle Schools (Total)	4112	3759	3821	3918
Female	1615	1705	1506	1551
Teachers in Middle Schools (Total)	91.5	209.6	230.1	238.3
Female	44.3	127.8	139.3	145.8
Student Teacher	44.9	17.9	16.6	16.6
Teachers per School (Total)	5	8.2	8.6	8.4
Teachers per School (Female)	5.5	21.7	22.1	22.4
Student per School	223.5	147.4	142.6	139.9
Percentage of Female Teachers	48.4	61	60.5	61.7
Number of High Schools (Total)	12.6	14.8	15.1	15.6
Female	4.6	2.8	2.8	2.8
Enrolment in High Schools (Total)	1726	1565	1574	1589
Female	653	676	644	658
Teachers in High Schools (Total)	155.7	260.2	270.2	278
Female	52.2	125.3	126.1	132
Student Teacher Ratio	11.1	6	5.8	5.7
Teachers per School (Total)	12.4	17.6	17.9	17.8
Teachers per School (Female)	11.3	44.8	45	47.1
Student per School	137	105.7	104.2	101.9
Percentage of Female Teachers	33.5	48.2	46.7	47.5

Source: quoted from FBS (2008), Pakistan Demographic Survey 2008

This study explores womens' perceptions of the role of education in their lives and particularly their perceptions of these opportunities. The difficulties that prevent women from enrolling in and completing education include, accessibility, lack of resources, lack of female teachers in rural areas, poor teaching quality and a lack of training opportunities; all are widespread. The organisation of schools, colleges and universities in terms of the daily and seasonal imperatives of local economies usually renders them dysfunctional, and the curriculum is often unattractive in instrumental terms (Brock and Cammish, 1999:47). At the level of universities, accessibility is a real problem; besides high fee structure and course understanding are other major problems.

Concluding Comments

The issues of gender in Pakistan include poverty, economic dependency, lack of a social security system and a poor education system. Gender empowerment is limited to slogans, as women's access to education and her rights of Islamic inheritance and *Haq Mehr* (bride money) are altered by cultural discourses. Pakistani women are facing inequality in nearly every sphere of life and in the domains of power, such as economic, legal, political, socio-cultural, educational status. The phenomenon of men control over women lives is a social reality; since men constitute the central authority in all fields. Care-giving and household roles are the main responsibilities of a woman, rather than a man. Men are the bread earners for the entire family and have a right to make decisions about their mothers, sisters, wives and daughters. Social and economic status plays a vital role in the decision-making power of women. However, the percentage of women working in professions associated with the upper classes is not necessarily higher than of women occupying working-class roles.

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