

An Analytical Study Of Gender Differentials In Socio-Economic Development In Pakistan

Parveen Shah

Faculty of Social Sciences
University of Sindh, Jamshoro

&

Hamadullah Kakepoto

Department of Sociology
University of Sindh, Jamshoro

Abstract

Gender differentials in socio-economic development are found all over the world. Socio-economic pursuits and opportunities are segregated as *per se* the division on the basis of gender specification rather than any specialization. Economic opportunities and pursuits are unofficially pronounced and implemented practically in various fields. The pronouncement is more practiced and is implemented in letter and spirit in the developing world. The obvious reason is that the technological inventions and thereafter diffusion is yet to reach at its full swing in that part of the world. There is also some sort of the realization that in the Muslim world including Pakistan, women are assigned less economic productive roles and activities. They include producing and rearing up the children, doing household chores, sewing clothes in the home, feeding the buffaloes and cows in villages, and above all putting their efforts and energies in such tasks which are considered economically unproductive. As a result the social standing of women in the society is secondary than their men folk. That alarms and affects their overall social status because bread earner is considered superior than the dependent. The women are considered dependent. This article attempts and enlists the allied factors and the variables which are considered important on the overall socio-economic pursuits and social status of the Pakistani women. An attempt also has been made to discuss the basic manifestations of discrimination in socio-economic development and its salient implications for prevalent socio-economic system of the country.

تلخیص المقالہ

دنیا بھر میں سماجی و معاشی ترقی میں صنفی بنیاد پر تضاد پایا جاتا ہے۔ سماجی و معاشی مواقع کی تلاش مہارت کے بجائے جنسی فرق کی بنیاد پر کیا جاتا ہے۔ معاشی مواقع میں یہ فرق غیر اعلانیہ طور پر واضح ہے اور مختلف شعبوں میں عملی طور پر پورے کیے جا رہے ہیں۔ ترقی پذیر ممالک میں یہ فرق نفس و تحریر میں ظاہر ہوتا نظر آتا ہے۔ اس کی بنیادی وجہ ٹیکنالوجی اور اس کے ثمرات کی کئی طور پر دنیا کے مختلف حصوں تک ترسیل نہ ہونا ہے اس کے علاوہ عمومی خیال یہ بھی ہے کہ اسلامی دنیا بشمول پاکستان میں خواتین کو معاشی سرگرمیوں سے منسوب نہیں کیا جاتا بلکہ زیادہ تر ایسے کام تک محدود رکھا جاتا ہے جس کی پیداواری اہمیت کم ہے۔ مثلاً بچوں کی پیدائش اور ان کی پرورش، گھریلو کام، گھر میں سلائی کرنا اور مویشی پالنا وغیرہ۔ نتیجتاً خواتین کی سماجی حیثیت مردوں سے کم سمجھی جاتی ہے کیونکہ کمانے والے فرد کو انحصار کرنے والے کی نسبت

ترجیح دی جاتی ہے۔ اس مطالعے میں ان متعلقہ عوامل کو درج کرنے کی کوشش کی گئی ہے جو پاکستانی خواتین کی مجموعی سماجی و معاشی تلاش اور سماجی حیثیت میں اہم تصور کیے جاتے ہیں۔ اس ضمن میں ملک میں سیاسی و معاشی نظام پر رائج بنیادی الجھاؤ اور سماجی و معاشی ترقی میں پائے جانے والے بنیادی امتیازی انکشافات کو زیر بحث لانے کی کوشش کی گئی ہے۔

Background of the Study

United Nations Development Program (UNDP, 1997)¹ in a report affirmed that if the development is not engendered then it will be considered in great danger. United Nations Human Development Report (1990) analyzed the progress of human development in developing countries. The report states that in those countries large scale disparities exist. These are concealed when presenting facts about human development. It has been mentioned in the report that in rural areas as compared to urban areas of the developing countries, on the average, half of the population has no access to health services and safe drinking water. Literacy rates for women are still only two thirds of those for men. The mortality rate of women in developing countries is 12 times higher than the rate in developed countries.

The United Nations (1995: xvii) in a detailed overview of the status of world's women in the year 1995, noted: "...too often, women and men live in different worlds __ worlds that differ in access to education and work opportunities, and in health, personal security, and leisure time". That report (1995, xvi-xvii, xxii, 11, 46, 70) identified a number of areas of continuing concern. International Labour Organization (ILO) in another study (ILO, Geneva, 1980) stated the overall conditions of women in rural societies of developing world. The study concluded that rural women were amongst the poorest of the poor. The study declared that women in rural areas lagged much behind men in daily life and common needs. This shows that women of the developing world are marginalized in the pursuits and attainments of the socio-economic development. Pakistan is also a developing country. The socio-economic development lags behind to some extent than the other countries of the region. One of the important factors is the low spending on the human development especially on education. Due to heavy allocation and utilization of the budget on defense other areas got its direct impact. Due to the illiteracy and almost no awareness, women in Pakistan have to suffer in every walk of life.

The pursuit for justice in the work place and the labour market has deep historical roots, and has inspired much debate, from Adam Smith's theory of productivity to Marx's plea for a proletariat uprising to today's journey towards achieving engendered justice in the working world. The issue of gender and employment is not exclusive to women; rather, it bears on questions of how a society can maximize its productivity and the well-being of its citizens, both men and women, in a framework of justice and equity. In Pakistan, the justice in a true sense is still a far cry. Due to the corruption, illiteracy, nepotism, and the generally psyche which promotes violent behaviour and domestic violence is never considered an important issue. In the industrial sector women are harassed. In the market

women cannot enter to sell their hand made products directly because it is considered against the market practices. The option they have is depending on their menfolk to handle everything in day to day transactions. As a result they find themselves on the mercy of men.

In Pakistan, majority of the population lives in rural areas and is engaged in agriculture. The rural Pakistan is scattered in villages, and the society is predominantly an agrarian one. There is a close relationship between socio-economic development and the vicinity where the development is conceived and consumed. The villagers take development in the sense which helps them with pocket money to spend on horse race, gambling, and other petty activities. It is pity that rural women find themselves trapped and have no proper medication, food and source of enjoyment. Local customs, traditions and tribal laws play a vital role in determining the status of women in Pakistan. Pakistani society remains patriarchal in nature. The socio-cultural traditions define the role of a woman ___ as a mother, wife, sister, and daughter. In rural settings the importance of constructive role of women in the social system is not generally recognized. The dominance of tribal codes and customs, and Indo-British judicial traditions has possibly created an atmosphere of discrimination against women.

Pakistan's present socio-economic situation does not favour poor working women. The relations between women and men - their traditional rights to use or own land, to disposition of cash income and other resources and their obligations to provide food and other necessities for the family members - are important aspects of the way in which a society organizes itself. In third world countries gender roles are different from those in western countries. This reality is of utmost importance for development policy makers, planners and project designers from donor countries.

The assertive role of males in Pakistani rural society generally relegates women to a somewhat lower status. This lower status in turn unconsciously causes discriminative treatment against females. In the long run, it may even result in the denial of certain rights for the weaker sex. The preceding account may highlight that the women in rural areas face myriad socio-cultural problems. A woman has to strive hard to maintain her individuality. There is an urgent need to remove the causes of discrimination against women. This research article highlights the significance of gender disparity in development. They include: agriculture, schooling, individual income, physical health and household organization.

Conceptual Framework

This study incorporates a literature review to explore the employment and development needs of the poor women. Culture permeates all aspects of life in Pakistan, so this research can contribute to the understanding of the complex nature of economic development. Each micro issue fits into a larger pattern of socio-economic relationships

in the complex web of Pakistani society. Women in poor sectors of Pakistan suffer from gender and social discriminations that restrict their access to labour and education, while government initiatives struggle to provide sustainable socio-economic improvements for such marginalized populations. The notion of international HRD (Human Resource Development) infers a world of inter-connectedness. This study informs HRD scholars and practitioners by extending existing literature and providing an understanding of an international perspective from a complex contextual location that should provide insights.

Method

Multiple business and sociological databases were searched to explore the employment and development status of marginalized women in Pakistan. In addition, Journals and World Wide Web were utilized using a multiple search engine called Dogpile.com. Library books from national and international libraries were recalled on loan and scanned for recurring themes of Pakistani literature, women's socio-economic status and women's development issues. Key descriptors and key words used were: Gender differentials, socio-economic development, women employment, Pakistan, poverty, women's development, research, social impact, economics, human resource, self-employment, women's studies, culture, leadership, gender, and income. Searches were limited to Pakistan and women's economic issues.

Gender Differentials in Socio-Economic Development in Pakistan

There is a fact that no society in the world treats men and women on equal basis (UNDP, 1997).² With regard to gender discrimination, some exceptions aside, men have imposed a subordinate status on women in all the societies - both Eastern and Western. Sufficient details are available to show the intensity of the problem world over. "In the United States a rape occurs every six minutes and violence occurs once in 2/3 of all marriages. In Canada, one in every four women can expect to be sexually assaulted at some point in her life. In France 95 percent of the victims of violence are women, 51 percent of the above at the hands of their husbands. In Santiago, Chile, 80 percent of women acknowledged being victims of violence in their homes" (Carillo, 1992).³ According to Asia and Pacific Development Centre (APDC, 1993)⁴ "in Papua New Guinea, 67 percent of rural women and 56 percent of urban women are victims of wife abuse".

According to a survey on "Social Development in Pakistan" (SDIP 1999)⁵ women's socio-economic indicators in Pakistan are considerably lower than their counterparts. A huge gap exists between genders access to social and economic opportunity. An index of gender discrimination was constructed to monitor the trend showing the relative position of females and males. Four indicators were used: (i) Life expectancy (ii) Literacy ratio (iii) School participation ratio (iv) Labour force participation. Results suggest that gender discrimination is mostly pronounced in the labour force participation rate, followed by literacy rate and school participation rate. They are described as under:

Education

Education is important especially for women because it provides important means for their empowerment. Aside from the gaining knowledge and social ethics favourable to socio-economic development, it has many latent and overt functions. Education helps to raise a critical thinking which uplifts organizational, administrative and management skills. Elevated sense of worth and better economic and social standing within the community is a direct outcome of education. Education, therefore, be made available to all. For better parenting and healthier living also, education is an important factor. It is beyond doubt that educating girls can yield a higher rate of return than any other investment.

In Pakistan there is great difference in the rates of enrollment of boys, as compared to girls. According to UNESCO figures (Dawn editorial, 23rd Feb 2004), enrolment in primary schooling for the females stands at 60% and 84% for males. The enrollment in secondary schooling is even more disappointing, 32% for the girls and 46% for boys.

Health

Basic health services contribute to the promotion of health in society. It is possible to avoid illness, serious health complications and early deaths through basic health services. According to a report by World Health Organization, the gaps between the health status of rich and poor are at least as wide as they were half a century ago, and are becoming wider still (WHO, 1998). Schuler cited World Health Organization saying: "Every minute and a half a woman is raped in South Africa; totaling approximately 380,000 women raped every year" (Schuler 1992).⁶

In Pakistan, unfortunately, women's reproductive rights are neither recognized legally nor culturally. Nor are their reproductive health care needs adequately understood or addressed. Women, especially rural women, have inadequate access to family planning and reproductive health services. Besides, these are of poor quality. At present, the health condition of Pakistanis, particularly females, is unsatisfactory. According to the Human Development Report (UNDP, 1999), in Pakistan female life expectancy was 65.1 years. It was higher than the male life expectancy of 62.9 years. It was, however, lower than the female life expectancy in most developing countries.

Whilst women tend to live longer than men in all regions of the world, the absolute gap varies greatly. This is determined by a combination of biological and socio-economic factors that are little understood. However, maternal mortality, female infanticide and male bias in food and health care allocation in the household, are factors that can reduce female life expectancy.

Nutrition

Pakistani rural women work from 15 to 16 hours in a day depending on the season. They participate in all farming activities except ploughing and irrigation. In off season they have time for leisure (Qadri and Jahan, 1982). However, it is ironical that women as the main food growers, food providers and food distributors always receive less food than men within the family. In scientific terms women often have greater nutritional needs than men because of long hours of physical labour, pregnancy and lactation. But in Pakistan, traditional practices do not recognize these needs and follow restrictions that are physically and mentally harmful to women's health. Such customs seems to have originated in the belief that men as the main bread earners should receive priority in nutrition. In some studies, it has been found that women deprive themselves of food in the sincere belief that male members need it most.

Access to Resources

Employment

The right to work is generally recognized for both men and women. However, this right is more a declaration of principle and has little to do with actual practice. Women in particular have difficulty in exercising the right to work because men and women do not have equal access to employment. Just employment practices require that sexual differentiation be expressly prohibited. However, women face different conditions: their freedom to choose their profession and occupation is restricted; their ability to renounce stereotype professions and occupations is even more restricted.

Women in Pakistan make a large, and generally unrecognized, contribution to the economy. When differentiating the urban and rural areas, the indicators for women employees in all occupational groups are higher in urban areas. In rural areas, the indicators for women workers, who remain unpaid, are by contrast considerably more. In urban areas females either prefer to select the government job or prefer teaching in private schools. The vast majority of them do informal work as housemaid. Female workers in the informal sector, particularly home-based workers, work long hours for low earnings than men. They feel insecure and can easily be blackmailed and even kicked off.

Income Disparity

There is a trend towards women's increased economic activity across many countries. The gap between women and men in paid employment, however, remains wide in many parts of the world. Almost everywhere women are less paid than men for the same kind of work (Hedman et al, 1996).⁷

Employment distribution shows that a majority of working females is absorbed into the agriculture, community service, and manufacturing sectors. Agriculture remained the

main sector employing females during 1984-97. The second largest sector employing women was manufacturing in the 1980s, and community services in the 1990s. The shift from manufacturing to community services could be attributed to a decline in industrial activity in the country (ILO, Labour Force Statistics, 1993/94, 1997/98).

In Pakistan, females involve in productive activities in rural areas do not have access to their earnings. Behrman and Zhang conducted an in-depth study of gender issues and employment for Asian countries including Pakistan (Behrman and Zhang, 1995).⁸ The study mentioned that gender segregation is higher in Pakistan, Philippines, and Turkey, mainly due to the high concentration of females in the agricultural sector. Females are among the poor and vulnerable population. Poverty among females could be a result of poverty of opportunity, i.e., poverty in terms of less access to education, health, and the labour market.

Studies concerning Pakistan shows that gender discrimination is quite significant in the country. Siddiqui and Siddiqui (1998) analyzed earning differential in terms of differences in personal characteristics and differences in the labour market. The authors noted that after adjusting the differences in individual characteristics, discrimination accounted for about 20 percent of the earning differential. Interestingly, the study revealed that wages of highly educated females were a little higher than those of males. This wage difference was reflected by a positive wage difference for professional workers. It implied that education could contribute significantly in lowering gender discrimination in Pakistan. That research showed that the rising unemployment rate existed among males and females. It highlighted concentration of females in low paid jobs. Thus, gender discrimination affected the performance of females in the labour market.

However, the study by Siddiqui and Siddiqui regarding discrimination did not take into account the feedback from labour market discrimination and differences in individual characteristics. It may be realized that discrimination in the labour market could discourage females, resulting in lower educational attainment and limited occupational choices for them.

Working Conditions

Once in the labour market, women confront discriminatory conditions in their internal work environment. These relate to worker safety, work time, promotions, remuneration and sexual harassment.

Women faces dual discrimination with regard to work safety. On the one hand, women are excluded from some occupations because they are considered too dangerous, either because of the physical conditions required or because of the working hours. On the other hand, women's exposure to dangerous working conditions is often not recognized. For example, some primarily female occupations, such as nursing, are not recognized as

dangerous although they require physical endurance and exposure to potentially toxic substances. The concept of women's health protection should be revised rather than excluding them from employment.

Emerging Issues and Concerns in Pakistan

Attitude Towards Women

The attitude towards women is reflected in issues like:-woman as man's property, early marriage, violence against women and role of women in politics. In rural areas women are found in doing domestic chores and are contributing much in harvesting and looking after the cattle. Sexual inequality has historically sustained itself by assigning the economic provider role to men and the childrearing role to women. The division between the public and domestic spheres has been a compelling one. Labour in the public sphere has been rewarded by money, prestige, and power, whereas labour in the domestic sphere has been typically isolated and under-valued. Male dominance implies the notion that men own a woman's sexuality. A woman is viewed as providing a man with sexual and domestic support. Within this arrangement, a sexual double standard prevails that permits men, but not women, considerable sexual freedom and adventure.

Customs and Laws

Women's lives are governed and controlled by customs rather than statutory laws. Access to legal rights and provisions continue to be denied. Customs and traditions curtail, negate and deny women of their basic rights. Retrogressive customs like honour killings are highly praised in rural areas of Sindh. Another area of discrimination against women in rural Sindh is linked with the question of the 'age' of the majority. It is seen to be coinciding with puberty. As girls reach puberty at an early age, they are considered to mature at a younger age than boys, therefore receive harsher punishments for the same crime at the same age as boys. For example, if a young boy is found to be guilty of rape, his punishment will be less than that of a girl of the same age. The injustice factor gives support and help in development of laws of the land eradicating crimes. Instead of understanding their behaviour and helping them they are punished harshly.

Generally men dictate women in daily life. They want to dominate and control over them. Physical mobility of women is restricted. They are not consulted in mate selection. In the name of culture and tradition a woman is told that she must be submissive, gentle, and compliant. She must be patient and forgiving. She must put up with everyone's whims and fancies. She must be nurturing and selfless and always prefer others needs on her own. She cannot go anywhere without the permission of her husband. Not even to the house of her parents. Culture of oppression prevails in rural areas of Sindh. Men believe that women are inferior. Men can marry twice or thrice. They often do not bother to even inform their wives and take permission from them. Men generally feel that in subjecting women to violence they are the upholders of sanctity and tradition. A woman is blessed

because they keep her safe and pure. This is a culture that denies them legal and social rights. It gives them almost no recognition at any level.

Violence Against Women

Women sometimes are subjected to physical violence. This includes rape, assault and dowry-related murders. Abduction and killings in the name of honour are additional forms of violence. The word 'Honour' in classical Latin is referred to as '*honos, honoris*'. The words '*izzat*', '*namoos*', '*ghairat*' in Arabic, Turkish and Persian means the good reputation, fame and name. However, the meaning and connotation varies from one society to the other. This notwithstanding, honour is universally regarded as gender-neutral term, and in no case is it gender specific. In Pakistan, violence against men and women for sexual transgression takes a customary form called '*Karo-Kari*', implying a black deed, where '*karo*' is the black man and '*kari*' the black woman.

Killing in the name of honour has been named as the 'traditional justice'. It is noteworthy that such types of killings are reported in those regions where tradition is regarded as sacred. Most of these societies are called pre-modern (Thor, 2002). Unfortunately, even in modern world such a cruel practice has become a challenge for the law enforcement agencies and the judicial system.

These facts reflect the devaluation of females in rural areas of Pakistan. Fear of violence suppresses the natural aspirations of women. It remains an important element in the lives of most women in rural areas of Pakistan. This situation determines the life pattern of women. Fear of violence is a cause of women's lack of participation in activities outside the homes. Within the home, women and girls may be subjected to physical abuse as punishment. Such an attitude is culturally justified in some cases. The insecurity outside the household is the greatest obstacle in the welfare of today's women. Overall, women continue to accept their inferiority in the house and in society.

Conclusion

Diverse cultural and geographical influences produce complex economic participation of women at work (United Nations, 1997). Sentiments regarding women's economic status vary because of differing conceptual frameworks and insufficient empirical evidence. The foregoing sections highlight that gender inequality in employment and development is widespread especially in rural areas of Pakistan. Women are seldom provided equal economic opportunities. They are usually provided leftovers, which affect their general health conditions. If they are ill, more often they don't get any suitable medication. Although they do work hard but they are less paid for the same work than their male counterparts. The prevailing customs and traditions have hampered the sociological and economical development of rural Pakistani women.

End Notes

- ¹ UNDP (1997) *Human Development Report 1997*, Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, P. 7.
- ² Ibid., P. 39.
- ³ Carillo, R. (1992) *Battered Dreams*, New York, UNIFEM, P. 5-6.
- ⁴ Asia and Pacific Development Centre (APDC) (1993) *Asia and Pacific Women's and Action Series: Law*, Kuala Lumpur, APDC, P. 15.
- ⁵ SDIP (1999) "Social Development in Pakistan" *In Annual Review SDIP*, P. 52.
- ⁶ Schuler, M., ed. (1992) *Freedom from Violence*, New York, UNIFEM, P. 322.
- ⁷ Hedman, B., Perucci, F., and P. Sundström (1996) *Engendering Statistics: A Tool for Change*, Stockholm, Statistics Sweden, P. 19.
- ⁸ Behrman, J.R. and Z.Zhang (1995) "Gender Issues and Employment in Asia" *In Asian Development Review*, 13(2): 1-49.

References

- International Labor Organization (ILO) (1993/94, 1997/98) *Labor Force Statistics*. Geneva.
- Qadri, S.M.A. and Jehan, Akbar (1982) *Women in Agriculture in Sindh*, Islamabad, Women's Division, Government of Pakistan.
- Siddiqui, R. and R. Siddiqui (1998) "The Decomposition of Male – Female Earning Differentials" Part II *In The Pakistan Development Review* 37 (4), Islamabad.
- Thor, Aase, ed. (2002) *Tournaments of Power: Honor and Revenge in the Contemporary World*, Aldershot, Hants: Ashgate.
- United Nations (1995) *The World's Women: Trends and Statistics*, New York, United Nations.
- United Nations (1997) *The World's Women: Trends and Statistics, Social Statistics and Indicators. Series K, No.12*, New York, United Nations.
- UNDP (1999) *Human Development Report 1999*.

Bibliography

- DFID (1999) “Eliminating World Poverty: A Challenge for the 21st Century” In *DFID White Paper on International Development*, Presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State, London, Department for International Development.
- Ghosh, J. (1999) “Impact of Globalization on Women: Women and Economic Liberalization in the Asian and Pacific Region” In *Women in Development Discussion Paper Series No. 1*, Bangkok, ESCAP.
- Templer, K.J. (2002) “Western Expatriates in India: A Challenge for the Local HR Department” In U. Pareek, A.M. Osman-Gani, S. Ramnarayan, & S.V. Rao (Eds.) *Human Resource Development in Asia: Trends and Challenges*, New Delhi, Oxford & IBH Publishing, pp. 149-156.
- United Nations (1999) *Human Development Report*, Washington, New York, United Nations.
- UNDP (1990) *Human Development Report 1990*, Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press.

Key Terms

Gender Differentials; Socio-economic Development and Women Employment.

Prof. Dr. Parveen Shah is Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Sindh, Jamshoro.

Dr. Hamadullah Kakepoto is Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Sindh, Jamshoro.