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PROBLEMS CHALLENGES FACE BY FEMALE IN GETTING EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY IN ZHOB DIVISION BALUCHISTAN

Rahim Ullah	Department of Social Work, University of Sargodha
Dr. Mumtaz Ali	Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work, University of Sargodha
Dr.Sadia Rafi	Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work, University of Sargodha
Mariam Mukhtar	Department of Rural Sociology, University of Agriculture Faisalabad

ABSTRACT

The Higher Education of women plays a significant role in building the human capital and the overall socio-cultural and economic development of a country to make it sustainable. The present study explored the problems faced by female students and faculty regarding higher education in Pakistan. Data were collected from 280 students and teachers from government colleges and universities spread over from Zhob division of Baluchistan by using the "Scale for Women's Problems in Higher Education" that measured personal and social problems of female students and faculty related to higher education. Results indicated that respondents with a background in arts feel significantly more discrimination on the socio-cultural challenge. However, personal insecurity ratings were lowest in the Zhob district. The lack of parental, particularly paternal, support poses a substantial risk, as females in unsupportive family systems struggle more to pursue higher education. Gender plays a crucial role, with males generally more favorable toward female education, while marital status introduces additional challenges, as married women encounter greater difficulties in continuing their education. This study recommends that access to higher education is a right of every woman in Pakistan and is a moral and social duty to achieve a sustainable society.

Keywords: Socio- Cultural Change. Cultural Barriers, Female Education

Introduction

Education is a basic human right, playing a crucial role in empowering disadvantaged groups and significantly contributing to quality and self-respect in life. It fosters understanding, dignity, and confidence in children, and no nation can progress without educating its new generation. The significance of female education lies in its profound influence on shaping an individual's personality, character, and mindset. Unfortunately, certain regions, including Pakistan and its least developed province, Baluchistan, do not give female education the necessary time and resources it deserves (Ahmad et al., 2015).

Higher education plays an integral role in fostering sustainable development within a nation. Intertwining with the personal, social, economic, and cultural fabric of humanity, higher education emerges as a cornerstone for the establishment of a sustainable society, ushering in transformative dividends for the greater good

(Yasmeen, 2021). Higher education stands as a foundational requirement for cultivating an inclusive civil society that transcends gender, religious, and social class boundaries. Higher education fortifies women's empowerment by empowering capable women to rise as leaders within society and providing them with the opportunity to serve as role models for younger generations (Kawuki et al., 2020). Pertinent concerns entail challenges related to accessibility, inadequate educational facilities, a lack of a supportive environment, and cultural restrictions. The issue of illiteracy remains a prominent concern in Pakistan, as reflected by the allocation of a meager 2.3% of the budget for education, indicating a decline of 0.3% from the funding proportion seen in 1999. Pakistan ranks 113th out of 120 countries on the education development index because it allocates only nine percent of government expenditure to education (Alexander, 2008).

Women's access to services is significantly behind that of men, whether it comes to education or health. The causes include the absence of accessible infrastructure for women, cultural norms that prevent them from seeking outside assistance, limitations on their mobility, and, most importantly, education plays a critical role in driving positive transformations in individual lives. Education bestows women with the authority to make decisions aligned with their personal preferences across all facets of life. Educating women amounts to educating the entire society, as emphasized by Ghulam (2016). Lindsay and James (2015) highlight that despite the championing of ideals of humanity, equality, and human rights, women still face obstacles in their pursuit of higher education.

Objectives of the study

1. To determine the parent's perspective about females higher education in Zhob Division Baluchistan.
2. To find out barriers and challenges face by female in getting higher education in Zhob Division Baluchistan.

Review of Literature

Ember, (2020) explained moreover, the dearth of accessible higher educational institutions further hampers female participation in higher education. The considerable distances involved pose a significant obstacle, increasing the physical and financial burdens on female students. Outdated cultural norms and values, rooted in conservatism, also obstruct female access to higher education. Feudal systems, exemplified by Jagirdaari and zamindari practices, present further challenges. Such systems exploit peasants, offering inadequate wages that fail to sustain basic livelihoods. The resultant poverty and deprivation contribute to low enrollment rates of females in higher education. Additionally, gender inequality persists as a concern in Pakistani society, with conservative perspectives influenced by orthodox interpretations of Islam casting coeducation as a perceived threat.

Farid et al. (2014) explained Parents hold concerns that coeducation could potentially harm their daughters physically. Worries about their daughters' marriage prospects after attending coeducational institutions also lead parents to believe that pursuing higher education would limit marriage opportunities, leaving girls with no choice but

to abandon their education. The prevalence of early marriages further contributes to the low rates of females in higher education. Parents often prioritize marrying off their daughters over educating them, partly due to concerns about arranging costly dowries, which have become increasingly expensive. Consequently, this study highlights the significant impact of socio-cultural and economic factors on female access to higher education in Pakistan, emphasizing the pressing need to address these challenges comprehensively.

Fortin, (2015) findings from this study underscore that women in higher educational institutions face discrimination, harassment, and discouragement from their male peers. The dominance of males in society poses a major barrier to women's access to higher education. As a recommendation, the study suggests an increase in job and enrollment quotas for women in higher educational institutions, along with the establishment of additional colleges and universities in rural areas to provide greater opportunities for female education. Eliminating all forms of discrimination against women is also an essential step forward.

Gaag, (2018) indicated that While the enrollment of female students is on the rise, accompanied by the introduction of special seats for female candidates, challenges such as discrimination, harassment, and discouragement persist within society. Particularly in rural areas, the situation remains disheartening for women seeking higher education. The lack of support from various stakeholders, including the government, further compounds the obstacles faced by women.

Iyer et al. (2018) explained that Access to quality higher education at the university level is primarily enjoyed by a privileged minority, comprising less than half a million individuals. Conversely, the lower and middle classes face recurring neglect in their pursuit of higher education due to a range of formidable challenges. Among these challenges, females are disproportionately affected by barriers to attaining higher education, reflected in a female literacy rate of 39.2%, which is notably lower than that of males.

Shahzad, (2021) the geographical location of educational institutions holds a greater impact on girls compared to boys, especially in regions where rural, remote, hilly, or desert areas lack proper infrastructure, including roads and public transportation. The availability of nearby institutions or universities plays a pivotal role in this context. The issue of traveling long distances in public transport raises security concerns, particularly in societies where girls might not be permitted to travel alone or require escorts.

Shaukat, & Pell, (2017) Female students also grappled with their families' perceptions regarding co-education, which emerged as a cultural barrier to pursuing higher education. This category encompasses the theme of "perceived fears and threats to family honor." In traditional societies, families often held unfavorable views about coeducation. Some of the students' comments mirror these sentiments: "People believe that co-education could negatively influence their daughter's socialization these accounts underline the prevailing conservatism within Pakistani family structures, where the mixing of genders for educational purposes wasn't readily accepted.

Methodology

The present study adopted a quantitative research approach, focusing on students (females) from different universities within the Zhob division. The universities included were the University of Information Technology, SBK Sardar Bahadur Khan University, and Baluchistan University. The geographical universe was restricted to the Zhob division, while the human universe consisted of female students from these higher education institutions. A purposive sampling technique was employed, selecting a total of 280 female students as the sample size.

The research was based on ontological and epistemological assumptions that guided the methodological framework. The primary data collection tool was a questionnaire, developed to meet the requirements of the quantitative study. The questionnaire was distributed and filled out through a face-to-face interview schedule to ensure high response accuracy.

For data analysis, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 16 was employed. In terms of participants, 10% of the total female students and 60% of the female teaching staff were involved in the study. Two distinct five-point Likert scale questionnaires were designed: one for the female students and one for the female teachers, ensuring a detailed collection of data. SPSS software was utilized to run the Chi-Square test and to analyze the overall data collected from both groups.

Data analysis and findings

Table1.1 Demographic profile

Age	Frequency	Percentage
17-20	56	20%
20-22	123	43.93%
22 to above	101	36.07%
Gender		
Male	155	55.36%
Female	110	39.29%
Other	15	5.35%
Family		
Single	150	53.5%
Nuclear	70	25%
Extended	60	21.42%
Income		
15000 to 20000	43	15.36%
20000 to 25000	113	40.36%
30000 to Above	124	44.29%
Family member		
1 to 4	73	26.07%
5 to 7	123	43.93%
7 to above	84	30.00%
Total	280	100

The demographic profile of the respondents provides an insightful overview based on several categories including age, gender, family type, income, and family size. The total sample size for this study is 280 participants.

Age Distribution

The age of respondents is divided into three distinct groups: 17-20, 20-22, and 22 and above. The largest age group falls within the 20-22 range, representing 43.93% of the respondents (123 individuals). The second-largest group is those aged 22 and above, making up 36.07% of the participants (101 individuals). The youngest age group, 17-20, accounts for 20% of the total sample with 56 participants. This distribution shows a predominance of respondents in their early twenties.

Gender Distribution

In terms of gender, the majority of respondents are male, comprising 55.36% of the total (155 individuals). Females make up 39.29% of the sample, accounting for 110 participants. There is also a small percentage (5.35%) of respondents who identify as "Other," with 15 individuals in this category. The gender distribution indicates a slight male dominance in the study, but the female presence is also significant.

Family Type

The respondents' family structures are categorized into three types: single, nuclear, and extended families. Over half of the participants (53.5%) come from single-family units, equating to 150 individuals. Nuclear families, which include parents and children, represent 25% of the respondents (70 individuals). Extended families, which may include additional relatives living together, account for 21.42% (60 individuals). This distribution reflects a higher prevalence of single-family households among the respondents.

Income Distribution

Income levels among respondents are divided into three brackets: 15,000 to 20,000, 20,000 to 25,000, and 30,000 and above. The largest income group earns 30,000 and above, accounting for 44.29% (124 respondents). The second-largest group earns between 20,000 and 25,000, making up 40.36% of the total sample (113 participants). The smallest group earns between 15,000 and 20,000, comprising 15.36% of respondents (43 individuals). This data suggests that a significant portion of the sample falls within the higher income brackets.

Family Size

Family size is divided into three categories: 1 to 4 members, 5 to 7 members, and 7 members or more. The majority of respondents come from families with 5 to 7 members, representing 43.93% of the sample (123 individuals). Families with 1 to 4 members account for 26.07% (73 respondents), while families with 7 or more members make up 30% of the total (84 individuals). This indicates a trend toward larger family sizes among the respondents. In summary, the demographic profile reveals a diverse sample with a predominance of younger respondents, a slight male majority, a significant representation of single-family households, and a high proportion of respondents with larger families and higher income levels.

Table: 1.2 Association between respondent’s family system and parent’s favor of getting higher education

Family System	Getting higher education		Total
	Yes	No	
Joint Nuclear Extended	70	58	128
Total	30	48	78
	31	43	74
	131	149	280

“Chi-square = 14.572, Df = 2, P-value = 0.05, Gamma = - 0.562”

Chi-square (14.572) indicates that there is a significant association between respondent’s family system and parent’s favor of getting higher education. The bi-variate analysis indicates that family system and parent’s favor of getting higher education are the contributing factor for the female students in getting higher education. So, the hypothesis association between family system and parent’s favor of getting higher education is accepted. The Gamma value (-0.562) reveals a negative association between Family system and parents favor to get higher education which indicates that the lesser the father’s favor for education, more will be the risk to getting higher education.

Table: 1.3 Association between Gender and favor about female getting higher education

Gender	Favor of female getting higher education		Total
	Yes	No	
Male Female Other	85	56	141
Total	30	64	94
	28	17	45
	143	137	280

“Chi-square = 12.442, Df = 2, P-value = 0.05 Gamma = 2.292”

Chi-square (12.442) indicates that there is a significant association between Gender of respondents and respondents favor of female getting higher education. The bi-variate analysis indicates that Gender and favor of female getting higher education are the contributing factor for the female students in getting higher education. So, the hypothesis association between Gender and favor about female getting higher education is accepted. The Gamma value (2.292) reveals a positive association between Gender and favor about female getting higher education is accepted.

Table: 1.4 Association between Marital status and challenges to higher education after marriage

Marital Status	Challenges to higher education after		Total
	Yes	No	
Married	97	69	166
Single	74	40	114
Total	171	109	280

Chi-square = 14.302 Df = 2 P-value = 0.05 Gamma = - 0.332

Chi-square (14.302) indicates that there is a significant association between marital status and challenges to higher education after marriage. The bi-variate analysis indicates that there is association between marital status and challenges to higher education after marriage. So, the hypothesis association between marital status and challenges to higher education after marriage is accepted. The Gamma value (-0.332) reveals a negative association between marital status and challenges to higher education after marriage.

Conclusion and Recommendation

It is conclude that significant challenges faced by females in pursuing higher education, with family system, gender, and marital status, culture, socio economics conditions being key influencing factors. The lack of parental, particularly paternal, support poses a substantial risk, as females in unsupportive family systems struggle more to pursue higher education. Gender plays a crucial role, with males generally more favorable toward female education, while marital status introduces additional challenges, as married women encounter greater difficulties in continuing their education. Opinions on barriers such as long distances, lack of transportation, resource availability, and policy implementation vary widely, reflecting diverse perspectives on these challenges. To address these challenges, it is recommended to (1) implement targeted awareness programs to encourage family support, especially from fathers, and (2) develop specialized support systems for married women to help them balance family responsibilities with education.

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