

Status of women in pakistan sociology essay



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This chapter summarizes the situation of female employment and the importance of education in Pakistan. It gives a detail overview on the status of Pakistani women and their living conditions. In depth research on gender parity, gender gaps and dissemination in Pakistan have also been reviewed. On the other hand, women protection & public policies for female empowerment has been given significant importance in their lives. Women are considered as a role model in our society, where every work in every field is being done by them. Most women work in agriculture sector where they work in their own farms and help to support their father or husband.

Status of women in Pakistan: Physical and Human living conditions

Pakistan is a developing country, where women are mostly degraded in rural areas. Most of the women are deprived of their basic rights and due respect. Each woman in Pakistan does not hold the same position. The status of women varies across classes and rural/ urban region due to various reasons such as religious factors, socio-economic development and the influence of tribal or jirgah decisions. In Pakistani society women is considered in reproductive roles as mothers and wives, where the main objective of women is to look after her home, husband and children while men is regarded in a productive role as bread winner for the family. As a result, the contribution of women is very less; thus regarded as low investment. This low investment accounts for purdah (known as veiled) for women in tribal areas, limitations on women's freedom of speech and discrepancies in every walk of life. The concept of early marriages of girls, upbringing of large number of children and lack of education negatively affect women's health.

Women's aspirations and position of working women in society

Aspirations play an important role in women's life. The socio-economic factors such as education and traditional norms adopted in the society play an important role in determining the objectives and goals of a woman. A woman makes her own decision to enter into the labor market depending on the ability of her skills and education if she attained. Most women prefer to be financially independent so that they should not put an extra burden on their parents or husband. Women in rural areas are being encouraged if they work in their own family farms. On the other hand, in urban areas women are usually employed in services sector.

A bitter reality is whether a woman lives in rural or urban areas, Pakistan is regarded as a patriarchal society, where women is being considered as slaves of their husband and they spend their whole lives to serve them. Not even a single woman in Pakistani society can live an independent life unless and until she is being under a protection of a male. With the rising inflation in our country, the cost of living of a single family has also been raised. Due to this, a man's wage is insufficient to support his family which has forced the women to find respectable jobs and contribute in the family income. A woman is now employed in numerous occupations such as laboratory assistants, ticket clerks at railway station and journalists.

Social status of working women

In the 21st century where a lot of improvements have taken place in every field, a lot of changes have been occurred in the advancement of women status in the world especially in the formal sector. It includes giving equal

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rights to women as men, encouraging women to gain education and supporting them for work. However, still in some Asian countries, the birth of a baby girl is concerned as an extra burden on a family mainly in agrarian communities. With respect to the status and rights of a woman, Pakistani government policies play no role in either the formal or informal sector. But nonprofit organizations are very active to support women in every field. With a rough estimate, around 70% of Pakistani population lives in rural areas where they suffer from basic infrastructure facilities like water, electricity, schools etc. Only religious education is being given to women in rural areas while other education is considered as least important which is the main reason for high literacy rate among women.

Besides this, it is the duty of every corporate employer to provide protection for women in the work place. Sometimes a woman has to hear abusive words from other men employees but they don't have much confidence to speak against it.

Female employment & Economic participation

A common stereotype of women to stay at home and completing the daily household chores should need to be break up. In fact women should be taught how to earn their own bread and live an economic independent life. Women working in informal sector usually remain unrecorded due to the informal nature of the job such as stitching, embroidery etc. It is frequently being observed that male members don't ever appreciate the work of females. Besides this, most of the men are reluctant to accept the reality that women can do any work to earn income. This is the main factor which

results in their economic participation as being disregarded or unnoticed.

Men think that whatever task or work they perform in household is part of household chores.

Gender Parity, Gender Gaps and dissemination in Pakistan

1. 2. 1 Social norms and Gender empowerment

The division of labor exists in our community due to culture that is still prevalent in most of the areas. Men act as the head of the public activities that take place outside of the home while women's activities are limited to private domain. Thus home is being regarded as sign of femininity where only female should be seen and work for household chores. However, women have a lot of advantages when they work in their own homes. They can manage their work with household duties and earn a respectable income. About one fifth of women are indulged in craft related trades and in other activities such as sewing, knitting and dress making. They perform all these works in limited resources due to lack of investment opportunities. A very small percentage of working women work to live a self sufficient life while a vast majority of women work to educate their child or to have enough resources for the basic necessities of life. Whether a women work as a part time job or full time job, still she has to look over her household activities. Different traditions and norms prevailing in our four provinces are also the main reason which keeps a woman away from searching jobs. Most women prefer to find jobs in girls' schools and colleges so that they don't have to interfere with men.

The main and important reason considered for less participation of women in labor force is socio-cultural constraints where women has no right to make her own decisions. As a result, gender gap is created. It is usually being raised when both men and women are not equally paid despite the same work at same level. Most of the societies in Pakistan try to maintain gender gaps due to the system of gender discrimination.

1. 2. 2 Human Capital and Income Group by Gender

In the developed countries, gender gap in human capital has been eradicated where as this gap still exists in developing countries due to less importance given to education. In developing countries, this gap is usually created due to supply side factors in the market for education. The quality of education, number of schools and presence of teachers are few in number. Most of the time teachers are absent from schools. Parents prefer to send their girls if only females are available. The wage discrimination in the labor market discourages the women to work in high productivity sectors and occupations. Gender roles within the household result in different shadow prices for out of school investment in human capital and for time in schools. Gender gap in human capital also occurs due to variations in the demand of schooling for children.

Gender preferences for work by Female

The differences in gender in labor market have a great impact on the respective field of work which they chose for themselves. A decline in fertility rate, delay in marriages and an increasing rate of female labor force participation; all these factors have changed women's preference in regard

to work. Parents living in rural areas discriminate among their children. They give more attention and a caring treatment to boys rather than girls. Each and every parent has their first priority of wellbeing after their child gets good education. With the upbringing of a female child, she is brought up in such an environment in which the female child faces discrimination in a male denominated society.

Gender gaps & discrimination in employment

Despite technological advances, gender inequality in the work force still remains an indefinable goal. In most of the developing world where woman earns less income, have poor working conditions thus it results in affecting long term unemployment than men. It mainly occurs due to socio-culture changes which caused by gender-based discrimination.

Female participation in Labor Force by size, occupation & residential status

As far as economic production is concerned, women play an important role in production activities such as agriculture and industry, formal and informal sectors of the economy. Women are not appreciated for their work even if they performed well then men. In Pakistan, a woman's economic status is determined by the rank of her father's income and after marriage, it is shifter to husband.

1. 3. 1 Labor force participation in different sectors of economy

The most important element to judge the status of women is through labor force participation rate. The introduction of latest technology in agriculture and manufacturing sector has brought significant changes in the economy.

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The labor intensive industries were replaced by capital intensive which leads to a decline for women working in those industries. On the other hand, the gap in gender inequality also took place due to globalization. More employment opportunities for highly educated post are being given to producers and employers, leaving behind needy and poor women jobless and increased lack of confidence.

The recent study tells us that most women are now willing to get a job in public sector services such as education and health, though they are paid less but still get satisfaction even on a small amount of income. Besides this, the percentage of acquiring education for women is greater than men but when it comes to employment opportunities and getting hired; women is still worse off. Women have tried to adjust themselves in male specified areas like banking, law and engineering.

From the above table, it can be clearly seen that the percentage of labor force in agriculture sector remained same through 2008-11. A 1. 4% increase has been occurred in female's agriculture sector. However, the employment share in manufacturing sector has been raised. It increased from 13. 2% in 2009-10 to 13. 7% in 2010-11. The wholesale and transportation sector shows a declining trend.

1. 3. 2 Poverty reduction due to women empowerment

A positive impact will be seen in women life if they reduce their daily household activities. This will lead towards betterment of their health and will further increase the efficiency and performance. As domestic work load will be decreased, women will be more inclined to work for economy and its

production which will help to reduce the poverty. Apart from this, women who help their father or husband in farm fields in order to contribute their share in income also plays a part in reducing poverty. Hence it can be concluded that a positive relationship is being developed between women's economic activities and family well-being. The word micro credit which means extending the time period to repay back small loans, are not enough to reduce poverty because at a certain time and date they have to be repaid back. Thus people avoid taking micro credit except in worse circumstances.

1. 3. 3 Female participation in Informal Economy

The informal sector or economy occurs mainly due to amalgamation of children and women in informal labor market. Sometimes it becomes too difficult to measure the women involvement in the informal sector and the household income. Women living in rural areas are involved in multiple jobs then men but their contribution towards production is undervalued. Most women prefer to work for those activities in which they have no contact with men, otherwise due to literacy people in rural areas don't respect women and their marriage proposals are rejected.

The table below shows that women involvement in informal sector in rural areas has been increased as compared to past years. The main reason is due to flexible working hours and an easy way to earn income limited in four walls of home.

Women who participate in informal sector are inferior as compare to formal sector with respect to working environment. On the other hand, women in informal sector are deprived of any social benefits and security. They are

illiterate, given the lowest rank among employees; as a result they live below the poverty line. These women work on contracts with employers. The working environment is not suitable for most of the women and they suffer from various diseases such as back pain, eye irritation, headache etc.

Women protection & public policies for female empowerment

1. 4. 1 Promoting women's right and Gender responsive policies and institution

In recent years, efforts are continuously being made for women to give them protection at work place so that they could not face any harassment by male workers. However, the attacks on girl's school and colleges are still continued to be taking place by terrorist. The main aim of the terrorist is to limit the activities of women. A woman in Pakistan has the right to go to court and stand for their rights. Besides this when a land is being inherited by a woman, the title and the control over the land is not shifted to that particular woman, thus it indicates that women mostly remain silent and suffer the consequences. However, the new legislation passed tries to reduce this inequality and give the due rights to women on buying and maintaining the land.

1. 4. 2 New laws and women's right under the current PPP regime

The new domestic violence act was passed as PPP government was being elected in February 2008. However due to ineffective policies and corrupt officials, the act was cancelled because the bill was not presented for discussion in a timely manner. In late February 2012, a new bill under the

provision of Senator Nilofar Bakhtiar was passed named as Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act 2012. The act contains comprehensive details regarding domestic violence such as “ All intentional acts of gender-based or other physical or psychological abuse committed by an accused against women, children, or other vulnerable persons, with whom the accused person is or has been in a domestic relationship.” The penalties and punishments of committing an illegal act of abuse or sexual harassment have also been stated in the act. Besides this, all the private and public companies should form a department which will only be responsible for employee’s complaints and establishing a safe and healthy environment which will be free from any kind of violence.

On the other hand, two other bills were also passed. The first was known as acid-throwing legislation which imposes heavy fines and a long imprisonment for the individual. The government should establish rehabilitation centers for burn victims and provide free of cost treatment. The second bill that was passed is Anti-Women Practices Bill in 2009. It outlined the punishment for giving a female in wanni or swara.

Pakistan Labor Policies and working women

Pakistan became an independent country on 14 August 1947. Since then, six labor policies have been introduced by the Government of Pakistan in the following years 1955, 1959, 1969, 1972, 2006 and 2010. These policies have been laid down in accordance with the international standards. These labor protection policies not only bring economic benefits in the company but also result in an increase in the productivity. The basic points covered under

these policies include the right of a woman to join trade union, equal treatment with other employees, minimum wages, fringe benefits, providing safety equipments while working and conditions for retirement or leaving a job. In order to increase the participation of women in labor force, the government should start some awareness campaigns in rural areas and provide women security and a friendly environment.

According to Labor Protection Policy 2006, women workers will benefit from the application of ILO Convention or Equal Remuneration, 1951 (No. 100), ratified by Pakistan in 2001. Minimum and above-minimum wages will be paid on the basis of equal pay for equal work, and equal pay for work of equal value, as between men and women, in accordance with Pakistan's obligations under ILO Convention 100 and 111 concerned with equality and non-discrimination, respectively.

Women harassment laws in Pakistan

The government of Pakistan aims to provide protection for women so that they can have a safe environment. The laws include instructions for all types of employees including management on behavior with female employees where it is being ensured that the work environment should be completely free from threats and pestering. The word 'harassment' at work place means having verbal or written communication or asking for sexual favors at workplace. Sometimes a person demands such favors and in return gives a woman benefits such as increase in wage or a promotion. On the other hand, if a person refuses to give such favors, the employee's limit the choices of training or make false statements against the employee in order to degrade

him/her. Besides this, a complaint of harassment can also be solved through an informal approach by conducting mediation between the parties. Due to such activities, the government lays down the laws. It will also help to increase the productivity and a better motivation towards the work. These laws will help to open more employment opportunities for women of this country at all fields.

1. 5 Key words and definitions

Women Status. “ It has been defined or described women’s status as having two components: the rights given to women and the respect given to them. Confusion results because these two factors are used interchangeably, when in reality they are often inversely correlated”.

Source: Youseff, (1978). Women in the Muslim world. Cambridge: Harvard University Press

Women Empowerment. “ Participation in domestic decision making; control over cash and spending and knowledge of legal and marital rights”.

Source: Mallhotra, A., Schuler, S. R., & Boender, C.(2002), Measuring women empowerment as a variable in international development. Retrieved from the World Bank Workshop on Poverty and Gender: New Perspectives.

Female Labor Force Participation. “ The foundation for studies of female labor force participation, which coincided with the growth of the entry of women into the paid labor market”.

Source: Cain, Glen G. (1966). Labor Force Participation of Married Women. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Socio-cultural factors. " Women's age, health, literacy, freedom of mobility and speech, lack of discrimination against daughters, commitment to educating daughters".

Source: Mallhotra, A., Schuler, S. R., & Boender, C.(2002), Measuring women empowerment as a variable in international development. Retrieved from the World Bank Workshop on Poverty and Gender: New Perspectives.

Study Objectives

To what extent women help in the economic contribution in order to have sufficient income to live a healthy and prosperous life.

This study will also examine the involvement of women in the informal sector.

The strengths and weakness of women in different sectors of an economy.

The possible recommendations and suggestions that can be undertaken to reduce the gender discrimination.

The role played by media in creating the awareness for female work force.