

A Comparative Study of Gender Inequality in Education Pertaining to Economic and Socio-Cultural Aspects at Secondary School Level in District Swabi

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Article History: Received: 10 Feb, 2019 Accepted: 21 May, 2019	ABSTRACT The main purpose of this study was to compare the gender inequality in education between male and female students pertaining to cultural, social and economic aspects at Secondary school level in Swabi district, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. All the students of the Government schools situated in the district were the population of the study. The sample of the study consisted of 200 students (male and female) from rural and urban areas of the population. More than 70% of the male respondents were undecided that economic, cultural, and social aspects are the main cause for gender inequality. Further, about 70% male respondents disagreed that culture is the main cause for gender inequality. More than 68% female respondents were undecided that economic and cultural aspects are the main factors responsible for gender inequality. Furthermore, more than 65% female respondents disagreed that social aspect is the main cause for gender inequality at Secondary school level. Uniform measure needs to be prescribed for teachers and parents to reduce discrimination against students by gender in rural areas. Furthermore, the introduction of free and compulsory education along with some financial support is recommended for every female student up to high school level specifically in distant areas. Key Words: Gender inequality, Education, cultural aspect, social aspect, economic aspect
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1. Introduction

In Pakistan female education faces numerous problems including traditional constraints and poverty. Government of Pakistan has taken several initiatives for improving female education for the last two decades 1990-2010. The main points were to develop the social aspects for female gender. The primary aim of gender inequality in education was to

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reduce the gap and to improve the female education (World Bank, 2001). In Pakistan it is a common view that education is not important for female. People consider education useless for female because they would not be allowed to do jobs. Further, they will be shouldering the responsibility as a mother and wife (Jayaweera, 2007). In some regions of Pakistan, cultural norms require female to either stay inside home or get permission to go outside. If permission granted to leave the home, so it is very important that she must go outside with her family members either male, female or a child. Such steps are planned to avoid any harm to a girl. So people harmed or even to be thought so it may be cause for her honor” and also for her whole family. Then it is very difficult for the family to make a relation as a husband for her and also degrade socially and economically when such ethics are updated.

The restrictions of these cultural are now changing with the passage of time with the education of male family members of the society, better interaction with exterior world and with contact of media. On the other hand, still present some compartments where female education is not motivated. Unfriendly situation of Secondary school from family, parents and society do not permit their children to get education. The distance of 500 meter from home to school effects on girls’ enrolment. This distance is considered responsible for 60% of the gender gap in enrolments (Hausman, Tyson & Zahidi, 2010).

Female education is very important for a progressive nation but unfortunately there is an inequality between male and female education in Pakistan. Progress of a nation depends upon female education because they are more than half of a nation. If the government gives full attention to the female education, so the nation of Pakistan can progress regarding some aspects.

1.1 Problem Statement

Globally, statistics shows the restricted participation of females in almost all sectors of development comprising education and employment prospects although the fact that

female constitute more than half of the world's population. The degree of low participation of women and girls fluctuates from country to country. In most civilizations, especially in developing countries like Pakistan, female has low access to these transforming opportunities and discriminated against employment opportunities and other benefits available to their male counterparts. It is true that if once there is gender inequality in education, then there is greater chance of disparity in all other sectors of national life. According to Adhikari (2013), the reasons of gender inequality are the results of structural, cultural, religious, social and economic factors which influence female's involvement and drop out of school. Further, gender disparity is in practice in Pakistani society and males are considered as economic and social utility (Nasrullah & Bhatti, 2012). Moreover, in Pakistan, sons are considered the earners for their family while daughters are not considered as income earning source for their families after getting their weddings in the other family. Females are considered economically expensive because parents viewed it as wastage of time and money (Shahzad et al, 2011). Furthermore, boys' education is, as per the prevalent taboos, a lucrative investment. This is apparently the reason that parents tend to offer formal education to sons rather than daughters (UNESCO, 2010; Global Monitoring Report, 2010; Noreen & Awan, 2011). Therefore, acknowledging this a comparative study of gender inequality in education pertaining to economic and socio-cultural aspects at Secondary school level in district Swabi" was designed.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The following were the study objectives:

1. To draw a comparison between male and female students about gender inequality in education from economic, cultural, and social perspective at Secondary school level in district Swabi
2. To examine the opinions of male students about gender inequality in education with reference to economic, cultural, and social aspects at Secondary school level in district Swabi

3. To study the opinions of female students about gender inequality in education with reference to economic, cultural, and social aspects in Secondary schools.

1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions governed the study:

1. What are the views of male and female students reveal about gender inequality in education from economic, cultural, and social perspective at Secondary school level in district Swabi?
2. What are the opinions of male students about gender inequality in education from economic, cultural, and social perspective at Secondary school level in district Swabi?
3. What are the opinions of female students about gender inequality in education rooted in economic, cultural and social factors at Secondary school level in district Swabi?

2. Literature Review

Gender discrimination, inequality, and uneven distribution of the rights is prominent all over the world. The civilized societies are facing the dilemma as well, however, in our society it is in the most dreadful form (Shameem & Ara, 2011). The full involvement of females in all spheres of life is of vital importance for the purpose of attaining gender equality and the empowerment (Noureen, 2015). For human recourse development, education is considered to be the utmost essential tool. Education is becoming a universal human right and an essential element of women empowerment (Zacharia, 2014). Further, equal access to higher education is needed without any discrimination for improvement of female in the countryside regions of Pakistan (Salik & Zhiyong, 2014). This can be achieved by participating in the decision making, access to resources, and free mobility. There is no doubt that the women of Pakistan are determined to play their part in raising their own position and of their families. To understand this

potential woman, need education just as Pakistan needs educated women"(Ministry of Education Report, 1959).

Jejeeboy and Sathar (2001), discussed the culture and customs in Pakistan, they distinguish that norm and cultural civilizations in various rural parts of Pakistan claim that without permission females cannot go outside from the home. They should stay at home. If they are allowed to permission, so they must always be tried to accompany by a male family member. Shaukat (2009) acknowledged that utmost inequality exists in rural areas, in Pakistan the female' enrolment rate in education is huge below than that of schoolboys especially in some rural regions. Such uneducated parents are reluctant in sending their female children to schools due to certain cultural taboos. Gender inequality is the outcomes of various factors (structural, cultural, religious, social and economic) which impact the girls' involvement and dropout of the school (Adhikari, 2013). Male are the source of income and social utility while female exposed to biasness for whole life (Nasrullah & Bhatti, 2012). Males were the decision makers in their houses and there is no equal opportunity in higher education for females (Alam, 2011).

- **Governmental and Non-Governmental initiatives for Girls' Education**

Various aspects are related to cultural customs, practices and traditional beliefs that have an undesirable impression on the presence, performance and female enrolment in schools. The pregnancy of single daughters is considered as traditionally and culturally disgraceful incidence for their family and as well as in their society, majority of the parents in most of rural areas, they are getting marriage of their daughters in earliest. It has been recorded that parents decide their daughters' marriages early in time, and then most of incident occurs for their shame (Colclough et al., 2000).

The main hurdles for female' education is the blame of schools' distance which affects girls' unreasonably. They belong to poor families, and then usually a very small

number of female children are enrolled especially in the far-flung areas. Under the FFE program initiated in Pakistan in 1998 this gender gap was to be addressed. The illiterate parents were to be made aware to stop traditional line of thinking and their financial hurdles were to be addressed by the State so as to ensure the education of the female children. From 2005-2009 under WFP Program more than 400,000 girls were enrolled and facilitated at primary level in backward districts. A student girl was supported with once-a-month ration of a 4-liter tin of vegetable oil, refreshments and other food items. This fact was highlighted by many scholars such as Lambeis (2008) and Ahmed, Amir, Espejo, Gelli and Meir (2007) who pointed that FFE programmed guide for the improvement of enrolment of girls in primary schools, and especially the provision of food items enhanced girls' enrollment.

- **Major hurdles in the way of Girls' Education**

Education increases further ability of the girls, Education increases females' competence in case of helplessness to cruelty and harassment. Poor families allocate limited income to their sons' education, in the family system better economic income. Yet certain cultural taboos abstained parents to go for schooling such as co-education and gender mix-up in schools (Ally, 2006). The cultural and traditional norms in backward areas of Pakistan have led to a position where male and female have assigned particular family responsibilities. Males are considered potential for earning life and are considered fit for daily jobs, while women are considered to have little potential in terms of economic returns, hence their education is usually ignored (Ali, Fani, Afzal & Yasin, 2010).

A basic reason, for why there are fewer girls than boys enrolled in school in Pakistan not just in the financial calculations of parents but also in the "socio-cultural taboos and inhibitions against female education (Government of Pakistan, 1999). These interconnected factors include the traditional attitudes regarding females' education, the practice of purdah, and opinions that education is irrelevant to females' futures.

- **Cultural and Financial Constraints**

In Pakistan, sons are considered that they are the earners for their family and make a strong position for them, but on the other hand daughters are not considered as earners for their families because daughters are economically expensive (they are mostly not permitted to do job, earn an income, and considered that they are in positions to take risk for their family's honor) and also think that one day they will get marriage and may not be in a position to support the family. Boys' education is, as per the prevalent taboos, a lucrative investment. This is apparently the reason that parents tend to offer formal education to sons rather than daughters (UNESCO, 2010; Global Monitoring Report, 2010; Noreen & Awan, 2011).

The role of girl's in schooling is greater in urban areas than in rural. In rural areas, individuals who give attention to their females to send them to school next to predominating civilization and traditions exist in the majority. Socio-cultural situations do not permit usual inhabitants to encourage schooling of their females. Traditional and Cultural stresses don't encourage females schooling mostly in rural areas. According to Shahzad et al (2011), the parents viewed it as wastage of time and money, since routinely females are not responsible as income earning source after getting their weddings in the other family. Most of the parents think about a school going girl is the most danger for their respect particularly when the girls are going to distance school. Other families think that all of them provide her subsequent family after getting wedding. But according to Farah and Shera, (2007), such types of traditional and cultural ideas dishearten women education. The economic organization of urban and rural zones varies to everyone in developing nations. Extraordinary poor quality is the chief characteristic of rural and as well as in tribal areas of Pakistan, where people live in depressed environments. As compared to persons in urban or city areas of Pakistan, rural areas have a lesser amount of education and health services as well. Unfortunately, in Pakistan, the position of rural areas influences individual interests (Khan et al, 2010).

Pakistani society is linked with a number of old traditions, cultural norms and civilization. These practices are very high in the rural area of Pakistan, created on women, girls respect and man sovereignty. The women and girls are treated harshly in the forms of corporal punishment, sexual exploitation and in reasonable forms and generally occur within family domains. These practices, according to Kay (2007) take place in the form of lashing females and, rapes, and girls honor killing in Pakistani male-controlled culture. Usually women take a smaller amount of foodstuff and fitness mind than boys by the parents and still society demands for girls and women to eat up to last stages (Muslims, 2010).

In large number of communities, gender preferences begin from start, where the birth of son brings happiness to the parents and daughters being considered shame for the family. Girls and women are trained in their earlier period to respect her bothers and parents and not quarrel with them. There are moderate rations and dress for girls as compared to her bothers. According to Zafar (2007), brothers and sisters are unequal in the sense that brothers are directed to be self-confident and have power in addition to their sisters by large those responsibilities to create foodstuff and deliver it to the grasslands or fields.

According to Groot (2007), the prejudice for the lads' schooling is below the proposal of financial income, where lads are considered wealth creators for the entire clan. While women once married joined the new clan; for an instance parent have to select among the education and gift cash. Groot (2007) says that parentages gather moneys for her daughter dowry in spite of financing on her schooling. Family work and direct towards the gender preference, where mother's approval to maintain her daughters at residence in order to support her in family work and get worry of her relations.

Likewise, moms educate their daughters how to maintain a family (Zafar, 2007). Majority of the female in rural areas at younger age are important to try for struggle with her mom and as well as for her family. By respected than mentioned responsibilities, girls

who are belongs to rural areas obtain fuel from fields etc., get water from the outsides wells and ponds, and also bring some foodstuff in field for their brothers and parentages (Shahzad et al. 2011). According to the Pakistan Domestic Research (2001-02) the ordinary cause for not attending girls, school is the necessity of parental approval to the girls in both urban and rural areas of every province. But consistency of this biasedness is mostly obvious in rural areas as compared to urban ranges and tougher limitations are imposing by parentages in rural ranges. While in urban ranges, this state is a bit improved, since cultural and customary feelings are spoiled in cities, villages, and towns. Through the rate of increased literacy on highest of mentioned investigation, it is essential that boys are not important to any authorized body to attend the school or allow them to attend the school (Farah & Shera, 2007).

- **Parents' prejudice for Sons**

According to Afzal, Butt, Akbar and Roshi (2013), various special measures have been applied to lessen gender disparity in social and cultural contexts. In this context, many conventions including the United Nations Millennium Summit in September 2000 discussed this problem in its Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The 3rd Millennium Development Goal was generally outlined to encourage gender equality and women's empowerment (Nasrullah & Bhatti, 2012; Noureen, 2015). However, the gap due to differential treatment of parents with males and females under usual routine and social desire revealed the partiality for males over females, explicitly in rural areas (Taga, 2012). According to Sathar, Wazir and Sadiq (2013), the education outcomes for girls have improved, but progress has been uneven with in Pakistan. Rural females lag far behind urban females and progress across the provinces remains unequal (Sathar, Wazir, & Sadiq, 2013). In urban areas, the importance of education proved dominating factor for eliminating distinction between males and female's enrolment (Afzal, Butt, Akbar, & Roshi, 2013).

The people create hurdles between girls and prediction for getting education, so these ethics bound the society of female and often prevent them from going to schools. Such morals are given when there is no male member in their family to go along with her then no permission is granted for getting education to go school alone specially when (Jejeeboy & Sattar, 2001) there is a long distance to school. They consider that education is not important for female as where there is a long distance on the other hand when there is a long distance for boys they give permission to go to school.

3. Materials and Methods

A survey research design was used to collect data form the sample. This design is one of the most important areas of measurement in applied social research. It includes any measurement procedures that involve asking questions of respondents.

3.1 Population

The population of the study comprised of (55614) students enrolled in the year 2013 and their teachers (1711) at Secondary level in district Swabi (Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 2013).

3.2 Sample of the Study

Random sampling technique was used to collect the study sample of 300 respondents. Out of 300 respondents (200 students and 100 teachers) were chosen randomly from selected schools ten male students (5 urban and 5 rural) and ten female students (5 urban and 5 rural) from the Secondary schools of district Swabi. From each school five teachers and ten students from 9th class were randomly chosen. Total numbers of students were $(10*20) = 200$ and total teachers were $(5*20) = 100$ respectively.

3.3 Research Instrument

Data were collected from respondents through a questionnaire developed by the researcher. It was a five point Likert scale prepared for the learners comprised of 40 items. The responses were vary from “strongly agree to strongly disagree” and divided into three aspects social, cultural and economic respectively. Responses of the students were gathered using two variables namely: gender and location. The questionnaire was made valid and reliable through experts’ opinions and pilot testing. The Cronbach’s coefficient α obtained for tool was 0.936.

3.4 Data Collection and Analysis

The sampled schools were visited personally to get relevant information through the use of selected instruments i.e. questionnaire. The respondents had to mark on the appropriate place one of the five categories ranging from “strongly agree to strongly disagree”, carrying the score 5 to 1 respectively as described by the items. The coded data were analyzed by utilizing statistical techniques to get the true picture of the prevailing gender disparity among the schools of district Swabi.

4. Results and Discussion

The data collected from the respondents were analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation through SPSS package. The tables were interpreted in the light of the objectives framed. The details of these tables are as follows:

Table 1: Male student’s opinions about gender inequality at SSs level (Economic Aspect)

	Frequency	%	Mean	S D
Valid	16	16.0	2.8667	0.41234
N	80	80.3		
A	4	4.7		
Total	100	100.0		

The above table 1 indicates that 80% male students were unclear about economic factor as a major component for gender inequality. This reveals that both the male and female respondents enjoy same economic advantage provided by the parents.

Table 2: Opinions of the male students about gender inequality at SSs level (Culture Aspect)

		Frequency	%	Mean	SD
Valid	SD	12	12.3	2.09	0.590
	D	70	70.7		
	N	15	15.0		
	A	3	2.0		
	Total	100	100.0		

Analysis of the table shows that 70% male respondents were in disagree to think of culture is responsible for gender inequality at Secondary level. This highlights the fact that cultural values have nothing to exacerbate gender disparity in Swabi.

Table 3: Male students' opinions about gender inequality at SSs Level (Social Aspect)

		frequency	%	Mean	SD
Valid	D	16	16.7	2.92	0.506
	N	75	75.0		
	A	9	9.3		
	Total	100	100.0		

Table 3 indicates that 75% male respondents were unclear to think that social factor influence the gender disparity. Though smaller yet interestingly 16% of the respondents disagree with the statement that social aspect is the factor of gender inequality at SSC level between male and female respondents.

Table 4: Female students’ opinions about gender inequality at SSs level (Economic Aspects)

		Frequency	%	Mean	S D
Valid	D	12	2.92	2.92	0.395
	N	81	81.0		
	A	7	7.0		
	Total	100	100.0		

Table 4 shows that more than 80% female respondents remain unclear to explain their support in considering the economic for gender inequality at Secondary school level. This simply reveals that economic factor does not enlarge gender disparity at Secondary school level as revealed by female respondents in district Swabi.

Table 5: Female students’ opinions about gender inequality at SSs level (Cultural aspect)

		F	%	Mean	SD
Valid	SD	9	9.0	2.16	0.548
	D	69	69.0		
	N	22	24.0		
	Total	100	100.0		

The above-mentioned table shows that more than 66% female respondents disagree that culture plays any negative role in widening gender inequality at Secondary schools. This shows that cultural norms do not widen gender difference. As per statistics in the table girls have almost the same treatment from the society. They can be pleased with the cultural norms and ethics persisting in the society for both genders, male and female.

Table 6: Female students' opinions about gender inequality at SSs level (Social Aspects)

		F	%	Mean	SD
Valid	SD	4	4.0	2.86	0.61
	D	22	22.0		
	N	66	66.0		
	A	8	8.0		
	Total	100	100.0		

Table no.6 shows that more than 65% female respondents stand at an undecided position as to whether social aspect of their life exerts any influence on widening gender inequality in the schools. This means that social environment has no impact on gender difference at Secondary schools in district Swabi.

Generally, most of male respondents do not believe that economic factor as a primary reason for gender difference at Secondary school level in district Swabi. Such findings are in sharp contrast with the findings of certain researchers such as Memon (2007) who found that there are some solid reasons rooted in the economic conditions of parents that influence gender gap as the increase in per capita income is directly proportional to improvement in reducing gender disparity. However, the results of this study reveal that the situation in district Swabi is relatively different as the respondents reported that both the sex enjoys equal economic advantage.

Virk (2008) results also support the current study who described that economic and social classes are usually not considered by the female respondents and similarly most of the male respondents do not consider that culture is responsible for gender inequality at secondary school level. Therefore, the causes of this study's findings may be that the sub culture of Swabi District is different that provides equal opportunities to both the sexes at secondary school level. Furthermore, individuals may be determined to present each kind

of facilities and resources for their kids without any discrimination. Similarly, most of the male respondents do not consider that social aspect is responsible for widening gender disparity. These findings contradict with the findings of Gupta (2004) who stated that male students are getting more chances to carry on their education even in face of their poor social and domestic problems. In the same way majority of the female respondents of the district were not thinking that economic and social features are responsible for gender inequality. Similarly, majority of the female respondents did not consider culture as a widening factor for gender inequality at secondary school level.

Generally, most of the male students don't consider that economic factor as a main reason which will responsible for gender inequality at secondary school level in Swabi District. So, these results do not match with the outcomes of the study carried out by Ghulam (2005). It is acknowledged that there are some solid and reliable suggestions that increase in per capital income for the improvement in different process of gender parity. So, the causes of this result may be also that male and female both the sex enjoys equally economic advantage and their parents or majority of people are providing the same economic position in the society. Further, the results of our studies do not match with the outcomes of the studies conducted by Adhikari (2013) and Linda (2014).

5. Conclusion

Keeping in view the complex nature of the issue of gender disparity in education and the contrasting findings of various researchers, coupled with the findings of the current study, it can safely be concluded that the reason behind this contradictory finding can be due to sub-culture variations. This is a fact that all the districts of Pakistan do not have the same educational facilities together with the strong influence of sub-culture. Of course, the Government tries to bring at par all the districts of the country; however regional and local context plays a decisive role in shaping the nature of education. An instance of such variation can be seen in the urban areas as compared with the far-flung areas such as Kohistan, Chitral, Dir, Kharan, and Gawader to name a few and even the tribal belt. This

could be the possible reason behind the apparently astonishing results of the current study. Hence; on the bases of findings it was concluded that no gender inequality was found between male and female respondents in Swabi District at Secondary school level with reference to economic, cultural and social aspects.

- **Recommendations**

The following recommendations were made in the light of the findings:

1. Gender awareness campaign may be launched involving students and their teachers in the rural and urban areas of Swabi district with the aim of causing attitudinal changes toward girls' education.
2. Provide scholarships to girls from disadvantaged and low-income groups to allow them to pursue their education.
3. Prepare a code of conduct that prohibits teachers from discriminating against students by gender.
4. Introduce free education with some financial assistance up to the Secondary school level for every girl enrolled especially in remote areas.

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