

Parents Attitude toward Female Education in Gilgit, Pakistan

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Female education plays a fundamental role in the development of a society but unfortunately the traditional attitude towards female education prevents them from getting education. In the present research study, an effort has been made to investigate the parental attitude towards female education in Gilgit city. For this purpose, a sample of 100 parents (50% males) was drawn from target population. The age range of the sample was 25-55 years. To assess parents' attitudes toward female education a self-made questionnaire of 16 items was administered on them. Items for the used questionnaire were generated by a team of psychologists based on the available scientific literature and by considering the sociocultural dynamics of Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan. The formatted questionnaire was reviewed and edited by a senior clinical psychologist who has a good level of experience in the said field. The study findings revealed that majority of parents have positive attitude towards female education. The results also reflected that parents' attitude towards female education is determined by their educational level as the parents with higher educational level have reported more positive attitudes towards female education as compared to the parents with lower educational level. However, parents' gender and income neither influence their attitude towards female education nor interact with their educational level in influencing parents' attitudes toward female education.

Keywords: parents, attitude, female, education, Gilgit

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The term education is very vast; it doesn't confine itself to any strict definition as it depends on the perception of person (Kainuwa & Yusuf, 2013). However, the transfer of knowledge, experiences, skills, practices, habits and customs from one generation to the upcoming generation by instructions and training is called education. In other words education is the process of gaining knowledge, different skills, competency, aptitude cultural norms and values, and to convey these capabilities to the next generations to boost up the development of the society (Okoro, 2011).

According to the Islamic perspective, education for women is as important as for men. It is generally considered that to teach a man is merely to teach a single person but to teach a woman is to teach a whole family (Reshma, 2014). Saying of Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH), "it is mandatory to each Muslim man and woman to seek knowledge". Islam has opened all avenues of knowledge for both men and women. There is not any discrimination between men and women in the case of seeking knowledge. Islam has never imposed any restriction on female education (Inamullah, Sarwar, Khan, Hifazatullah, Naseeruddin, & Hussain, 2010).

Female education provides essential tools to the women for the fulfillment of their duties regarding service of the state and also to enhance their individual development. It is also a path through which one can obtain knowledge and expertise that are lifetime wealth for them (Ningi, 2012). Education is very valuable for girls in all matters of their lives. It brings changes in their lives and improves their standards of living. Education makes girls more sensible and enable them to take decisions for a better future. Educated girls know how to rear children in a good manner and how to protect themselves and their families from dangerous syndromes. According to Mangwat (2010), the survival of children is associated with the education of their mothers. Educated mothers adopt safety measures for their children to protect them from serious disorders, i.e. measles, pneumonia, typhoid, hepatitis, polio etc. Education improves child nutrition and health thus reducing mortality rates and enhancing fertility rates. It also enhances the household skills of women, economic production, women's involvement in politics and fortification from sexual diseases, violence and abuse (Idoko, 2009).

Education is an important means of development for any nation. As Napoleon Bonaparte stated "*give me the educated mothers and I would give you an educated nation.*" This is because the educated women can raise their children in a good manner, can better deal with the family problems and become the source of progress and development of the whole nation (Muhammad & Askar, 2009).

The national education commission of Pakistan emphasized on the role of Pakistani women in the development of country. It said that a home or a society will never be educated until there is an educated woman behind them. Through education, a huge number of women could be secured for different variety of jobs and services i.e. teaching, engineering, medical, banking etc. It is necessary that the basic education provided to the women should be firmly strengthened academically and the opportunities and facilities are equally provided to the boys as well as girls. The education commission recommended that the educational facilities must be equally provided to the girls and boys for the growth of education because women's role in the progress of country is very significant (Dogar, Azeem, Feroze, &Shakoor, 2011).

It is an accepted fact that females have an important role in the developmental process of a nation. Females are playing their roles in social order, economy and politics. Most of the developing countries, including Pakistan, lack huge number of educated and technically experienced females; as a result, they are left behind in almost every field of development (Aslam, 2007). Therefore, it is very necessary to educate all people of Pakistan in order to develop the economy of country. Special importance must be given to the female education from primary to higher educational level so that females could contribute for the development of country (Dogar, Azeem, Feroze, &Shakoor, 2011). Despite the admitted importance of educated women for the development of the nation, women are highly discriminated in education all around the world; however the factors behind this discrimination vary. Most of the females are not getting education because of lack of opportunities. They are ignored and provided fewer educational opportunities. A large number of women are illiterate in the present time (Shah, Hussain, Khan, Sibtain, &Gul, 2011).

Various factors are associated with female education along with parental attitudes; parents' attitudes manipulate the academic attainment of children and also endow with the children in the process of getting education (Good, 1959).

Various factors are responsible to shape the attitude of parents regarding education of their daughters and sons in different scenario. These factors include education level of parents, parental age, parental gender, affluence, social position, economic status etc. Only a few girls with uneducated mothers were getting education at university level (Osei, 1994). According to Haldane-Lutterdot (1995) the uneducated parents do not give any importance to the girls' education. Illiterate parents have negative mind-set towards female education due to various reasons such as illogical beliefs, cultural limitations, low status of females, early marriages, unpaid labor at home, protection of veil (purdah) etc. However, educated parents do not give importance to these factors and they have encouraging attitude towards their children's education without any discrimination of gender (Muhammad & Askar, 2009). According to some studies, illiterate parents have low level of interest in the education of their daughters which even involves discouraging attitudes towards female education. In contrast, the educated parents are highly interested in the education of both their sons and daughters (Shani, 1996). Habib (2005) pointed out that the girls who attained higher education were those whose parents were highly educated. It is also indicated from the literature that the educated mothers tend to provide education to their daughters as possible as they can (Stephen, 2007). As reported by Tansel (1997), educational achievement of boys and girls depends on the education of their parents. But the education of father has greater influence as compare to mother's education. Moreover, mother's education has a huge impact on girl's education. Further studies found that educated mothers have more positive and encouraging attitude towards daughter's schooling rather than their son's education (Pal, 2004).

Some parents do not send their daughters to school due to traditional beliefs (Collins, 2014). Such beliefs also prevail in the cultural context of Gilgit and it is generally assumed that females are made for work so kitchen is the right place for them. Due to this concept, some parents prefer their son's education when there is choice to make. Some parents think that they should not waste their money on the daughter's education because she has to go to somebody else home while the son disseminates the family's name so they spent their money on the education of boy. Hamid (1993) explored in his study that traditional beliefs and customs (especially in rural areas of Pakistan) restrict the girls from getting education. In another study Khan and Ali (2005) further elaborate that the socio cultural and religious norms are responsible for low enrolment of girls in school. The people of

rural areas are very conservative. They believe that females should live inside the house and simply perform domestic activities i.e. household chores, taking care of children etc. This conventional concept leads the parents not to invest money on their daughter's education. Female education is perceived as less important by their parents because the central management roles at all levels is attributed to men only (Colclough, Rose, & Tembon, 2000).

The people who are living in big cities are more concerned with their daughters' education as compare to the people living in rural areas (Rafiq, 2000). The rural people are backward in the field of education just because of their conventional attitude towards the education of females. Additionally, in these areas there are not enough educational institutions to complete the needs of education (Asghar, 1992).

In 1985, Ghazala and Rubeena explored that female education is encouraged even in lower economic class. Parents want to educate their daughters to make them able to choose a suitable career. Their study tells that a very positive attitude towards education has developed in all socioeconomic classes (Dogar et al, 2011). According to the findings of another study parents whose economic status is weak always prefer to educate their boy child in order to secure their future because they consider it a beneficial investment to spend money on the education of boy (Tan 1983; Chekki 1974). Boy's education is preferred in poor families of Pakistan because of economic problems and the female education is generally ignored. Parents show discriminatory behavior while selecting the school for their children. Usually parents select better standard school for the son and daughters are enrolling in a low standard (with limited facilities of education, lower fees) school (Aslam, 2007). Findings of another study in Pakistani context shown that most of the parents have positive attitude towards their daughter's education yet there are some organizational problems that hinder the girls to acquire education. According to the respondents those problems are; distance from the schools, lack of trained faculty and financial problems of parents, cultural restrictions, family customs and beliefs, and shortage of governmental policies (Hussain, Zakaria, Hassan, Mukhtar, & Ali, 2003).

In our society, children live with their parents and depend on them for their needs. They follow their parents and make life decisions according to their will. Education is one of the basic needs of every individual therefore, everyone must acquire better education (Ara & Aziz, 2013). Therefore, parental attitude towards the education of female children is very important. The parents' attitude could be either positive or negative. The positive attitude of parents can be advantageous for the girls to create interest in their learning, to improve class performance and achieve success in their studies. On the other hand, negative attitude results in reduction of motivation and also decrease the self-esteem, hence preventing the girls from getting education. Keeping in view the significance of female education, it was imperative to conduct the present study regarding parental attitude towards female education in Gilgit city of Pakistan.

Research Objectives

The objectives of the research were; to explore the parental attitude towards female education, to find out the main effects of parents' gender, education and income on their attitudes toward female education, and whether gender interact with education and income or education interact with income to influence parents' attitudes toward female education in Gilgit city of Pakistan.

The research may be helpful to recognize problems or obstacles in the way of female education by assessing parents' attitudes, so that the possible solution will be recommended accordingly. The research study might be significant for the reason that the outcomes of the study may endow with important instructions and guidelines for the government, NGOs and other policy making organizations to make efforts to promote female education by focusing parental attitudes. The research may also be useful to change the negative attitude of parents towards the education of girls and develop positive attitude by making them realize the importance of education for their girl child. Finally, the study may also provide basis for other researchers to address the obstacles related female education in Gilgit.

Method

Participants

A gender proportionate sample of 100 married participants with female child, age ranged from 25 to 55 years, was selected from Gilgit city base on convenient-purposive sampling-technique. The education levels of participants were; 14% participants belong to primary level, 19% participants belong to secondary level, 14% participants belong to higher secondary level, 35% participants belong to graduation or above and 18%

participants were illiterate. Regarding socioeconomic status of the participants based on their monthly income; 48% participants belong to the lower class (0-15000), 33% participants belong to the middle class (16000-45000), and 19% participants belong to the upper class (above 45000). The religious/sectarian backgrounds of the participants were; 34% participants *Shia Asna Ashri*, 33% participants *Ehl-E-Sunnat* while 33% participants *Shia Imamia Ismaili*. The occupations of participants were; 29% domestic chores, 16% business, 32% government servants, 15% teachers while 8% belong to other occupations. All the participants included in the study were natives of Gilgit city and had at least one school age girl child.

Instruments

Demographic sheet; A demographic sheet was used to collect the demographic details of the participants, such as age, sex, education level, income, occupation, religion, living area, and number of children etc.

Parental attitude towards female education questionnaire (PAFEQ); in the available scientific literature there was not such a questionnaire available to assess parents attitude toward female education. Most of the relevant studies which focused on parents' attitude toward female education were qualitative and the concept was measured through in-depth interviews and focus group discussion or simply by two or three statements. For proper conceptualization of the topic under study, we have collected and reviewed the relevant scientific literature reported globally as well as from Pakistani context. Based on reviewed literature and by considering the socio-cultural fabric of Gilgit-Baltistan, 16 items were generated by a team of psychologists who had more than five years of teaching and research experience. The formatted questionnaire was reviewed by a senior clinical psychologist for linguistic accuracy and cultural equivalence. He has a good level of experience in the development and adaptation of psychological scales. The suggested recommendations were incorporated. All the statements reflected the attitude towards female education. This self- made questionnaire (named PAFEQ) was used in the present study as a research instrument to collect the data. The final form of questionnaire was consisted of 16 items, out of which 8 items were positively stated (showing positive attitude towards girl's education) and 8 were negatively stated (showing negative attitude towards girl's education). These two categories of items were stated randomly in the questionnaire. Respondents need to rate each statement on a 5-point Likert scales ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Items 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 15 and 16 were the positively stated items while 3, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14 were negatively stated items. All negatively specified statements were revers scored and added with positively stated items to get a sum score that showed the attitude (either positive or negative) of parents towards the education of their daughters. The highest range of the score is 80 while the lowest is 16 and 48 was established as a cutoff score. Scores at or/above 48 shows positive attitude while below 48 shows negative attitude towards female education. The score above 70 indicates highly positive attitude.

In order to assess the response reliability *Cronbach's alpha* was run and it was .86 for the questionnaire.

Procedure

The participants were approached at their homes by the researchers. Data were collected by administering the questionnaire only on those participants who were willingly to take part in the study. Participants were assured that the material will be used only for research purpose and their personal information would not be shared with individual identity. They reserved the right to withdraw from the research anytime they want.

Data analysis

For the statistical analysis of data, both descriptive (mean, standard deviation, & frequencies) and inferential statistical technique factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used by statistical package for social science (SPSS).

Results

Before analysis of the collected data, Cronbach's alpha was document to assess the response reliability that falls in acceptable range (.86).

Table 1

Mean and standard deviation on PAFEQ for gender, educational level, and socioeconomic status (n=100, Male=50, Female=50)

Variable	Level	M	SD
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Gender	Male	66.08	11.68
	Female	69.52	8.09
Socioeconomic Status	Lower	65.91	10.99
	Middle	69.58	8.94
	Upper	69.66	9.39
Educational Level	Graduation and Above	73.22	6.52
	Higher Secondary Level	66.71	7.22
	Secondary Level	67.21	7.09
	Primary level	61.57	15.01
	Illiterate	63.56	11.67

According to the finding of descriptive statistics (table 2) most of parents have positive attitude towards female education (45% positive & 50% highly positive) and very few number of parents (only 5%) have negative attitude towards female education.

Table 2

Range, frequency, and interpretation of participants scores on PAFEQ (N=100)

Range	Frequency	Interpretation
71 and above	50	Highly positive attitudes
49-70	45	Positive attitudes
48 and below	5	Negative attitudes

In order to assess the main effects of parents' gender, educational level and income as well as the interaction effects of main variables on their attitude toward females' education; factorial analysis of variance (shown in table 3) was completed. The interaction factors were established as; Gender×Education, Gender×Income, & Education×Income, implied that whether gender interact with education and income or education interact with income to influence parents' attitudes toward female education.

Findings revealed that interactions among main variables (Gender×Education, Gender×Income, & Education×Income) are not significant. It indicated that neither participants gender interact with their education and income nor their education interact with their income to influence their attitudes toward female education. However, the main effect of "parents' educational level" on their attitude toward female education was statistically significant; indicated that parental attitude towards female education is influenced by their educational level. Parents having different level of education have different attitudes toward female education. Therefore, we have completed one way analysis of variance and post-hoc analysis for further clarification of these findings (table 4). Parents having graduation or above educational level have more positive attitude towards female education as compared to the parents with primary level education, and illiterate parents.

Table 3

Factorial analysis of variance results parents' attitudes as dependent variable while their gender, educational level, and socioeconomic status as independent variables

Sources	df	SS	MS	F
G(Gender)	1	188.64	188.64	2.15
E(Education)	4	1229.55	307.38	3.49*
I (Income)	2	31.45	15.73	.18
G×E	4	102.57	25.65	.29
G×I	2	29.47	14.73	.16
E×I	8	858.0	107.25	1.22
Error	78	6853.88	87.87	

* $p < .05$

Table 4

Analysis of variance results parents' attitudes as dependent variable while their educational levels as independent variable

Sources	df	SS	MS	F
Between Groups	4	1921.94	480.49	5.51**
Within Groups	95	8278.06	87.14	
Total	99	10200.0		

** $p < .01$

Discussion

The purpose of this research was to explore parents' attitude towards female education in Gilgit city. The study also assessed the role of parental gender, educational level, and their socioeconomic status in determining their attitudes towards the education of their daughters.

Results of the present study showed that majority of parents have positive attitudes towards female education. These findings are consistent with the results of previous studies in Pakistan where parents have highly positive attitude towards their girl child's education (Dogar, Azeem, Feroze, & Shakoor, 2011). Majority of parents (90%) were strongly in favor of females' higher education. According to the respondents' point of view, higher education is the right of women and it is necessary to groom their personality and also to enhance their capabilities so that they could make a difference between right and wrong to sort out solutions of their problems (Khattak, 2013). Almost all parents were of the view that girl's education is very important for them to start a good life and also to protect them from any sort of exploitation or abuse. The parental attitude towards female education was very good and supportive (Kamaldeen, Buhari, & Parakoyi, 2012).

Most of the parents have favorable attitudes towards female education although there are some logistical and administrative problems such as; long distance to school, lack of efficient teachers, family beliefs etc. (Hussain, Zakaria, Hassan, Mukhtar, & Ali, 2003). According to Kamaldeen, Buhari, and Parakoyi, (2012) parents have identified some factors that hinder the girls from getting education. Those factors include early age marriages among girls, scarcity and teenage pregnancy etc. Despite having positive attitudes towards their daughter's education, however, majority of parents were facing the problem of lack of schools and infrastructure (Buzdar & Ali, 2011).

However, some contradictory findings are reported by researchers in other Muslim countries. E.g. in Bawku Muslim community in the upper-east region of Ghana parents have negative attitude towards girls education. This was because of some negative concepts of the parents about girls. For example girls are always confined to the kitchen and they do not need any sort of formal education. Furthermore they are not intelligent as boys and they do not perform well as boys do in their studies (Stephen, 2007).

Regarding gender differences in attitudes toward female education, our findings showed statistically not significant differences. It indicated that both parents have same attitudes toward female education in this part of Pakistan. Similar findings also reported by other researchers. The attitude of male and female parents did not differ regarding the schooling of female child. In the earlier times females were bounded to their houses and they were unaware of the importance of education. Nowadays females are given almost same status as males have in making their life decisions and both parents are in favor of schooling of their children (Samal, 2012). Both parents have positive attitudes toward female education but in some studies mothers have surpassed fathers. Mothers have comparatively more positive and encouraging attitudes towards their daughter's education than fathers (Dogar et al, 2011; Reshma, 2014).

The role of parents' educational level in their attitudes toward female education was also assessed in this study. Results showed that parents having different level of education have different level of attitudes toward female education. Parents having graduation or above educational level have more positive attitudes towards female education than parents with primary level of education and illiterate parents. Similar findings are also reported by researches in other parts of Pakistan where educated parents have more positive attitude towards female education as compare to uneducated parents (Shah et al, 2011). Educated parents have more encouraging attitude towards female education. Uneducated parents are reluctant to provide education to their daughters due to their irrational beliefs, early marriages of their daughters, low status of women, and the concept that girls are guests at their parents' home till their marriage, and some other cultural boundaries while educated parents do not have such type of irrational beliefs and they do not consider the cultural boundaries so they are sending their daughters (without hesitation) to educational institution for seeking education (Muhammad & Askar, 2009).

Family educational background determines the likelihood of a girl to attend the school. If the parents are more educated there would be more chances for their children to get education. Highly educated parents have more encouraging attitude towards girl's education (Ningi, 2012). Parents' higher level of education has positive effect on their attitude towards female education (Reshma, 2014).

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The role of parents' socioeconomic status was also studied in this study and its findings are not statistically significant. According to Ghazala and Rubeena (1985) parents with the background of all socioeconomic statuses have favorable attitudes towards female education. Parents stated that females must be provided with quality education that could help them in career making (Ghazala & Rubeena, 1985; Reshma, 2014). Some contradictory findings are also found in literature where socioeconomic status of parents negatively affected their attitudes toward female education (Samal, 2012). People with lower economic status have less preference to the female education as compare to the people from upper class (Javed, 1965).

The financial status of parents plays an important role in the schooling of children. The parents who are in a better financial status are well aware that education is necessary for their children so they invest more for the education of their children regardless of their gender (Breen & Goldthorpe, 1997).

Parents with different classes have different attitude regarding female education. Majority of parents are sending their girls to school but parents with lower income level educate their daughters up to primary level and they do not encourage their daughters for further education. Parents with middle income class were somewhat hesitant to allow their daughters to get higher education; however, they allow them to get education up to the secondary level. In contrast, parents belonging to higher income class have most favorable attitudes towards girl's education and they allow their daughters to get higher education. The parents even send them out of city to their education (Ambreen & Mohyuddin, 2013).

Conclusion

Parental attitude towards female education in Gilgit city was examined in this study. In view of our findings, it is conclude that majority of parents have positive attitude towards female education. Parents' educational level played an important role in determining their attitudes toward female education; however, their gender and socioeconomic status neither influence their attitudes nor interact with one another and education level to influence parents' attitude toward female education in Gilgit, Pakistan.

Recommendations

Awareness programs, regarding importance of female education is recommended for parents with low educational background and illiterate parents, so that they would also develop more positive attitudes toward female education and ultimately will encourage their daughters to get education.

The study sample was only from Gilgit city that may not be true representative of the entire province, so that it is recommend to add sample from all districts of Gilgit-Baltistan and other province of Pakistan to increase the generalizability of future studies in the same area.

It is also recommended to control an important demographic variables such as tribal system, cast, etc. which tend to influence parents attitude toward female education.

In the present study we have assessed only those parents attitudes who had school going female child but in future studies it is recommended to include all parents irrespective of their off spring's sex and schooling status for encompassing the holistic societal picture regarding female education.

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