

Socio-Cultural Causes Underlying Women's Social Discrimination in A Traditional Pakhtun's Society at District Mardan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

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Abstract

This study uncovers the various socio-cultural basis of women's social discrimination in a traditional Pakhtun's society at District Mardan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Pakistan. The KP province is considered of patriarchal nature where women's rights are disparate in different domains of life, including in the social domain. The key focus of the study is 1) "to know the role of patriarchy in women's discrimination in social domain of life", 2) to analyze the illiteracy as cause of women's social discrimination", and 3) to assess cultural stereotypes as factor underlying women's social discrimination". Data for the study comes from union council Babini, district Mardan. Using stratified random sampling technique, data were collected from 94 (female 47 and male 47) respondents. An extensive interview schedule was used for data collection. Findings of the study suggest that patriarchy, illiteracy and cultural stereotypes were the major causes of women's social discrimination.

Key Words: *Patriarchy, Illiteracy, Cultural Stereotypes, Women's Social Discrimination.*

1. Introduction

Discrimination against women in different domains of life is common all over the world and Pakistan as South East Asian country is no exception in this regard. Discrimination against women, in different domains (legal, political, economic and social etc) of life, is a normal societal business in Pakistan (Sandhu and Amna, 2012). Starting from the family to the public sphere/domain, they are dealt very differently as compare to their men counter parts. Generally in Pakistan and particularly in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the societal structures are much closed for women empowerment in all respects including social empowerment (Naz, Ahmad and Waqar, 2012). Women in KP are discriminated in different domains of life by various socio-cultural means and particularly by education because texts and illustrations in the school system are gender biased (Ullah, 2007). Patriarchal system, illiteracy, and cultural stereotypes are the

common dynamics behind most of the aspects of women discrimination including social discrimination. Because of patriarchy they are mostly discriminated at home (i.e. not allowing for spouse selection, for getting equal education like men etc). In 2013, Tabassum et al argued that illiteracy is one of the key forces behind the poor status of women in all spheres of life.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Gender Discrimination a Historical Perspective

Across the globe culture stands as an important attribute for the difference between females and males when it comes to the organization of social life. Gender discrimination throughout the human history is the product of culture and normative structure of the society (Thakur et. al, 2009). Women have always been considered as servants to the men. According to Anthropologist Napoleon in the horticultural society “women were suppose to give a quick response to the demands of their husbands”. In those days women have to prepare meal in hurry for their husbands when they come from hunting (Hagberg & Widman, 2016). Women have been through very poor standpoints throughout the history and the main reasons are found as social, cultural and normative structures of the societies.

2.2 Women’s Social Discrimination in Pakistan

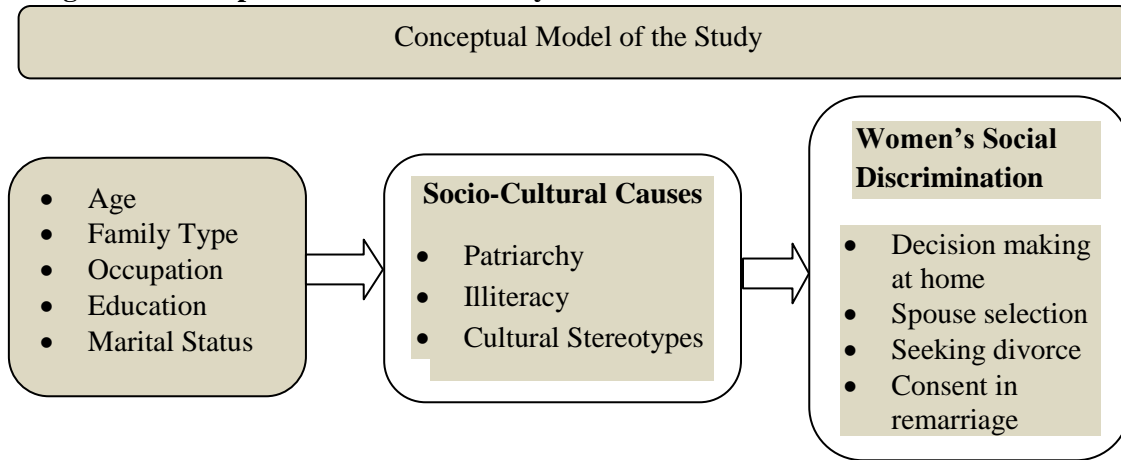
Gender discrimination is a broad academic area which cannot be understood in a country from a single perspective. It can be seen from multi dimensions in Pakistan with finding different causes of it. Arguing (Ullah, 2013) said that gender power is shaped and reshaped through schooling and the main construction behind this male hegemony is patriarchy. Women are socially discriminated in Pakistan through various social, cultural and media discourses means. Societal normative structure is very obstructive for women that are why women are not getting social empowerment (Tabassum et al, 2013). Women’s social location is very poor because of the patriarchy and cultural stereotypes. Social location is defined as “the group membership that people have because of their location in history and society” (Henslin, 2011). In sociological debate, social location is determined by education, sex, wealth etc. The socio-cultural determinants (i.e. education, cultural norms, media discourses etc) of women’s social location in Pakistan are very discriminatory and those reflect a very different results for them through their lives. Family and patriarchy system are mainly responsible for women’s discrimination in different walks of life (Latif, Usman, Kataria & Abdullah, 2015).

2.3 Social Discrimination against Women in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Khyber pakhtunkhwa, a region of pakhtuns is very closed and traditional in respect of women related issues. Cultural stereotypes and norms have made society closed for women in all respects (Naz, Ahmad and Waqar, 2012). The overall organization of society is much closed for women empowerment because this is constructed by men and women are discriminated in different legal, political, economic including social domains. Although, women constitute almost half of the society’ population in KP but still they are not getting the equal rights in starting from family to the public sphere/domain (Bari, 2005). Women in the politics are too much ignored because a very nominal representation is given to them in the parliament (17.5%) and same in the all four provincial assemblies of the country (Khattak and Hussain, 2013), although they constitute half of the population. This discrimination in the parliament give very bad results in all angles of women’s lives in the country and in the KP province also. Women’s social discrimination is revealed in different

shapes (discrimination in spouse selection, seeking divorce etc), however discriminating women in education is a serious problem of the KP province. Women representation as leaders in the school texts is even absent (see Ullah, 2006).

Figure 1: Conceptual Model of the Study



3. Methodology and Data Presentation

Data for the study comes from union counsel BabiniMardan. Through proportionate random sampling the union counsel was divided into village counsels. Sample size was determined by Tharo Yemini formula (a formula of calculating sample size). Using an extensive interview schedule, the data was collected from 94 (male 47 and female 47) respondents. The study is drawn on two main independent variables (social and cultural causes) and one dependent variable (women's social discrimination). The social and cultural causes behind women's social discrimination were determined by three indicators 1) patriarchy, 2) illiteracy, and 3) cultural stereotypes. In this study the women's social discrimination as dependent variable is fixed by 1) decision making at home, 2) spouse selection, 3) seeking divorce, and 4) remarriage of the widow/widowed. Through descriptive statistics, the frequency and percentage of the socio-cultural causes were calculated in first stage. Frequency and percentage of the different scales of women's social discrimination were also calculated through descriptive statistics. After getting the valid frequency and percentage of both the independent and dependent variables, inferential statistics was applied to get the actual results of the study variables. With the help of descriptive and inferential statistics' techniques, data is calculated and presented in the following tables.

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

Table 4.1. Education Level of the Respondents and their Family System. (N=94)

Statement	Frequency Male	Frequency Female	Percentage Male	Percentage Female
Illiterate	9	36	9.5	38.2
Primary	12	10	13	11
Middle	16	11	17	12
SSC	19	15	20	16
HSSC	15	11	16	12

Bachelor	12	6	13	6.38
Master and Above	11	5	12	5.31
Total	94	94	100	100

Family System of the Respondents

Statement	Frequency	Percentage
Father	31	33
Grand Father	19	20.2
Husband	29	31
Mother	9	10
Grand Mother	3	3.1
Wife	0	0
Any Other	3	3.1
Total	100	100

The table no 4.1.1 shows the frequency and percentage of the respondents regarding education/qualification and family system of the respondents which are sub variables/indicators of the independent variable (socio-cultural causes). The table demonstrates that out of 94 respondents 9 (9.5 %) male respondents were illiterate while 36 (38.2 %) of the female respondents were illiterate, 12 (13%) of the male respondents were primary pass while 10 (11%) female respondents had the same primary education, 19 (20%) male respondents were studied up to SSC level while 19 (16%) of the female had SSC level education, 15 (16%) of the male were qualified HSSC while 11 (12%) female had the same HSSC level education, 12 (13%) male respondents had studied up to bachelor while 6 (6.3%) of the female were studied up to bachelor level, and 11 (12%) of the male respondents had studied up to master or above level while only 5 (5.31%) of the female had studied up to master level. The table clearly concludes that education ratio of the female was very much low as compare to male because 38.2% female were found illiterate, 11% female were primary pass, 12 % female were SSC, 12% female were HSSC, 6.38% were bachelor pass, and only 5.31% female had master and above qualification.

Table also explains family system of the respondents on the basis of authority in which 31 (33%) of the respondents had have father as head of the family, 19 (20.2%) of the respondents had have grandfather as head of the family, 29 (31%) respondents had husband as head of the family while 9 (10%) of the respondents had mother as family head, and only 3 (3.1%) had mother as family head. The table finds that most of the families (84%) had patriarchal family structure while only 13.1 % of the respondents had matriarchal family system which is very nominal.

Table 4.2. Division of the Respondents by Decision Making at Home, Spouse Selection, Seeking Divorce, and Remarriage of Widow (N=94)

Decision Making at Home		
Statement	Frequency	Percentage
Husband	49	52.12
Wife	12	13
Any Other Male	24	26
Any Other Female	9	10
Total	100	100

Spouse Selection Male/Female		
Statement	Frequency	Percentage
Consent of Male	63	67.02
Consent of Female	31	33
Total	94	94
Seeking Divorce by Male/Female		
By Male	67	71.2
By Female	27	29
Total	94	94
Remarriage of Widow/Widowed by the Consent of Male/Female		
By Male Consent	83	88
By Female Consent	11	12

Data about the dependent variable(s) is presented in the aforementioned table which reveals the status of the respondents in the decision making at home, the respondent's consent at the time of spouse selection, respondents seeking divorce, and remarriage of the widow/widowed. About the decision making at home, the table demonstrates that 49 (52.12%) of the respondents confirmed that decision is made by husbands at their families, 24 (26%) respondents said that other male members in the family make domestic decisions, only a nominal number 12 (13%) respondents affirmed that wives make domestic decisions, and 9 (10%) of the respondents confirmed that other female members at home take decisions. The table concludes that in majority of the decisions at home (78.12%) are made by husbands and other male members of the family.

Data in the table also explains information regarding spouse selection by male/female in which 63 (67.02%) of the respondents agreed that consent of the male members is taken at the time of spouse selection while only 31 (33%) of the respondents affirmed that female consent is taken at the time of spouse selection. Data in the table clearly indicates that majority of the male members (67.02%) have the option to select spouse by their own choice while females were not given this opportunity. Information in the table reveals seeking divorce by male and female in which 67 (71.2 %) of the respondents agreed that males have the authority to give divorce to their wives while only 27 (29%) respondents confirmed that females can ask for taking divorce from their husbands. The table clearly concludes that majority of the males 67 (71.2 %) have the authority to divorce their wives while females have no authority to ask for divorce.

About very important variable i.e. remarriage of the widow/widowed by the consent of female and male, the table mentions that 83 (88 %) of the respondents told that male members are allowed for remarriage or even for 2nd and third marriage having their own choice while 11 (12 %) of the respondents affirmed that a female's husband dies, she is not allowed to have remarriage by their own choice and she has to remarry with the brother of the died husband. So it is concluded from the data presented in the table that majority of the males (88 %) were allowed for remarriage and second marriage even in the presence of their first wives.

4.2 Inferential Analysis

The relationship between the study's independent variables (i.e. patriarchy, illiteracy, and cultural stereotypes) and dependent variables (i.e. decision making at home, spouse selection by males and females, seeking divorce by male and female, and

remarriage of widow/widowed by the consent of females and males) is tested with the help of chi-square and data is tabulated and presented in the following shape.

Table 4.3. Association of Patriarchy, Illiteracy and Cultural Stereotypes with Women’s Social Discrimination (N=94)

Factors	Statement	Women’s Social Discrimination (Domestic decision, Spouse Selection, Seeking Divorce & Remarriage of Widow/Widowed)			Total Statistics	
		Yes	No	Uncertain		
Patriarchy	Yes	79(84.04%)	15(15.95%)	0(0%)	94 (99.9%)	χ^2 =89.21 (.00)
	No	15(15.95%)	1(0.5%)	0	16 (17.02%)	
	Uncertain	0(0%)	0	0	0(0%)	
Education	Illiterate	Men 9(9.57%)	Men 9(9.57%)	0	Men 18 (19.14%)	χ^2 =3.14 (.273)
		Women 36(38.29%)	Women 36(38.29%)		Women 72 (76.58%)	
	Literate	Men 85(90.42%)	Men 9(9.57%)	0	Men 85 (90.42%)	
		Women 58(61.70%)	Women 36(38.29%)		Women 36 (38.29%)	
Cultural stereotypes	Yes	72(76.95%)	72(76.95%)	3 (1.5%)	72(76.95 %)	χ^2 =91.01 (.00)
	No	21(22.34%)	21(22.34%)	0	21(22.34 %)	
	Uncertain	1 (1.06%)	0	0	1 (1.06%)	
	No	156((78%)	6(3%)	0	162(81%)	
	Uncertain	1(0.5%)	0	0	1(0.5%)	

The above table demonstrates the relationship between independent variables (patriarchy, illiteracy, and cultural stereotypes) with dependent variable (women’s social discrimination) with the help of chi-square statistics. About the relationship of patriarchy (an indicator of dependent variable) with the women’s social empowerment (domestic decision, spouse selection, seeking divorce & remarriage of widow/widowed), the data shows highly significant statistics (P= .00). It means that there is a strong relationship of patriarchal family system with the social discrimination of women. Most of the families were dominated by men that are why women’s social discrimination was visible.

The table also demonstrates non-significant relationship ($P = .273$) between illiteracy and women's social discrimination. Most of the men were educated as compare to women and female were found uneducated or with very nominal ratio. Here the relationship is not strong because patriarchy has very strong relationship with women's social discrimination so because of that education as part of the social discrimination also dominated by male dominance phenomenon. The relationship between cultural stereotypes and women's social discrimination is strongly expressed ($P = .00$) by the above mentioned table. The table demonstrates that because of cultural stereotypes women were visibly discriminated because they had no say in the domestic decision making, they had no right for spouse selection by their choice, they had no right to seek divorce and their consent was not taken for second marriage if first husband dies or gives divorce to her.

4. Key Findings of the Study

This study was mainly focused to uncover the relationship between the “socio-cultural causes” and “women's social discrimination”. By socio-cultural causes, in this study, we meant patriarchy, illiteracy, and cultural stereotypes. However, the women's social discrimination is determined by decision making at home, spouse selection by males and females, seeking divorce by male and female, and remarriage of widow/widowed by the consent of females and males. After interpreting the data thoroughly with the help of descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage) and inferential statistics' techniques (chi-square), the following key findings are extracted.

a. Patriarchy, Illiteracy and Domestic Decision Making Process

After testing the frequency of the responses through chi-square between patriarchy, Illiteracy and decision making at home, the study finds that the structure of the family was found mostly patriarchal and people were illiterate in majority. Because of patriarchy and illiteracy, the study found that decisions were always taken by only male members of the family and female members have no say in the domestic decision making process.

b. Spouse Selection in the Patriarchal Families/Illiterate Family Members

The study finds that male members had the authority to select their spouse by their own choice while female members in the family were not allowed for spouse selection by their own choice and they were suppose to marry to a person of their father's choice because the structure of the family was dominated by males and most of the family members were illiterate and they were not aware of women's social rights.

c. Seeking Divorce in the Patriarchy/Illiterate Family Members

The inferential data analysis finds strong relationship between patriarchy, illiteracy and seeking divorce by males and females. Males were allowed to divorce their wives while females were not authorized for the same act because the families were patriarchal in nature and most of the family members were illiterate and they ignorant to know about the social rights of women.

d. Patriarchy/Illiteracy and Remarriage of the Widow/Widowed

The study finds that women were not allowed to have remarriage by their own choice if their first husband dies and they had have to marry to the died husband's brother. However, men were allowed to have second or third marriage by their own choice if their wife dies. About all this social discrimination of women, patriarchy and illiteracy were involved as major dynamics.

5. Conclusion

This paper has examined the relationship between patriarchy, illiteracy, cultural stereotypes and women's social discrimination in union Mardan, KP. Findings of the study suggest that patriarchy, illiteracy, cultural stereotypes in the study had great role in socially discriminating the women population of the area. Because of patriarchy, illiteracy and cultural stereotypes women were not allowed to have say in the domestic decision making process, they were not allowed to select their spouse(s) by their own choice, female had no authority to seek divorce and they were not allowed to have remarriage by their own choice if their first husband dies. However, men were dominating domestic decisions, they were allowed to select their spouses by their own choice, they had dominated the divorce seeking process, and they were also authorized to have remarriage by their own consent if their first wife dies.

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