

Do Parents Matter? A Study On Female Educational Attainment In Rural Punjab, Pakistan

Naimatullah Hashmi *, Mazhar Hussain Bhutta **, Zahira Batool ***

Abstract

More than 60% of the population of Pakistan lives in rural areas. Women in these rural areas are far behind in their education as compared to their urban counter parts. Moreover females' educational performance has been observed better than their male counter parts globally. In rural Pakistan, weak administrative set up, poor economy and unfavourable social conditions demand parents to play a key role in educating their children, especially for their daughters. The present study tried to measure the role of parental altruistic attitude in educating their daughters. A sample of 700 female children was selected from the two Districts, Faisalabad and Jhang of the Province of Punjab using multistage random sampling technique. The results of the study found a strong positive impact of the parental interest on the educational attainment levels of their daughters. The average educational attainment level of the girls belonging to parents with high altruistic attitude is much higher than those belonging to parents with low. A statistically significant value of Somers'd ($p < 0.001$) evidenced a strong cause-effect relationship between altruistic attitude of parents and educational attainment levels of their female children. The study concluded that schooling system in rural areas is weak; and parents who discuss educational matters with their children stay in touch with their learning-states. Such parents care for their regularity at school and manage to accomplish the educational deficiencies of girls at home. The study recommends increasing the parental role in enhancing the schooling levels of female children by realizing them its importance in the interest of family, nation and individual itself.

Key words: Educational attainment, Altruistic attitude, Rural females, Pakistan.

Introduction

Education is a compulsory component for the development of a country. It enhances the awareness of people towards health care (Grown, Gupta, & Pande, 2005), promotes democracy in a country (Barro, 1999), boosts the skills of its citizens (Maitra, 2003) and necessary for the future development of the nation (Umer, Othman & Hassan, 2016). Moreover, studies in gender perspectives reported women are more advantageous in achievement of educational scores globally by the end of 20th century (Hadjar, Krolak-Schwerdt, Priem & Glock, 2014; LU & IK, 2007). Educational performance of the female students in Pakistan has also been reported better than their male partners (Saeed, Gondal & Bushra, 2005). Researchers acknowledged the difference in educational achievement to the factor that boys' culture is less study oriented than girls' culture (Houtte, 2004). In Pakistan, rural population constitutes 63.62% of the total population (PBS, 2018).

* Professor Department of Sociology, PMAS Arid Agriculture University Rawalpindi, Pakistan.

** Assistant professor Department of Sociology, PMAS Arid Agriculture University Rawalpindi, Pakistan.

*** Associate professor Department of Sociology, GC University, Faisalabad.

Schooling of rural females cannot be overemphasized for a country like Pakistan, where women are victimized in the name of respectability. The health status of rural people are lower as compared to their urban counterparts (Anwer & Awan, 2003).

Pakistan has been placed at 118th position out of 130 countries in the Human Development Index in the world (HCR, 2016). The literacy rate among the rural females (age 10 years and above) remained 36% in 2016-17 (GOP, 2018). Furthermore, public in Pakistan has no advantage of 'compulsory basic education' like welfare states in the developed parts of the World. Pakistan is facing a poor economy and a fragile administrative set up in this regard. Children's education in such a situation becomes the responsibility of parents. Various researchers indicated that the children whose parents were more motivated for their education have higher schooling levels as compared to their counterparts whose parents were behind on this aspect (Hindin, 2005; Saeed, Soomro & Abro, 2012). Parental role in educating their girls is of special importance in the socio-economic lagged rural areas of Pakistan. These rural areas carry a weak tradition of women's higher-level education due to strong patriarchal norms. Literature reported various reasons of parental weak interest in the schooling of their daughters like fear of harassment for big girls on school way as the higher-grade schools are few and located at far flung areas (Hashmi, Zafar & Ali, 2009; Ahmad & Gates, 2016), the religion-oriented societal norms demanding an adult female to be limited to home activities in Pakistan (PCGA, 2005), taking roles of women just as caretaker of the family (Mekonnen & Mekonnen, 2014), political apathy and corruption in society (Jamal, 2016), preference of religious/madrassah education (Siddiqui, 2017) and early marriages of females (Obiageli & Paulette, 2015), poverty and large sibship size of families (Baranowska-Rataj, Styrz & da Silva, 2015; Kalmijn & van de Werfhorst, 2016), gender-discrimination attitude of parents among children (Kugler & Kumar, 2017) and issue of respectability of females (Purewal & Hashmi, 2015). Most of these factors hindering the girls' schooling as reported are mostly parental-oriented. Therefore, the need of parental dedication in educating their children in such a socio-cultural scenario becomes manifold. In this vein, the present study aimed to know the impact of parental role towards educational attainment levels of their daughters in the socio-cultural environment of rural areas in the province of Punjab. The results of this action-oriented research intend to help the policy makers in developing the human capital of fifty percent population of Pakistan.

Methodology

The study was conducted in the rural areas of Districts Faisalabad and Jhang of the Punjab Province. Two towns from District Faisalabad and two tehsils from District Jhang were selected randomly at the first stage of sampling. The selection of union councils, villages and respective households was made at the second, third and fourth stage of sampling. A number of 700 female children were decided to be a suitable sample size for this study. The female children having attained their final grade in the last five years constitute the population of study. The official age at first enrolment of children in Punjab is nine years (DPI, 2000). Hence, it was decided to select the female children of age 6 to 14 among 'never enrolled'. There was no age criterion for those who had experienced school enrolment (at least one-year

enrolment in an educational institution). Only single female child was selected from a household with a view of proper coverage of the population. The heads of the selected households were the respondents of the study. The response variable (educational statuses of the individuals) was measured through their final completed educational grade. This educational attainment of the selected cases was categorized within the educational structure of Pakistan. The units of analysis, who could not complete five years of schooling- an initial stage of education 'primary'- were categorized as with 'no education'. Those successfully completing the schooling of five, eight, ten and more than ten years were categorized as 'primary', 'middle', 'matric', and 'above matric'.

According to Tansel (1997) altruistic-parents prioritise the education for their children irrespective of monetary benefits of education for or from their children. Such parents see the future welfare of children in their educational outcomes. For Teachman (1987), the altruistic attitude matters towards the extent parents involve in managing the educational resources like providing reference books, newspapers, dictionary/encyclopaedia, and study-room in the home for the children. Likewise, Keng (2004) viewed altruistic level of parents through their interest in the schooling performance e.g. whether the parents 'ever told children to work hard in school', 'checked their books', 'supervised their homework', and 'discussed their educational prospects with teachers'. Hindin (2005) measured the parents' attention through the concept of 'parenting styles' i.e. whether parents monitor their children closely, supportive towards their studies and supervise their homework or ask about them from children's fellow friends.

After a visit in the field to know the phenomenon of girls' schooling in the study area and for pre-testing the research instrument, altruistic attitude of parents towards their siblings was decided to be assessed through three indicators i.e. their arrangements for home study, maintaining the regularity of the children with school and sharing the educational matters with the units of analysis. First, standard of educational coaching at home was measured on three-point ordinal scale i.e. no opportunity, by herself and by a tutor for guidance school assignments/readings at home. Second, ensuring regular school attendance of units of analysis was assessed through the number of unjust absentees of selected female child from school in a week. Third, the assessment of parents' attitude towards 'sharing the educational problems' was measured through the number of discussions of parents on educational matters with units of analysis in a month. These measures on the mother/father practices in the interest of better education of their girls i.e. managing their study at home, ensuring regularity in school attendance and sharing the educational problems with them were combined in to a single variable measured on ordinal scale to reflect the altruistic attitude of parents. First indicator 'the parental arrangement for girls' study at home' comprised of three categories i.e. those girls: (a) who had no opportunity to study at home even by themselves ('1'), (b) had opportunity to study by themselves ('2') and (c) for whom tutor was managed by parents to enable them in completing their school assignments and meeting other educational deficiencies ('3'). Second, the number of absentees (in a week) from school ranged from 0 to 4. Altruistic parents are expected to check their children for absentees from school. The parents tolerating (0-1) and (2-4) absentees for their daughters in a week were

coded as '2' and '1' respectively on ordinal scale. Third, the parents sharing the educational problems/issues with the selected girl: never in a month, one to two, three to eight and nine to thirty times in a month were assigned the codes of 1, 2, 3, and 4 respectively. As all the three variables were measured on ordinal scale, an index variable for altruistic attitude was constructed by adding the score of each respondent on these three indicators and it ranged from 3 to 9 on ordinal scale. The parents with the score range (3-4), (5-7) and (8-9) for the index variable were assigned the positions of 'low altruistic', 'moderate altruistic' and 'high altruistic' respectively for the purpose of statistical analysis. Further, the parents who did not prefer to enrol the selected girl in school were allotted the code '0' for the variable and were merged in the category of 'low altruistic' for the index variable. Considering the nature of ordinal measurement of dependent and independent variables, it was decided to deploy Somers'd test for measuring the effect of altruistic attitude of parents on the educational attainment levels of their female children.

Results and Discussion

From the sample size of 700 cases, 73.57% had availed the chance to 'ever enrol', whereas the remaining 26.43% did not avail the opportunity to be enrolled in the school. As shown in Table 1, 11.65% of the parents never managed/asked units of analysis for studying at home. The parents who provided the opportunity to the selected female children for studying at home were 56.89%. However, less than one third of the parents (31.46%) managed the home-learning to achieve the educational deficiencies of children through tutors. The 'number of unjust absentees' in a week of the selected female children from school ranged from 0 to 4 (table 1). The practice of ignoring of nearly twenty percent of the parents for two to four absentees of their daughters from school in a week (on the average) is a noteworthy finding. It reflects the need of parental interest in girls' schooling in this society. More than one third of the respondents (36.70%) acknowledged that they never shared or discussed the educational matters with the selected female children. However, more than one tenth of the respondents told that they made discussion with the units of analysis more than two times in a week on their educational problems (table 1). A majority (41.75%) reported 3 to 8 discussions in a month with the selected female children relating to their education. The parents with the altruistic index variable (educational) of 'low', 'moderate' and 'high' degrees were 63.3%, 30% and 6.7% respectively (table 1). The bivariate level analysis showed a strong positive association between the altruistic attitude of parents and the educational attainment levels of their girls. The units of analysis with 'no education' belonging to the parents of low and high altruistic attitude were 68.9% and 4.1% respectively (table 2). A clear majority (86.5%) of the units of analysis had schooling level of 'matriculation and above'. However, 6.6% of the cases attaining the higher-level education i.e. 'secondary level and above' were from the parents with low altruistic attitude. The value of Somers'd (0.67) depicted the relationship highly significant ($p < 0.001$). Similarly, the average educational attainment levels of the units of analysis also increased with increase in the altruistic level of parents as supported. The units of analysis belonging to parents with the altruistic levels 'low', 'moderate' and 'high' had average educational attainment levels of 2.80, 8.20 and 11.81 respectively with approximately same standard deviations (table 2).

The school-timings in Pakistan are short as compared to educational institutions in developed countries of the World, especially up to secondary level. The shortage of teachers and their irregular working is a common phenomenon in rural areas of Pakistan (Ghuman & Lloyd, 2007; Jamal, 2016). The students have to complete the school assignments at home to perform better in the examination in the teaching system of public schools in rural Punjab. Parental support in completing the school assignments and resolving other educational problems of children enhance their educational learning, which may further decrease the chances of dropout from school and hence, increase the chances of their enrolment in higher level classes. Similarly, people in the rural areas select their daughters to work for household chores when mothers are engaged in caring animals or are at the farms when father is out of home, which results in their absence or being late in school. The field experience revealed that most of the people in the rural areas do not perceive the future of their females in education but believe in their luck. After marriage, future of a woman depends upon the socioeconomic status of her husband and/or his family. Another reason of ill-interest of parents in daughters' schooling is since rural society of Pakistan does not believe in the achieved status for women; neither cultural norms encourage them to compete for such in the market. In these circumstances, parents' interest in the human capital development of female children plays a crucial role in enhancing their educational levels (Olomukoro & Omiunu, 2011). The view gets the support from the finding that parents anticipating better jobs for their children have been reported for investing more on children as compared to the parents perceiving the low status jobs like barber and retailer for their children in Cambodia (Keng, 2004). Children of these education-conscious parents were four times more likely to complete grade four than those belonging to the parents with low interest in the schooling of their children. Teachman (1987) viewed a strong positive impact of the 'parent-related' factor for the educational outcomes of daughters than sons up to undergraduate level in USA. He further deduced that both material and educational resources are imperfect measures in the analysis as parents vary in the extent to help and motivate their children to benefit the educational opportunities. Similarly, Liu (2004) found a negative regression coefficient for parents' lack of care for girls' education with their schooling levels in rural Vietnam. Hence, the parents who are interested in the education of their daughters prefer to discuss their educational matters with them. It provides them chance to know their difficulties for their possible solution; which further results in higher educational levels for them. As enrolment in next grade depends on passing the children educational performance in the current grades. Hence, the suggestion of experts from United Nations through Millennium Summit- 2000 to implement the Compulsory Primary Education Act of 1994- Government of Pakistan looks not fruitful without the strong motivation of parents for educating their girls. The study recommends enlightening the rural society about the benefits of women education. The findings of the study also lead to increase the women participation in economic, social and political activities in the rural society of Pakistan. It will further make the parents to realize the need of human resource development for their daughters as well.

Acknowledgements: Researchers thankfully acknowledge the financial support of Higher Education Commission, Govt. of Pakistan for carrying out this research.

Table 1: Distribution of educational attainment of UA and various parameters of altruistic attitude of the parents

Variables	N	%	Variables	N	%
<u>Educational attainment</u>			<u>Home study</u> (ever enrolled)		
No education	296	42.3	All	515	100
Primary	152	21.7	No home work	60	11.65
Middle	59	8.4	Home work by herself	293	56.89
Matriculation	59	8.4	Coached by tutor	162	31.46
Above matriculation	134	19.1	<u>No. of parents-UA discussions</u> (ever enrolled)		
<u>No. of Absentees</u> (ever enrolled)			All	515	100
All	515	100	0	189	36.70
0-1	415	80.58	1-2	215	41.75
2-4	100	19.42	3-8	57	11.07
			9-30	54	10.49
<u>Index of altruistic attitude</u> (for all)					
All	700	100	Moderate altruistic	247	35.29
Low altruistic	379	54.14	High altruistic	74	10.57

UA: Units of Analysis.

Table 2: Analysis showing bivariate relationship between altruistic level of parents and educational attainment of their daughters

Altruistic level of parents	Final completed education of UA (%)					Final educational class of UA	
	No Edu	Primary	Middle	Matric	Above matric	Mean	S.D
Low altruistic	68.9	18.5	6.1	3.4	3.2	2.80	3.47
Moderate altruistic	13.0	32.0	13.0	15.4	26.7	8.20	3.76
High altruistic	4.1	4.1	5.4	10.8	75.7	11.81	2.96

Somers'd=0.67 with p-value less than 0.001.

References

- Ahmad, S. M., & Gates, P. (2016). 'Education is light; it takes you towards the path of light': Parental Perceptions about Education and Their Children's Schooling in Northern Pakistan. *FWU Journal of Social Sciences*, 10 (2), 1-14.
- Hadjar, A., Krolak-Schwerdt, S., Priem, K. & Glock, S. (2014). Gender and educational achievement, *Educational Research*, 56(2), 117-125,
- Anwer, I. and Awan, J. A. (2003). Nutritional status: Comparison of rural with urban school children in Faisalabad District, Pakistan. *Rural and Remote Health*; 3 (online). (Available at <http://rrh.deakin.edu.au>).
- Baranowska-Rataj, A., Styrac, M., & da Silva, G. C. (2015). The Impact of Family Size on Educational Attainment in Cross-Country Comparative Perspective. (online). (Available at <http://paa2015.princeton.edu/papers/151825>)
- Barro, R. J. 1999. Determinants of democracy. *Journal of Political Economy*, 107(6), 158-183.
- DPI (Director Public Instruction). 2000. Memo No. 11003 dated August 16, 2000. Govt. of the Punjab, Lahore (Pakistan).

7. Ghuman, S. and C. B. Lloyd. (2007). Teacher absence as a factor in gender inequalities in access to primary schooling in Rural Pakistan. The Population Council, Inc., New York.
8. GOP (Government of Pakistan). (2018). Economic Survey 2017-18. Economic Advisor Wing, Finance Division, Islamabad, Govt. of Pakistan.
9. Grown, C., Gupta, G. R and Pande, R. (2005). Taking action to improve women's health through gender equality and women's empowerment. *The Lancet*, 365, 541-543.
10. Hashmi, N., Zafar, M. I. and Ali, T. (2009). Low female educational attainment in rural Pakistan: Causes and remedies. *Pakistan Journal of Science*, 61, 215-219.
11. HCR (Human Capital Report). (2016). World Economic Forum- 2016.
12. Hindin, M. J. (2005). Family dynamics, gender differences and educational attainment in Filipino adolescents. *Journal of Adolescence*, 28, 299-316.
13. Houtte, M.V. (2004) Why boys achieve less at school than girls: the difference between boys' and girls' academic culture, *Educational Studies*, 30(2), 159-173, DOI:10.1080/0305569032000159804.
14. Jamal, A. (2016). Why He Won't Send His Daughter to School—Barriers to Girls' Education in Northwest Pakistan: A Qualitative Delphi Study of Pashtun Men. *SAGE Open*, 6(3).
15. Almijn, M., & van de Werfhorst, H. G. (2016). Sibship size and gendered resource dilution in different societal contexts. *plus one*, 11(8), e0160953. (Available at: <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article/file?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0160953&type=printable>).
16. Keng, C. (2004). Household determinants of schooling progression among rural children in Cambodia. *International Education Journal*, 5(4), 552-561. (Available at <http://iej.cjb.net>).
17. Kugler, A. D., & Kumar, S. (2017). Preference for Boys, Family Size, and Educational Attainment in India. *Demography*, 54 (3), 835-859. (Available at: <https://www.nber.org/papers/w21138.pdf>).
18. Liu, A. Y. C. (2004). Flying ducks? Girls' schooling in rural Vietnam- A revisit. *International and Development Economics*, National Centre for Development Studies, Asian Pacific School of Economics and Government, Australian National University Canberra, ACT 0200, Australia.
19. LU, M.D. & IK, S.T. (2007). Gender differences in academic performance in a large public university in Turkey. *Higher Education*, 53, 255–277. DOI 10.1007/s10734-005-2464-6.
20. Maitra, P. (2003). Schooling and educational attainment: Evidence from Bangladesh. *Education Economics*, 11(2), 129-153.
21. Mekonnen, Y., & Mekonnen, B. (2014). Assessment of Attitude of Parents Towards Their Girl- Childrens' Education in Bure Woreda, West Gojjam, Ethiopia. GC (Doctoral dissertation, Addis Ababa University).
22. Obiageli, O.E. & Paulette, E. (2015). Parental Attitudes and Girl-Child Education in Edo State, Nigeria. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, 5(3), 175.
23. OCSO (Organisation for Community Services & Development). (2007). Journey towards A literate Pakistan. Directorate of Literacy & Non-formal Basic Education, Quetta, Pakistan.

24. Olomukoro, C.O. & Omiunu, S.E. (2011). Strategies for Expanding Access to Education to the Girl-Child in Nigeria. *Journal of Adult Education and Development*, 5(1), 212-222.
25. PBS (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics). (2018). Ministry of statistics, Statistics Division Govt. of the Pakistan.
26. PCGA (Pakistan Country Gender Assessment). (2005). Bridging the Gender Gap: Opportunities and Challenges. Report No. 32244-PAK. Environment & Social Development Sector Unit, South Asia Region, World Bank, Washington D.C.
27. Purewal, N. & Hashmi, N. (2015). Between returns and respectability: Parental attitudes towards girls' education in rural Punjab, Pakistan. *Routledge, British Journal of Sociology of Education*,
28. Saeed, M., Gondal, M.B. & Bushra. (2005). Assessing achievement of primary grader students and factors affecting achievement in Pakistan. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 19(6), 486-499.
29. Saeed, A., Soomro, G. R., & Abro, A. (2012). To Analyze ttutorhe Effectiveness of Female Education in Sindh. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Contemporary Research in Business*, 4(6).
30. Siddiqui, N. (2017). Parental education as a determinant of school choice: A comparative study of school types in Pakistan. *Research in Education*, 99 (1), 3-18.
31. Tansel, A. (1997). School attainment, parental education, and gender in Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana. *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 45(4), 825-856.
32. Teachman, J. D. (1987). Family background, educational resources, and educational attainment. *American Sociological Review*, 52(August), 548-557.
33. Umer, S., Othman, Z., & Hassan, K. H. (2016). Education and Empowerment of the Women in Rural Areas of Balochistan: The Views of Baloch Tribal Men. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 6(10).