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DOES HIGHER EDUCATION REALLY MATTER IN IMPROVING WOMEN'S SOCIAL STATUS? EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FROM BALOCHISTAN

Abstract

This study investigates the impact of higher education on women's social status. The social status of working women was examined by women's perception about their decision-making participation at the household level in Quetta. The social impact of higher education was evaluated based on positivist philosophy and implantation of survey approach. Primary data have been collected using self-administered questionnaire. A sample of 300 women respondents working in public sector schools, colleges and universities in Quetta city was collected using the simple random technique. A Chi-square test of homogeneity was applied to see whether the difference in the proportion of opinion responses. The study found that highly educated women were more socially empowered than the less educated women and actively participate in familiarly related decision makings. The study finally recommended that women should pressure continued and struggle to acquire higher education and there should be also a commitment on the part of the government to provide free and equal distribution of education in order to guarantee women's socio-economic development.

Key Words: Higher Education, Social Status, Women's Familial Empowerment, Balochistan

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Introduction

It is a well-recognized and acclaimed statement worldwide that education is the most potent instrument for economic development, freedom of choices and more importantly for social liberation (Sen, 1999).

The higher education system has significant roles and responsibilities in improving human capital formation and it acts as a socio-cultural development agent. A society with a high proportion of university graduates receives greater social status and civic participation (Yousefy & Baratali, 2011).

The significance of the higher level of education is associated with improvement in women's earning ability and empowering them in deciding the desired family size and other family related issues. Nevertheless, women's education has taken central attention due to its progressive effects on the standard of living along with their children's growth and development.

Decision makings, participating in civic and outdoor activities are the ways in which higher education assists women to improve their social status. This study, therefore, examines the role of social variables such as women decision-making at the household level and social factors as fertility tendency which are central dynamics of women empowerment in the developing world.

Empirical evidence reveals that regardless of expansion of higher education in Pakistan from 1999 to 2014, the access of different socioeconomic groups in higher education has been grown-up due to persistent investment in higher education.

The effect of higher education on women's empowerment in decision-making about their household matters among the women

in Balochistan has broadened the scope of this study as a few studies conducted (*Impact of Education, 2013*). Therefore, this study examines the effect of higher education, women's social status at public sector educational institutions in Balochistan.

Review of Literature

Different studies have been established to show the social status of higher education. For instance, Khan and Sajid (2011) conducted a survey on the relationship between women's decision-making at the household level using chi-square test of homogeneity. On the basis of their analysis, it is concluded that opinion of educated working women are more significantly associated with involvement in the process of decision making than the illiterate women who not previewing their active participation in the decision are making process.

Aly and Quisi (1996) surveyed socioeconomic forces that affect Kuwaiti women's labor market participation decision. They studied that women's earning and schooling are positively associated with each other while negatively correlated with the number of children.

Samarakoon and Parinduri (2015) studied the impact of education on women's empowerment and authority by focusing women decision authority within a household level, asset ownership, and community participation. They established that education was found to be a significant association with the number of live births, and promoting reproductive health practices, conversely, did not find any evidence that long years of schooling significantly improved women's decision-making authority (except for saving) and ownership of household assets (except that of household appliances and jewelry) and community participation.

In the same line, Pitt et al. (2006) applied regression analysis with instrumental variables (IV) methods, revealed that access to microfinance in Bangladesh due to a higher level of education advances women's decision-making autonomy, freedom of mobility and higher level network status. This study also supported previous findings that education has led to significantly improving the women's social status.

Similarly, Kalita and Tiwari (2011) empirical results found that in household decision making and opposing domestic violence, a highly educated women's participation was statistically significantly and directly related to their time consumed in the domestic conditions and working conditions but there was no significant relationship between women's educational level and their raising voice against violence.

The complexity of the association between years of schooling and family related decision making has been extensively advanced in recent literature and is the highly debated theme on generative behavior (Kohler and Roger, 2003).

Khalida (1993) addressed that highly educated women delayed the age at marriage successfully share in the family decision about the schooling of children. Women with college graduation or higher level of education have more tendency towards a less number of children and more caring of third schooling than women with high school degrees or fewer years of schooling).

Murtaza (2012) studied women's social status through higher education in Gilgit-Baltistan. The findings of the study established that highly educated women achieved, higher personal confidence, sustained economic independence and improved social status within the family community.

Sandhya (2015) examined the significance of education in empowering women in rural India. The study explored that, higher education has much benefited the status of women; but, the study established that rural women were comparatively less developed than urban women in the Bagalkot district of India.

Noreen and Khalid (2012) investigated the women's empowerment through higher education with the aim to explore opportunities and possibilities for women empowerment in Pakistan settings. They found that women in Pakistan have to face socio-cultural limitations to acquire higher education and pursue their future careers and recommended that women should pursue to higher education and career by acknowledging and maneuvering the support of their family partners.

Materials and Methods

Research Strategy

The Research strategy employed for the current research study is survey method. A survey strategy usually relates to the deductive approach to establish a framework that how a certain percentage of the population reflects or behaves in a particular way to understand the reality (Saunders, 2009).

Sampling Strategy

The sampling procedure is chosen for the current study as simple random sampling to collect the data. The sampling size of minimum 300 women respondents working in the public sector has been drawn from different public sector schools, colleges and universities located in Quetta city with the qualification level ranging from intermediate to M. Phil/Ph.D.

The sample size in case of finite population is given by the following formula:

$$n = \frac{Z^2 p q N}{e^2 (N - 1) + Z^2 p q}$$

Where

N = Size of the population

N = the desired estimated sample size of a finite population

z = the standard normal variable at the desired confidence level

P = Population proportion/reliability (or frequency estimated from a sample size of n)

e = acceptable margin of error/precision (0.05)

$$n = \frac{(1.96)^2 (0.3) (0.7) (3700)}{0.0025 (3699) + 3.8416 (0.3) (0.7)}$$

n = 299 or approximately 300

Data Collection Instrument

The data collection instrument for this study was used as a self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire was comprised of three sections. The first was section consist of demographic information about the respondents. Section two was relevant to the perception of women's about opinion questions while section three was captured the effect of higher education of women's decision-making at familial level.

Data Analysis Techniques

The chi-square test of homogeneity was employed to see whether there is the difference in proportions of categories responses about opinion questions. To ensure the validity of the chi -square test of homogeneity and for analysis purpose; five points Likert scale was recoded into three categories (Agree, Neutral and Not Agree).

Results and Discussions

For the current study, the results are reported in three dimensions. The demographic analysis, cross-tabulation, and chi-square (χ^2) analysis were used to show the relationship between higher education and women's social status.

Table 1 Demographic Distribution of the Respondents according to their Age Structure, Education, Family Structure and Income

Demographic Variables	Grouping	Frequency	Percentage
Age Structure	20 -30	103	34.3
	31 and 40	118	39.3
	41 and Above	79	26.4
Level of Education	Below Bachelor	51	17.0
	Bachelor	116	42.0
	Master	85	28.3
	Above Master	48	12.7
Husband/Head Education	Below Bachelor	46	15.4
	Bachelor	97	32.3
	Master	134	44.6
	Above Master	23	7.7
Level of Income	5000 - 20000	49	16.3
	20001 - 35000	77	25.6
	350001 - 50000	62	20.7
	50001 - 65000	58	19.4
	65001 - 80000	31	10.3
	80001 and Above	23	7.7

Source: survey data

The table-1 shows that female respondents' age structure: categorized into three mutually exclusive classes: 20-35, 31-40 and 41 and above. The results of age structure highlights that about

(34%) of the respondents fall between age group 20-30, and (40%) belong to the age group between 31-40 while 26% of the respondents were reported by age 41 and above. In the next section of the table, educational level of the respondents is presented, as it is central for the current study, 17% of the female respondents having education below bachelor or possessing certificates equitant to intermediate, 42% having bachelors, while 28% of the respondents hold master diplomas and remaining 13% holding above master or M.Phil./P.HD certificates.

The next part of the table pertains to the family structure of the respondents. As 46 % of the respondents fall in joint family structure while the rest 54% fall in the nuclear category. This demographic variable has significant importance in the current study because the majority of the women with higher income falls into the nuclear family group.

The final part of the table depicts the income level of the participants, as 16% of the respondents' receives income between 5000-20,000. The majority (i.e., 25%) of the participants yields monthly incomes ranged between RS 20000 to 350000 and about 8% catches monthly income above Rs.80, 0000.

Opinion 1: Do you agree that mothers should have an important role in children educational schooling and career?

Table 2 Mother should have an important role in children educational schooling and career

Education	Responses	Frequency	Percentage	X ²	p - value
Below Bachelor	Agree	24	47.0	4.34	0.114
	Neutral	13	25.5		
	Disagree	14	27.5		
	Total	51	100		
Bachelor	Agree	52	44.8	9.47	.000
	Neutral	25	21.6		
	Disagree	39	33.6		
	Total	116	100		
Master	Agree	56	65.8	45.6	.000
	Neutral	06	7.1		
	Disagree	23	27.1		
	Total	85	100		
Above Master	Agree	38	79.2	28.49	.000
	Neutral	03	6.3		
	Disagree	07	14.5		
	Total	48	100		

Source: Survey data

To examine the impact of education on the perception about women's social empowerment and decision-making participation, the respondents were divided into four educational categories, namely: below bachelor, bachelor, and master and above master. All the respondents have questioned five Likert scale questions. There were seven opinion questions which highlights the social status and the perception of women's about their role in decision-making at the household level.

Table 2 shows the participant responses regarding the rating question "Mother should have an important role in children educational career and schooling". The reported results show that 47% of the respondents with lower education have no significant difference between response categories. But educated groups characterized by having bachelor certificate, 45% and master 66% show a significant difference between response categories with respect to proportion. As the data reveal the most of the respondents in literate categories do agree with this opinion. Chi-square test of homogeneity was employed to examine the difference in the proportion of response categories of respondents. The results were significant for all categories except below bachelor category which was insignificant at 5% level of significance. This suggests less educated respondents are bounded in the line of their male dominants and traditional folkloric values.

The results in Table 1.2 indicate that the responses of female participants concerning opinion "Women should have the decision-making power at household level". The data revealed that the majority of the respondents in the highly literate group agrees in the favor of the opinion as 77 % of the respondents in the bachelor category do agree about this opinion, 8% of the responded remained neutral while only 15% are against it. The reported results of Chi- Square are highly significant ($p < 0.05$) in all categories except below bachelor category where the result of chi-square are insignificant ($p > 0.05$).

Table 1.3 shows the participant responses regarding the rating question "Whether access to higher education is equal both for men and women?" The data depicted that respondents with below bachelor and bachelor categories had no significant group difference between response categories. The reported results show that 35% of the respondents in the lower education category or having an intermediate certificate agree with the item while 39%

were against it and 26% remained neutral. But the majority of respondents (35%) having a bachelor degree does agree with this opinion followed by 69 % and 81% in master and above master categories respectively.

Opinion 2. Do you believe that higher is the level of education the more women participated in household decision making?

Table 1.2: Women should have the decision-making power at household level

Education	Response	Frequency	Percentage	X ²	p -value
Below Bachelor	Agree	23	45.0	3.28	0.54
	Neutral	13	23.5		
	Disagree	15	29.5		
	Total	51	100		
Bachelor	Agree	93	77.0	109.0	.000
	Neutral	10	8.0		
	Disagree	14	15.0		
	Total	116	100		
Master	Agree	73	85.9	43.76	.000
	Disagree	12	14.1		
	Total	85	100		
Above Master	Agree	41	85.4	24.08	.000
	Disagree	7	14.6		
	Total	48	100		

Opinion 3: Do you believe that opportunity of getting Higher Education in Pakistan is equal for both men and women?

Table 1.3: Both men and women have equal access to acquire higher education.

Education	Response	Frequency	Percentage	X ²	p -value
Below Bachelor	Agree	18	35.3	1.52	0.467
	Neutral	13	25.5		
	Disagree	20	39.2		
	Total	51	100		
Bachelor	Agree	41	35.3	3.96	1.000
	Neutral	29	25.0		
	Disagree	46	37.7		
	Total	116	100		
Master	Agree	59	69.4	12.80	.000
	Disagree	26	30.6		
	Total	85	100		
Above Master	Agree	39	81.2	50.37	.000
	Neutral	02	4.2		
	Disagree	07	14.6		
	Total	48	100		

Table 1.4 shows the participant responses regarding the rating question “women should have the freedom to perform outdoor activities/shopping”. The reported results show that 80% of the respondents with lower education do agree about this item while 10 percent remained neutral and 10 percent disagree with this statement.

Similarly, in the other categories majority of respondents do agree regarding this statement. The results of chi-square of homogeneity were significant in all cases. The reasons behind equality of proportions in all education categories are obvious. Since, Pakistani society, especially in Balochistan setting is more

conservative and mainly man dominated society, therefore, women with any level of education are well aware of the importance of their right to perform their outdoor activities.

Opinion 4: Do you believe that women should have the freedom to perform outdoor activities/shopping?

Table 1.4: Women should have the power to perform outdoor activities.

Education	Response	Frequency	Percentage	X ²	p -value
Below Bachelor	Agree	41	80.4	50.86	0.00
	Neutral	5	9.8		
	Disagree	5	9.8		
	Total	51	100		
Bachelor	Agree	107	92.2	82.78	.000
	Disagree	9	7.8		
	Total	116	100		
Master	Agree	77	90.6	56.10	.000
	Disagree	8	4.8		
	Total	85	100		
Above Master	Agree	43	89.6	30.08	.000
	Disagree	5	10.4		
	Total	48	100		

Opinion5: Do you believe that higher is the level of education, the more is the mother careful about her maternal health?

Table 1.5: Higher education provides more awareness about maternal health

Education	Response	Frequency	Percentage	X ²	p - value
Below Bachelor	Agree	22	43.1	5.81	0.054
	Neutral	15	29.4		
	Disagree	14	27.5		
	Total	51	100		
Bachelor	Agree	87	77.0	132.98	.000
	Disagree	29	23.0		
	Total	116	100		
Master	Agree	65	76.5	107.37	.000
	Disagree	20	23.5		
	Total	85	100		

The results in Table 1.5 present the responses of female participants regarding item "Higher education provides more awareness about maternal health". The data revealed that the majority of the respondents in the bachelor group were in favor of item as 77 % of the respondents in bachelor category do agree about opinion question 6 while 23% were against it. In the case of Master category, 77% of the respondents do agree with this statement while 24% are not in favor of the item. The data further highlights that 43% respondents in an intermediate category or below bachelor do agree with the item while 30% remained neutral, followed by 28 % are disagreeing about this opening question.

The reported results of Chi-Square are highly significant ($p < 0.05$) in all categories except intermediate category where the result of chi-square are insignificant ($p > 0.05$). The analysis shows a

significant positive association between levels of education and caring about maternal health.

The data provide enough evidence that respondents with schooling below bachelor have no significant difference between response categories.

Opinion 6: Do you believe the husband and wife should consult each other in household matters?

Table 1.6: Husband and wife should consult each other in household matters

Education	Response	Frequency	Percentage	X ²	p -value
Below Bachelor	Agree	21	41.1	6.22	0.044
	Neutral	08	15.6		
	Disagree	22	39.2		
	Total	51	100		
Bachelor	Agree	64	55.2	3.84	.000
	Disagree	52	44.8		
	Total	116	100		
Master	Agree	70	82.4	35.58	.000
	Disagree	15	17.4		
	Total	85	100		
Above Master	Agree	44	91.7	33.32	.000
	Disagree	4	8.3		
	Total	48	100		

The results in Table 1.6 present the responses of female participants regarding the opinion question "Husband and wife should consult each other in household matters". The data show that respondents with below bachelor have no significant difference among response groups. In this group 16% remained neutral depict the weak decision power of women and less participation in family matters. In the bachelor category. The data revealed that the majority of the respondents in other groups are

in favor of item as 55 % of the respondents in bachelor category, followed by 83% and 92% in master and above master categories respectively.

The data established that highly educated women are well aware of their role in the process of decision making along with family head regarding household matters.

The reported results of Chi- Square are highly significant (i.e. $P < 0.05$) in all categories except intermediate and graduation categories where the result of chi-square is insignificant ($p > 0.05$). The analysis shows there is a significant positive association between levels of education and women view regarding the participation in decision making regarding of household matters.

Opinion 7: Do you believe the higher the level of education, the more women have capability and freedom of choices?

Table 4.7 Higher education enhances women capability and freedom of choices

Education	Response	Frequency	Percentage	X ²	p -value
Below Bachelor	Agree	23	45.1	3.64	0.54
	Neutral	12	23.6		
	Disagree	16	31.3		
	Total	51	100		
Bachelor	Agree	73	62.9	53.81	.000
	Neutral	9	7.8		
	Disagree	34	29.3		
	Total	116	100		
Master	Agree	61	71.7	58.25	.000
	Neutral	7	8.3		
	Disagree	17	20.0		
	Total	85	100		
Above Master	Agree	31	64.6	24.87	.000
	Disagree	14	29.1		
	Total	48	100		

The results in Table 4.7 present the responses of female participants regarding item "Higher education enhances women's more freedom of choices and capability". In above-cited categories of the women respondents relating to their education, 45% respondents in below bachelor category do agree about this statement, 24 % remained neutral while 41% retained disagree about this item.

The data revealed that the majority of the respondents are in favor of opinion as 63 % of the respondents in bachelor category do agree about item 6 while 29% are against it. In the case of Master category, 72% of the respondents do agree with this statement followed by 8% remained indifferent while 20% are not in favor of

the item. The data established that 65% respondents in the above master category do agree with the item followed by 29% of the respondents were disagreeing about this statement.

The reported results of Chi-Square are highly significant ($p < 0.05$) in all categories except intermediate category where the result of chi-square are insignificant ($p > 0.05$). The analysis shows there is a significant association between levels of education and women's capability of freedom of choices.

Conclusion

This study examined the association between women's education and women's social status measured by decision-making participation at household level in Quetta. As discussed earlier the results of this study showed a highly significant association between women's education and the familial decision-making power. Owing to the analysis of the results the study found that perception of highly educated women was a significant positive association with their participation in the decision-making process. The findings of this study contribute to the debate over whether the level of education really improves women's social status by in Balochistan by changing the perception that higher education succeeding in allowing women to actively participate in decision making.

Thus, the paper reveals that women's free and fair access to higher education enables women to foster in multiple dimensions of the socioeconomic process that guarantees gender equality in Pakistan especially in Balochistan.

This study finally recommended that there should be the commitment on the part of both government and societal networks such as parents, NGOs and other civil society agents to

work how to empower and make efficient girls from an early age in educational institutions as well as at household level.

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