

# WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT: A TWO-TIER APPROACH ANALYSIS OF PAKISTANI YOUTH

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## **Abstract**

*The Fourth World Conference on Women proposed a conceptual shift from the 'Women in Development' (WID) paradigm to the 'Gender and Development' (GAD) approach, a key strategy to reduce inequalities between men and women and bringing into mainstream economy of a country. The present study used a two-tier approach of 'public-private' sphere to investigate gender equity through greater decision making autonomy and economic independence of females. The sample consisted of Master degree (post-graduate) students between 20-24 years, enrolled in University of the Punjab, Lahore. Mixed- methodology approach was deployed and self-constructed questionnaires were used to collect data. In-depth interviews were also conducted with parents. The study concludes that young females in higher education in Pakistan are gradually getting the power of making decisions regarding their own matters as well as their family at both public and private spheres. The young females are operating their personal bank accounts independently, taking decisions in choice of institute for their higher studies, spending a day/night at a friend's place, buying things like car, furniture, other items for family etc. Moreover, on the pretext of financial security and economic independence, parents as well as young males were found in favor of young females to pursue professional careers.*

**Keyword:** Women Agency; Gender Equity; Public- Private Sphere

## **INTRODUCTION**

In the Fourth World Conference of Women held in Beijing in 1995, an important conceptual shift was generated from the 'Women in

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*Development'* (WID) paradigm to the '*Gender and Development*' (GAD) approach (UNESCO, 2000). This paradigm shift played an important role in bringing significant change at developing policies focusing improving conditions of females in all walks of life, along with creating attitudinal change among the male community. This process is essential for developing a network of social relations in which discrimination among genders is minimized. Later, United Nations adopted this approach as an agenda for countries around the world and especially the developing nations. The '*Gender and Development*' (GAD) approach promotes sustainable development by recognizing the importance of both sexes as complementary biological entities, having their own respective social roles in their respective socio-political and cultural context. According to this approach '*gender equity*' advocates a system based on providing individual opportunities, responsibilities and the rights without any gender discrimination. The basic philosophy lying behind is to create the feeling of fairness among both genders in all spheres of life. This includes inculcating the attitudinal change among all members of the society that females can also attain their self-identity through economic independence. In 2014, UNESCO further declared this inclusive approach vital for the sustainable growth of societies, as it is mutually beneficial for people-centered development.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The given literature portrays a picture of how gender equity and women autonomy is being reflected in different parts of the world.

Rahman and Rao (2004) while using influential Dyson and Moore's (1983) econometric analysis to study as to why women in South India enjoy relatively greater freedom in making choices in their lives as compared to women of North India. A household data survey showed that women in Southern state of Karnataka had higher level of mobility and decision making autonomy as compared to women of Northern state of Uttar Pradesh. The trend was studied by studying the phenomena of cross-cousin and uncle-niece marriages, the

practice of taking dowry, and having the autonomy to make different choices in life. The study showed that the higher wages of women in South India increased their autonomy to make different choices in life about themselves. Applying Dyson and Moore's theory the improvement in infrastructure like having streetlights and schools in the village– were associated with increased women's autonomy. Hence, it was concluded that economic factors and infrastructural improvements had a powerful influence on the women's autonomy as compared to the kinship structures.

McDonald, P. (2000), in his article "Gender Equity in Theories of Fertility Transition" has highlighted the fact that gender equity also has a relation with low fertility rates among females. Studying the literature related to developed countries this postulate was highlighted. The article also explains that in the underdeveloped countries the low gender equity is related to lack of support for women to combine paid work and childrearing. Moreover, the tax-transfer systems remain based on the male-breadwinner model of the family, where females always have a subordinate relation to their male family members and are perceived in traditional gender-oriented roles within the family. Hence, it is argued that an increase in gender equity is a precondition of a rise in fertility from very low levels. Moreover, with relevant literature this paper also explains how gender equity varies in individual oriented institutions and that in family-oriented institutions. It explains that in family-oriented institutions the family itself is responsible for creating a balance between male-female roles. Whereas in individual oriented institutions the prevalence of gender equity is very rapid such as in education institutions and in the job –market.

Contrary to the above two studies, Halrynjo and Lyng (2009), taking the case of a developed country like Norway conducted in-depth interviews with mothers pursuing high-commitment careers of law and consultancy, showed a general pattern of women reducing their work commitment after childbirth. Contrary to the majority working mothers in Norway, the selected sample of mothers were those who were privileged enough to maintain a balance between their work commitment and their responsibilities of motherhood, due to different supporting factors. However, this is not a generalized trait that a mother in Norway can have the options of making easy choices between an established career and a committed mother.

Here we can say that in developed countries, although the phenomenon of individualism prevails dominantly as compared to our region. However, due to better supporting structures the gender equity is prevalent by creating a balance between the role of a mother and her professional career.

With reference to economic independence and decision-making autonomy among the youth, the Western Europe and North American regions, have a dominant trend of young people leaving their parents' home at an early age so to attain economic and social independence and the freedom to experience life on their own. However, with reference to gender equity this trend is more prevalent among the young boys as compared to females. The females remain obligated towards their family (Amato & Booth, 1997).

According to El-Haddad (2003), in the Arab gulf countries, the traditional extended family model remains to prevail where the decision making authority and the economic control is in the hands of the male head, however due to the influence of global values females are gradually gaining emancipation to attain economic opportunities and decision making authority at both public and private sphere.

Zeba. A. Sathar and Shahnaz Kazi (2000) have given a different perspective on women autonomy, working in the agriculture sector in rural Punjab. They are of the view that the Western scholars have created a general picture of Pakistani society as being a monolithic community, where majority of the population are Muslims. This depicts a homogeneous culture where the female is totally oppressed under the subjugation of male authority. On the other hand, Sathar and Kazi are of the view that in this homogeneous culture the women's autonomy is heterogeneous in terms of her individual conditions as well as on the basis of her community traits. The socio-demographic traits and the agro-ecological variations also have a role in bringing this diversity. Comparing Northern Punjabi women living in rural settings with the Southern Punjabi ones, show that the former have lower economic autonomy but greater mobility and decision-making authority than the latter ones. Paid employment has been found to be a major contributor in changing women agency. Interestingly 'education' has been found to be a less influencing factor in this regard in the rural Punjab setting.

As discussed earlier, the particular condition plays an important role in defining the female's autonomy in Pakistan. However, the private-public sphere dichotomy is vividly gendered constructed in Pakistani household. Female's rightly place is considered to be the private domain, whereas the male member is responsible for looking after the affairs of the public domain. The patriarchal premises place the male-head of the family as the dominant authority, protecting 'family honor' by maintaining these private-public defined boundaries (Donnan, 1997).

On the basis of this literature review it can said that along with economic independence many other factors also contribute in defining the gender equity and women agency, like the demographic factors, institutional support etc. The present paper aims to highlight some important areas in this context.

## METHODOLOGY

The study applied a 'two-tier' approach to explain how women agency in the socio-cultural context of family in Pakistani society is gradually changing, in retrospect of 'Gender and Development' (GAD) approach. The two-tier approach helped to understand the dichotomy of the 'public-private' sphere, in the context of the present and past family values. In the 'two-tier' approach, the 'first tier' comprised of investigating young females' decision making in the domain of their 'public sphere', such as spending a day/night at friend's place, operating a bank account, buying durable things for home, taking decision about choice of getting admission in educational institution for higher studies etc. The 'second tier' comprised of exploring young females agency in the context of the 'private sphere' of their households. Decisions regarding pursuing a carrier, voice within household affairs, autonomy in following fashion trends, participation in decision making in marriage ceremonies taking place at their homes etc. This approach helped in understanding attitude of parents (especially fathers) and young males (students) towards females' agency both in the private and public spheres.

The present study deployed mixed-methodology. Multi-stage random sampling technique was used to collect data from 600 young university students belonging to the age group of 20-24 years using self-administered questionnaire. There were 70 percent females and 30 percent male respondents in the selected sample. In this sample there was a representation of young adults from Punjab province (70 percent), from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (28.5 percent), from Azad Jammu and Kashmir (10 percent) and from Sindh province (2.0 percent). Two male students belonging to the South Asian countries of Nepal and Sri Lanka were also the part of the selected sample.

In order to substantiate the data collected from the quantitative analysis, twelve in-depth interviews were conducted from purposively selected parents (either father or mother) living in

Lahore. These comprised of parents who had one or more children in the age bracket of 20-24 and were post graduate students at PU. An Interview Guide was developed on the basis of main themes of the structured questionnaire used in the survey for interviews with the parents.

### **Major Findings**

The study indicates a gradual increase in female agency and their decision-making authority. Moreover, the findings reflect the transition being experienced in the traditional patriarchy by the educated Pakistani population through attitudinal change of both genders in accepting females as equal contributing members of society.

### **Seeking Permission to Spend a Day/ Night at Friend's Place**

Youth like to spend time out with their friends and enjoy freedom from their families/parents. This has become an indicator of the level of prevalence of individualism among youth in the Pakistani society. The data shows that the percentages of those spending a day at a friend's place in different categories was less than 50 percent, indicating that staying out of home is not a prevailing norm among the educated youth of Pakistan. The fraction of male respondents (6.0 percent) reported 'never' spending a day at a friend's place shows that this practice is even unacceptable for the males in some places. However, when we look at the gender differential although there were more male respondents (34.7 percent of males reported 'many times' and 33.5 percent reported 'sometimes') as compared to female respondents (19.7 percent females who reported 'many times' and 32.2 percent reported 'sometimes') who reported this trend, but with reference to gender equity we find a gradual transition in the status of females. The collected data reflects that contrary to the traditional perspective in which female is symbolized as the honor of family and her staying out of home without being accompanied by a family male member is an out of question thing, there is a gradual shift in this

view. Females are now gradually gaining greater trust from their family especially male members in being accepted responsible and who can emancipate in public sphere along with protecting their chastity.

Table 1. Frequency of Spending a Day at a Friend's Place

Frequency of spending a day at a friend's place	Male	Female	Total
Always	3.0	1.2	1.7
Many times	34.7	19.7	23.9
Sometimes	33.5	32.2	32.6
Rarely	22.8	30.1	28.0
Never	6.0	16.8	13.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	167	422	582

These findings become even more substantial as they show the reporting of respondents belonging to Punjab province (70.0 percent), the Khyber Pakhtunkhawa (28.5 percent), Azad Jammu and Kashmir (approximately 10.0 percent) and about two percent of respondents were from the Sindh province.

The overall trend of spending a day at a friend's place was not so frequent (as shown in table 1). However, this trend has increased due to globalization and females are enjoying more freedom as compared to their elder generation. It may be argued that social transformation is taking place in Pakistani society, but at a much slower pace as compared to other regions of the world (as discussed by Bernard,



2003; Cliquet, 2003; DeSilva, 2003; Nossier, 2003, Quah 2003; Rindfuss et. al, 2004).

Table 2 shows that the parents keep check on their children’s activities and their social life and do not encourage their children to stay out of home at night. Moreover, it can be inferred from the given data that parents generally prefer their children to be in their own safe premises during night unless the young children are in boarding of their university. Even for an adult, their reputation becomes dubious, who without any pertinent reason spends a night outside their home.

Table 2. Frequency of Spending a Night at a Friend's Place

Frequency of spending a night at a friend's place	Male	Female	Total
Always	0.6	0.2	0.3
Many times	15.1	2.4	6.0
Sometimes	24.1	6.4	11.4
Rarely	36.1	13.0	19.6
Never	24.5	78.0	62.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	167	422	589

From the In-depth Interviews conducted from parents, the general findings on this issue were that mostly parents allowed their young children to spend a night out of their home when they were working on a ‘class group project’ or for a combined study for their exams preparation. The parents were of the view that the norms have changed and they cannot restrict their children from going out as was done by their own parents. However, now a days parents have to be more vigilant about their child’s whereabouts and also develop trust

in them. With reference to the '*gender and development*' (GAD) approach, the gender equity on this issue was at a permissible level. Parents were more liberal towards boys as compared to girls in allowing them to spend a night at their friend's place. The data shows that 24.1 percent males and only 6.4 percent females reported that 'sometimes' they had spent a night at a friend's place. Interestingly, only one boy (0.6 percent) and one girl (0.2 percent) reported of 'always' spending a night at a friend's place, which indicated that spending a night at a friend's place on a regular basis was rare. The larger proportion among males (36.1 percent) and females (78.0 percent) were those who rarely had stayed for a night at their friend's home.

Therefore, it can be inferred from the findings that the family in Pakistan, retains traditional values of not allowing their children to spend night away from home. Spending night outside home is even less permissible for girls as compared to young boys, as girls are taken to be symbols of chastity in Pakistani society.

Table 3 shows the trend of youth taking permission from parents for spending a day/night at a friend's place. The data reflects that among the surveyed youth, obedience towards parents is the general practice. There were exactly 43.1 percent males and 37.9 percent females who "always" took permission for staying out of the home and did not cheat their parents. The rest of the youth population reported of never staying out of their home without their parents. The data from the parents also supported this evidence that their children kept their trust in taking such decisions.

Table 3. Frequency of Taking Permission from Parents for Staying at a Friend's Place

Frequency of taking permission from parents	Male	Female	Total
Always	43.1	37.9	39.3
Many times	13.1	31.2	26.1
Sometimes	18.6	22.7	21.5
Rarely	19.1	5.2	9.2
Never	5.9	2.8	3.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	167	422	589

However, some parents during their in-depth interviews were of the views that:

*“times have changed and the relationships between parents and their young children have become more friendly and liberal. Young children feel less hesitation in talking to their parents about what they want and they know how to get their own desires fulfilled.”*

Issues such as taking permission from parents or staying out at a friend's place are not taken as taboo any more.

**Shopping Trend of Respondents**

In the present research shopping trends among the young respondents was taken as an indicator of public tier and showing the level of gender equity and acceptance of females' decision making authority.

Table 4 shows the 'gender and development' (GAD) approach by showing that there was no significant difference among males and

females (42.5 percent males and 40.5 percent females respectively said that they did their own shopping 'many times') regarding their shopping trends. Moreover, the table 4 shows that a gradual acceptance of females to have decision-making authority was visible.

Table 4. Frequency of Doing Their Own Shopping

Frequency of doing own shopping	Male	Female	Total
Always	28.1	15.5	19.1
Many times	42.5	40.5	41.1
Sometimes	19.2	27.4	25.0
Rarely	8.4	11.4	10.6
Never	1.8	5.6	4.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	167	422	589

One reason for this may be the influence of consumer culture prevailing globally. The parents in their In-depth interviews also reported that they allowed their adult children to do shopping for themselves. However a different narrative was also conceived from these interviews. They said that;

*"boys were allowed to shop alone for themselves, whereas, girls were usually accompanied by their mothers, elder sisters, sisters-in-law or brothers"*

Furthermore, one mother narrated that;

*"I sometimes allowed my daughter to go for shopping with her friends, but this was on rare occasions. "She (daughter) normally goes with me or her elder sister, when she wants to go to the market".*

The discussed details based on in-depth interviews showed a strong depiction of the ‘gender and development’ (GAD) approach interpretation of ‘shopping by themselves’ by female respondents given by their parents. The data reflects that the young adults are being accepted as responsible individuals who have the skill and capacity to shop and buy things for themselves as well as for others smartly. Table 5 shows the percent distribution of respondents by frequency of shopping for their parents/elders. On the question of how often the respondents shopped for their parents, a substantial number of respondents (37.9 percent) reported ‘sometimes’. There was not much difference in the male (37.1 percent) and female (38.2 percent) response rate in this category, although the difference was quite visible in the categories of ‘rarely’ and ‘never’ (see table 5).

Overall the data reflects that the autonomy of young adults in shopping is being accepted by their parents. Contrary to the stereotypical perception of the society, the patriarchal image was somewhat diffused as parents were of the view that the young girls made better shopping choices for them as compared to their male counterparts. This also supported the GAD approach of gender equity.

Table 5. Frequency of Shopping for Their Parents/Elders

Frequency of doing shopping for parents/guardian	Male	Female	Total
Always	4.2	9.7	8.1
Many times	18.6	26.8	24.4
Sometimes	37.1	38.2	37.9
Rarely	27.5	18.0	20.7
Never	12.6	7.3	8.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	167	422	589

Buying a durable household item like TV, fridge or air-conditioner is not an everyday activity as it involves lots of expenses, especially for a middle income class or lower income class family. As in the surveyed population sixty percent of the respondents belonged to middle income class, so the data collected relevant to purchasing durable items (in Table 6) showed the acceptance of respondents as economically independent and responsible persons. However in this specific class category this practice is not an individual act rather it is a collective family decision, although the final decision is made by the person who is bearing the cost or has the relevant decision making role.

Table 6. Frequency of Opinion Taken in Buying Durables

Frequency of opinion taken in buying durables	Male	Female	Total
Always	29.9	30.2	30.2
Many times	35.3	28.6	30.5
Sometimes	23.4	24.8	24.4
Rarely	2.4	4.3	3.7
Never	9.0	12.1	11.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	167	420	587

Table 6 shows the percent distribution of respondents showing frequency of their opinion taken in buying durables like a fridge, TV or an air-conditioner etc. The data show that, there were 35.5 percent male respondents and 28.6 female respondents who reported that their opinion was taken 'many times' while buying durables in their house. The response rate was somewhat similar, for the categories of 'always' and 'sometimes' (see table 6 for detail). Here the gender

equality was visible by the fact that no significant difference was visible between male and female response rate, thus indicating that with time and due to the influence of global values, acceptance of females in the decision making process within important household affairs has increased.

Pakistan is a patriarchal society and segregation of roles between genders was expected. However table 7 shows that a large difference between young males and females in the case of buying durables themselves has become considerably less. The data shows that 16.4 percent males and 6.0 percent females bought durables ‘many times’. The corresponding figures for the response ‘sometimes’ were 20.0 percent males and 8.1 percent females respectively. The response rate for ‘always’ buying a durable themselves was even lesser (8.5 percent males and 1.9 percent females).

Table 7. Frequency of Buying Durables Themselves

Frequency of buying durables themselves	Male	Female	Total
Always	8.5	1.9	3.8
Many times	16.4	6.0	8.9
Sometimes	20.0	8.1	11.5
Rarely	12.7	3.6	6.2
Never	43.1	80.5	69.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	167	420	587

These findings reflect the ‘public-private dichotomy’ for male and female activities, prevalent in Pakistani family institution. From the data it can be inferred that going out and actually buying a durable is

an activity in the 'public sphere', where dealing with other males is involved. Table 7, shows that over all the respondents being young have a lesser participation in this activity (in the 'never' category 43.1 males and 80.5 females) as their family discouraged them from carrying out such time consuming activities, however in the 'always' category there is less gender differential (8.5 percent males and 1.9 percent females), therefore showing an increased level of female economic independence, and the trust on her independent decision making ability in the public sphere.

### **Having a Personal Bank Account**

Possession of personal bank account was used as another indicator for measuring the GAD approach through gender equity in decision making process and the acceptance of females as economically dynamic members of family.

The gender differential was visible in the family treatment towards the young respondents, as operating a personal bank account is an indication of economic dynamism. Table 8 shows that more than half the men (59.3 percent) and one-third women (33.4 percent) had their own bank accounts. Both male and female respondents were students in the Punjab University (PU) and carried more or less similar socio-economic statuses. Their expenses were mostly centered on their university fees and other expenses related to academic life. However the collected data shows that gradually females are also being accepted in this status.



Table 8. Frequency of having Personal Bank Account

Having own bank account	Male	Female	Total
Yes	59.3	33.4	40.7
No	40.7	66.6	59.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	167	422	589

Moreover, from the data in table 7 and table 8 it can be inferred that the patriarchal influence remains dominant in Pakistani society where economic matters are related to 'public sphere' and remain to be specifically the domain of males. On the other hand, females remain the property of the 'private domain' who is allowed lesser participation in economic matters. However, a gradual change is being observed.

### Decision of Taking Admission in Punjab University

The decision of making a choice of an institution for higher education is an important stage of a young individual's life, as this could become a milestone regarding his/her professional career. In the present study it was taken as an indicator of decision making autonomy which was used to see that to what extent young females are gaining this status, reflecting the GAD approach in Pakistani society. In the response to the question asked about who made the decision of the respondent's taking admission in the institution, the findings showed a visible shift towards gender equity. Table 9 shows that 64.1 percent male and 55.8 percent female respondents reported that they took admission in Punjab University on account of their own free choice. This is a significant change, since young females are being empowered to make important decisions in their lives. This may be related to the different steps taken by the present government regarding emphasizing female education and emancipation, and the role of

media in creating awareness in this regard.

Table 9. Frequency of the Relation Who Made the Decision about their Admission in Punjab University

Who made the decision for admission in Punjab University	Male	Female	Total
Yourself	64.1	55.8	58.2
Elder Brother	11.4	7.8	8.8
Father	20.4	23.0	22.3
Mother	0.6	7.8	5.8
Elder Sister	1.2	2.9	2.4
Grand father	0.0	0.2	0.2
Grand mother	0.0	0.2	0.2
Spouse	0.0	0.7	0.5
Uncle/ Aunt	1.2	1.4	1.4
Cousin	1.2	0.0	0.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	167	421	588

There were 20.4 percent male and 23.0 percent female respondents who took admission in PU as a result of the decision made by their fathers. Father was the authority figure in the traditional family system, which made all the important decisions (Donnan, 1997). Due to the influence of global culture the trend has changed and youth is gaining more freedom in making decisions about their lives. Another plausible explanation for this may be that there were 34.7 percent respondents who had about 60+ years old fathers', who were not earning. Usually the aged male head's authority is associated with his economic status (ibid), and hence their pertinent authority was

eroded. After the father, the other family member (whose advice was mostly preferred for taking admission in PU) was the 'elder brother' (11.4 percent male and 7.8 percent female respondents took advice from their elder brothers). The data shows that female respondents took advice from family members more frequently than their male counterparts regarding admission in the university as girls are considered the custodians of culture and sign of honor of the family (Jafree, 2017), as they transmit the culture through their socially defined roles in family. However another aspect which was reflected through the collected data was that interestingly, among female respondents mothers were important in seeking advice (6.8 percent females and only 0.6 percent male respondents took advice from mothers), which may be interpreted as a gender equity shift. Although the figures are traceable but it also shows that now females are getting empowered to make important decisions in their lives without taking the approval or acceptance of the male members of the family. This was somewhat a taboo in the past.

### **Participation in Marriage Ceremonies**

In Pakistani society, marriage is an important custom not only placing two individuals in a legal bond of commitment towards each other, rather creating a bond between two families. Therefore marriage event becomes an occasion in which all members of the family try to participate actively. The decision making authority are the male elders, but a change in this trend has been noted. The present data explored the youth's participation in such decision making processes related to marriage. As for this section of data, the time duration was one year, out of 600 only 148 respondents were eligible to answer the question.

Table 10 shows that there were 20.4 percent young respondents who said that they did not have any type of participation in arranging a marriage ceremony. There were 70.9 percent females and 29.1 percent males who reported that they did play a part in the decision-making

process related to the 'selection of spouse'. This is a very important indication of the GAD approach, as in traditional Pakistani family, young females are considered dependents of their male elders. After father and grandfather, the hierarchal authority lies with the elder brothers to make such decisions. However, the collected data shows a change in this practice as females are gradually being given to participate in important family decisions.

Table 10. Frequency of Participation in Decision Making Related to Marriage Ceremonies

Frequency of participation in decision making process	Male	Female	Total
Spouse selection	29.1	70.9	18.5
Venue for the functions	33.1	66.9	30.9
List of guests	29.7	70.3	30.2
My opinion was not taken in any issue.	22.3	77.7	20.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	211	514	725

was much greater than males in the decisions made related to 'selection of venue for the marriage ceremonies' (66.9 percent females vs. 33.1 percent males) and in 'finalizing the list of guests' (70.3 percent females vs. 29.7 percent males).

Parents, in their In-depth interviews gave different views regarding the participation of youth in the decision making process related to the arrangements of marriage ceremonies. One mother said;

*"We are Syed (name of a caste), we don't marry outside our caste and spouse selection is done mostly by our elders, however the boy/girl is asked about his/her liking, before the final decision*

*is made. For other arrangements, the (young) brothers and sisters are involved."*

One father said that;

*"making different important decisions in marriage is the area of womenfolk. I just gave my approval of the boy (spouse) for my daughter and told my family about the expenditure which I could bear".*

Another mother said;

*"marriage is a very important event for a family. In our family, each member has the right to give his/her opinion and the final decision is taken collectively".*

One father and another mother had the similar view that;

*"now-a-days a family cannot take any decision without the participation of the young members of the family".*

Therefore, it can be inferred from the information gathered from parents and the youth that a marriage ceremony in Pakistan is taken to be a family event, reflecting high level of collectivism. In the traditional family set-up the decision making authority in all spheres of life was in the hands of the male head (Donnan, 1997). However, a change has taken place now, and females are becoming dominant in the decision making process related to arranging marriages. Furthermore, due to the influence of global values the overall participation of youth regarding decision making processes in family related issues has somewhat increased.

### **Females' Acceptance as Economically Independent Family Member**

In the present study the 'gender and development' (GAD) approach was seen not only through allowing females participation in decision making processes, it also included change in the attitudes of males towards women as equally competent individuals. Table 11 presents

a picture of the acceptance of females at different levels in the decision making authority as well as their acceptance as economically independent family members.

Table 11 shows a different picture from the traditional view of males about female economic independence and decision-making ability in the household. Traditionally, Pakistan is a patriarchal society, where female identity is always associated with the male. She is recognized in the society as a mother, wife, daughter or a sister of a male member of her family and is perceived as the custodian of family honor. Her decisions about issues concerning her and people related to her are decided by the male members of her family (Donnan, 1997; Allan, 2000; Munawar, 2006; Saigol, 2011).

The data show that due to globalization a significant change has come about. There were 61.6 percent male respondents who were of the view that females made wiser decisions than males in family matters. It is worth noting that 41.3 percent men reported that the decisions made by females were good. This shows a change in the attitude of males towards females. Economic independence of females was approved by 59.1 percent of the male respondents. There were 50.7 percent males who opined that earning females made wiser decisions as compared to non-earners. These findings suggest that the role of women in households is changing and there is greater acceptance of them by males for their emerging participation in decision making (for details see table 11).

Table 8.11. Frequency of Male's Acceptance towards Females as Economically Independent Decision Makers in

Household	Great extent	Some extent	Not at all	Total	N
Impossible to run the household affairs without women's participation	18.6	50.6	30.8	100.0	156
Female's part in the decisions made in your household	30.6	43.5	25.8	100.0	62
You personally approve their participation	49.2	41.3	9.5	100.0	63
Females have the ability to make correct decisions in life	35.1	55.0	9.9	100.0	151
Females make wiser decisions than males in family matters	7.9	61.6	30.5	100.0	151
Earning females should have economic independence	22.8	59.1	18.1	100.0	149
Earning females make better decisions than non-earning females in household	28.0	50.7	21.3	100.0	150

In case of the comparison with parent's views some interesting findings were gathered. With the exception of one, all mothers were home makers and they were of the view that homes can be managed

very well without the earnings of females. According to a mother;

*"Women know how to manage expenses of the household.". The mother further narrated; "the wisdom of a woman is not dependent on her education, but on the skills she has brought with her from her own (parent's) family. I have seen many examples of un-educated mothers very 'wisely' managing their household affairs and some educated mothers completely failing to do so".*

Interestingly the only earning mother was also of the view that education and occupation have nothing to do with the success of a woman in her household. She was of the view that;

*" having a career only gives a woman personal satisfaction of having a certain level of economic independence and of enjoying a status (on her own) in society. Otherwise, women actually learn the skills of household management through demonstration and through learning by doing."*

The fathers were happy with their own personal marital lives with their non-working housewives, but they would not mind if their daughters opted a career; or their sons married a career-woman. Moreover, all the fathers were of the view that due to modern communication technology, today's youth is well informed and have the ability to make right decisions about their lives. Regarding the decision-making ability of females in the household, they again were satisfied with their wives and even more satisfied with their mothers who were un-educated with no professional training, but were wise enough to take care of large extended families in their own time period.

## CONCLUSION

On the basis of the major findings of the present study it can be concluded the women agency has changed giving more recognition and acceptance to females as an independent member of the society



having the prudence and maturity to make right choices in life. This reflects that the '*gender and development*' (GAD) approach based on promoting sustainable development by recognizing the importance of both sexes (male and female) as complementary biological entities, having their own respective social roles in their respective socio-political and cultural context, is gradually becoming visible in Pakistani urban youth. Moreover '*gender equity*' is also increasing within the public and private sphere (within family household), where young females are provided with opportunities to make the right choices in their lives as well as considering them equally competent to their male counter-parts in making responsible decisions. The basic philosophy of GAD approach i.e to promote fairness of treatment for both men and women in all spheres of life and creating an overall acceptance for female's emancipation at all levels of society, is gradually on the rise.

The findings of the present study show that young females are gaining more liberty and freedom than the past, in making choices about how they want to spend their day-to-day lives. Taking the decision of getting admission in PU shows the significant increase female emancipation. Their economic autonomy by operating their personal bank accounts and buying valuables for family use has gradually become an accepted norm. The attitudes of parents towards their young children have changed because of the improved inter-generational communication. Today parents are less strict in forcing their children. Parents are showing greater level of permissiveness towards their young children and allow them to shop for themselves as well as for their parents. However, the family moral values remain to be deeply embedded in the socialization processes of young family members. Young females going all alone by themselves for shopping remains to be an unapproved act and are preferred to be accompanied by their mothers, elder sisters, sisters-in-law or brothers, when they go shopping. Similarly spending a night out of the home without being accompanied by a male family member remains to be a taboo

in the society.

Marriage is an important custom, which generates bonding between two individuals, and between the two families. All members try to show their bonding with the family by showing their participation in different events of the function. The data shows that wedding ceremonies were considered as private family activities and women fully participated in them. Traditionally, Pakistan has a patriarchal culture, where female's identity is defined by the male authority. Women perform many important roles within family while working under the authority of males (Nasrullah, 2014). The data shows that the young males were more receptive than their parents towards change in the status of females. The parents were of the view that the younger generation is intelligent enough to make "right decisions" about their own lives. Henceforth, social transformation is taking place in the Pakistani society, however the basic family values are intact where female remains to be a sign of honor and respect.

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