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Social Exploitation of Lower Class and Stratification System in Rawalpindi

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Abstract: *The main objective of the research is to study the exploitation and social oppression resulting in a lack of opportunities or unequal access to resources. The methodology is descriptive based on a constructivist research approach. Furthermore, the triangulation method was employed to avoid rapid saturation. For the sake of collection of data, observation, a structured questionnaire was employed. The sampling design is based on the SRS technique. Sample drawing was the essential constituent of the first phase. The research referred to some of the systems of stratification out of many, existing in societies. It also indicated certain stereotypes and obstructions faced by individuals due to the emergence of stereotypical discourses in society. In the end, the researcher tried to relate an ascribed trait (class or class mobility) with education (which sounds to be an achieved trait but is dependent upon several ascribed factors).*

Key Words: Social Stratification, Class Exploitation, Social Oppression, Gender Discrimination, Unequal Access to Resources

Introduction

In the current research study, the two most important elements of the study are ascribed status and social stratification resulting from social exploitation. Social stratification exists in every society which goes parallel to inequality but Islam offers an egalitarian ideology. The

Holy Quran says “O mankind I (God) created you from a single pair of male and female and made you into people and tribes that ye may know each other (not despise each other)” (Brown, 2013). When the Islamic Republic of Pakistan is referred to, researchers come to

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know that it basically emphasizes abolishing exploitation. The constitution in article 3 emphasizes 'eradicating exploitation from society'. It also emphasizes that states should ensure the abolition of exploitation through adopting just means and fulfilling rights in accordance with input, including their ability and work done ([Government of Pakistan, 2018](#)).

In every society, there exists stratification or hierarchies where some people are placed at the top and others at the bottom or in between. Hierarchies are based upon religion, caste, class, income, etc. In past, differentiation generally existed on the basis of religion or ownership of productive assets. Today class is determined on the basis of income. These classes are based on the stratification in society. This stratification is not just made on the basis of class or economic condition but also on the basis of culture ([Becker et al., 2017](#)).

One society has layers or strata that are made of people and resources. The people of each stratum are selected and defined for it as per their approach to extensive valuable resources. Each stratum or layer of society has different ranks. These strata represent the division among people of society that leads to the formulation of an unequal classification system of society. For an instant, we can take the example of our ancestral societies which have Kings, slaves, Lords Serfs etc. ([Rueden, 2014](#)).

Stratified society involves exploiters and exploited agents where wealthier ones in society are exploiters having innumerable options while exploited agents are least wealthier ones and have fewer options. The existence of exploiter agents of the capitalist class and exploited agents of the working class

shows unequal access to resources such as productive possessions. Stratification leads to the oppression of subordinate people of society. On a broader level, oppression entails in society due to 'world views'. These world views describe how people perceive their relationships with others. It can broadly be based upon his/her life experiences or concepts. For instance: It is a world view about minorities in America that they must be in a subordinate position to Natives or Americans, referring to oppression ([Collins, 2016](#)).

The social oppression that is led by social stratification also refers to the cultural oppression of the minority groups ([Virley, 2013](#)). The article not only signifies the importance of counselling in eradicating cultural oppression but also emphasize the cause behind the lack of theory regarding cultural oppression. The reason behind it could be that the counsellors are also not aware of others' cultures and their counselling is based upon their own values or cultures. Oppression can be seen in the form of inequalities where inequalities in societies is a concomitant of unequal opportunities ([Sumerau and Grollman, 2018](#)). The author attributed inequality of opportunity to 'circumstance'. By circumstance here, the author refers to certain factors that are not in control of individuals and are apportioned to them at the time of birth (like race, geographic area, family class etc.). All these factors refer to ascribed Statuses.

The current research study is undertaken to investigate the social stratification phenomenon in Rawalpindi in the light of the above discussion. The research aims to explain how the social stratification phenomenon is propagating in continuous mode and what reasons are in the back of this phenomenon

and the point of view of people regarding it. Nevertheless, this research acquaints to produce some new body of knowledge about social stratification system and its ultimate results in the form of various sort of discriminations and inequalities.

Objective of Research

The main objective of this research study is to study the class exploitation and social oppression resulting in a lack of opportunities or unequal access to resources.

Primary Research Questions

Does ascribed status bring social stratification into society?

Secondary Research Questions

1. What are the systems of stratification in the potential population?
2. Does ascribed status results in social stratification in society or not?
3. How does one class gets exploited?

Review of Literature

[Molina et al \(2013\)](#) stated that social stratification creates inequality in a society marked by social oppression. It is characterized by the dominance of one group over the other. People with low income are generally given low-grade employment in society. People with low academic achievement and occupation from the lower class enter another system of occupation-based stratification. It leads to the dominance of a class over the workforce and results in class exploitation and inequality. Development and inequality are based on the concept of unequal opportunities. Unequal opportunities also affect development outcomes like Economic growth, institutional

quality, education etc. The paper also emphasizes on World Development Report, the main focus of which was equality of opportunity in terms that all members in society have a similar chance to be an active and economically productive participants. Unequal opportunities hinder development as fewer educational facilities due to low income would result in less cognitive development, diverging an individual towards a low paid job in future.

[Savage et al \(2013\)](#) revealed that the stratification is not just made on the basis of class or income, rather it is also affected by other intervening factors that include possession of strong social and cultural capital illustrating that culture and social ties of a person accompanied by indicators of class can also affect his/her social position in the societal hierarchy.

[Harvey L. \(2012-2020\)](#) referred to social research glossary that defines oppression as 'when an individual holds power and exercise it over another subordinate group in an unjust way'. More explanatory definition of oppression cited that 'People are not oppressed only in terms of socio-cultural factors, economy or politics rather they also assert to be mentally oppressed'.

[Thompson N. \(2016\)](#) illustrated that the leading cause of oppression is the act of differentiation among groups on the basis of which one class acquires a higher position in the social hierarchy and the others are considered as lower and are thus exploited. This exploitation of one group or individual over the other brings about gender discrimination and inequality in society that ultimately causes destitution for the other group. Discrimination thus possesses an

oppressive penalty where denial of human rights is often seen by the dominant group.

[Roser and Cuaresma \(2016\)](#) demonstrated that in all well developed and complex societies, the valued resources are always distributed unequally. Mills (2019) has affirmed that most of the privileged groups of people and families receive a disproportionate prestige, power and other crucial resources share. Doob (2019) had acknowledged that social stratification refers to the term constellations of social institutions that are the means of generating social inequalities. Stratification propagates when the social institutes categorize certain types of goods as valuable or worthless. Also, it induces the distributions of categorized goods among the people as per their position in society. [Bales and Parsons \(2014\)](#) evaluated that positions of people in society are determined by their job designations, occupations and their respective social roles in society.

Methodology

This research study was conducted among the communities of *Pindora*, *Abbasi Abad* and neighbouring areas in Rawalpindi. These areas are selected due to two factors majorly that are diversification and convenience. There are diversified attributes of Rawalpindi in terms of demography and population. The researcher opted for urban regions as locale upon which inferences were generalized. This study is the descriptive research design. As per the quantitative approach, the data was collected through a structured questionnaire as a tool and instrument of research. While some of the questions were quantified by using SPSS software and google form which helped in data collection. A sample of 40 respondents was

drawn through the SRS sampling technique. So SRS (Simple Random sampling was administered. Research is applied as per the interest of the topic and is distinct from other types of research like diagnostic or pure research. However, the research has appealed more to the constructivist view based upon the doctrine of relativism.

Results and Discussions

The researcher while administering the tool of research, interpreted the collected data and extracted the following information as per the major variable of research study given:

Stratification in Society

Stratification system refers to systems that generate inequalities that can be seen in society in terms of unequal distribution of valued goods in which unequal proportion of resources as well as income, power etc. are enjoyed by most privileged individuals. Stratification systems rely upon ascribed traits that affect the position of an individual in society, which is usually found to be discriminatory in nature. Therefore, the authors in this article suggested designing a stratification system on the basis of an individual's achievement rather ascription.

The basic difference between flexible and institutionalized labour markets is that there exists:

- High Minimum wages
- Employment protection

These institutionalized labour markets can help to reduce poverty or inequalities in terms of wages or income ([Brady, 2003](#)).

The research data affirms that there exist stratification in society on the basis of ascribed traits like class and gender (that were the main

topic of concern to address these two ascribed traits). The findings also elaborated that this system of stratification creates numerous different obstructions to one way based upon these ascribed traits. Furthermore, the use of power based upon ascribed attributes was also

noticed. The main attributes of respondents were recorded. The perceptions of educated people were also recorded that showed in more proportion on perspectives like class mobility due to education, hindrances faced by them outside the domestic sphere.

Table 1. Age Group of Respondents

	Attributes	Percentage
Age Group of Respondents	20-25	80.8
	26-30	11.5
	31-35	7.7
Qualification	Middle	3.8
	Higher	92.3
	Uneducated	3.8
Dependency Ration of Respondents (Are you independent?)	Yes	34.6
	No	61.5
	5	3.8
	Total	100

Social Exploitation

Responses collected under this variable of study elaborated that respondents belonging to lower class does not only results in exploitation by higher, dominant or exploiter class (all these

words are used to refer to the elite class in literature) but there exist certain impediments from inter-class also. The reason appeared to be the lack of access to opportunities and resources which initiates competition among them.

Table 2. Economic Condition of Respondents

	Attributes	Percentage
Economic Condition	Low	11.4
	Moderate	80.8
	High	7.7
	Total	100

The data collection about class exploitation was of prime importance in which it was hypothesized that people from the lower class are exploited more but when data were being collected the problem lay in recognition

of one's class. Because it is done so according to one's own perception rather than any standard criteria. Thus perceptions are interrupted by desires that in whatever condition they were, but had needs that might

not be necessities but exist, they classify them either in lower-middle or middle class. The reason behind that was found to be facilities with development in technology and also the western world that creates an artificial need of object. For instance, respondents earning more than 45,000 classified them in moderate class but few respondents earning the same class categorized themselves in high class. Thus, it was about the matter of desires in identifying class.

Exploitation for the lower-class perpetuates at the family or individual level also. It is perpetuated in several manners. The one who is less educated or earns less in the family also faces oppression, for which exploitation might not be the right term because it gains more negative connotation but still exists and may have the last effect on individual and result in anxiety by a reduction in performance. When this kind of individual-level oppression is faced by people, it invokes stress among them that gradually takes shape of violence in most cases, one of the respondents mentioned that he was sent out away from his family, by them, to earn despite his efficient outcomes in education until the middle, but due to lack of opportunities, he needs to struggle hard and faced oppression. He also mentioned that he could not pursue education due to his ascribed class, its impediments and to fulfil the needs of his family that pushed him out. Being functionally cognitively and capacity to show a better outcome in education he had to quit education. Several scholars had mentioned that one's capacity in education and onwards that could result in reducing disparities but if one's class hinders the way along with oppression faced by people from lower

occupational status, the only thing that is left is oppression.

The researcher has also analyzed and interpreted the observed realities recorded by her during fieldwork. She found that due to the outbreak of the Corona virus, the elite class who are running factories, are shedding off their workers, due to apparent losses in form of fewer working hours that are allowed and reduction in every minute exercise including market. The workers mentioned that they had neither paid their pending wages nor valued the work that they are delivering for several years. While Prime minister Imran Khan along with the federal cabinet passed a decision to privatize Pakistan Steel Mills (PSM) that resulted in the termination of around 9350 workers and declared an amount of compensation that cannot actually compensate the needs of workers. It was decided as a retrenchment plan but created oppression for labourers. One of the workers also stated that during the pandemic when people are living from hand to mouth and have no support to accommodate to fulfil basic needs. Furthermore, it had also resulted in an increase in the crime rate.

Social Oppression

The higher class in any field is found to be manifesting power over the other by some means. A large number of respondents were migrated from their rural areas because oppression gets more intense due to hindrances placed by higher class individuals and people were suppressed in name of culture and created hindrances. It affects the social positioning of individuals and migration was thought to be the only solution to gain access to resources and gain a higher position on the social hierarchy.

Table 3. The viewpoint of Respondents about the ascribed status

Question:	Response	Percentage
Does ascribed status such as class brings social stratification in society?	Strongly agree	57.7
	Agree	23.1
	Disagree	19.2
	Strongly disagree	Nil
	Total	100

Social Mobility and Inequality

The decision for mobility intervenes with many other factors like Workplace discrimination on the basis of class, occupation-based stratification and other such push factors. These factors also result in decreased performance and consequently increase pressure, anxiety and loss. It can also be elucidated that although all case studies and experiences are distinct but access and opportunity are important effluents that impedes one’s path toward development and mobility.

The association between social mobility and inequality has been described from a number of perspectives. One of the broadly liberal perspectives is that socio-political tensions can be overcome if there is a rise in social mobility. It is the view that directly manifests the fact that the countries such as the US and UK exhibit higher social mobility which is why they have reduced the level of social inequality to the very lowest level. Political and policy-making interests are becoming the major causes of higher social mobility in these regions. From the above

discussion related to social mobility and social inequality, the relationship is clearly evaluated. It manifests that if there is a tension of rising of social inequality in society then only the remarkable solution is to induce a higher rate of social mobility either with a motive of policy-making or political interests ([Bukodi and Goldthorpe, 2018](#)).

A higher proportion of respondents agreed that the ascribed class creates impediments in one way in form of deliberate unequal access to resources and allows the elite class or often known as exploiter class to exploit them to provide them with more capital because wealth accumulation is found more at one pole leaving the other behind. It referred to the exchange relationship which enshrines that the elite class is determined to fulfil their need by exercising power over the other and exploiting it. Due to the perception of people about inequality, they were most likely in favour of mobility which had another effect on the economy on a macro level. The proportion of their preference about mobility is given as:

Table 4. The viewpoint of Respondents about social Mobility

Question:	Response	Percentage
Do people prefer mobility because of inequality?	Strongly agree	57.7
	Agree	23.1
	Total	100

Differential Social Treatment and Ascribed Status

Social inequality takes various forms like differential treatment, income inequality, unequal opportunities etc. People from higher

classes are considered prestigious and thus treated differently. When were asked about differential treatment due to ascribed class, except a negligible proportion, all agreed that people are treated in different ways, the proportion for which is given as:

Table 5. The viewpoint of Respondents about the ascribed status

Question:	Response	Percentage
Do you think differentiation is made on basis of ascribed status?	Yes	92.2
	No	7.7
	Total	100

The consequences of which are derived to be enhanced inequality and more economic gap which ultimately results in violence. Violence is created because when there exists inequality and accumulation of wealth at one pole and the other is left with those whose power is manifested and they are unable to fulfil their basic need.

several radical feminists had developed feminist theory to highlight such oppressive traits and to ask for equity and inclusion. ([Lay and Daley, 2007](#)).

Social Discrimination

The researcher has also found that discrimination leads us towards an unjust system that suppresses not only the development of a particular gender but also consequently affects the whole society and hinders the development of all. Society as a whole can develop only if equal participation is provided to all irrespective of gender, class, caste, religion etc.

Education and Social Stratification

[Brown \(2013\)](#) stated that the modernization era has opened the doors towards accessing education for all. The way from a class of origin to destination class needs to be passed by education, which facilitates class mobility and reduce inequality. But in reducing inequalities the need of the hour is to implement such policies in society that would eradicate disparities and advantages to a particular class, suppressing the other.

When discrimination against women was indicated and experienced in society. But now, feminism is somewhere used illicitly to preserve one’s own interest in name of discrimination. It was aimed at gaining equity-based rights and providing equal recognition to women with men in society. Unequal opportunities and dominance of males in several fields raised oppression for females, thus

As per the researcher's collected data and its interpretations, the current era demands more competition among people if they want a better living standard. There are several reasons for an increase in the rate of education like the need for time, better social positioning and to develop. Along with facilities of infrastructure, one does not need to go to distant places thus gender differential treatment that a female cannot go at distant places particularly common in remote areas at early times, it is feasible for them to seek education

Table 6. The viewpoint of Respondents about social Mobility

Question	Response	Percentage
Who should be given more opportunities?	Lower Class	65.4
	Middle class	26.9
	Elite Class	7.7
	Total	100
People from the lower class are:	Socially marginalized	11.5
	Equally treated	7.7
	Deprived of access to resources	11.5
	Both a and c	69.2
	Total	100
People who are preferred in decision making for society	Lower class	3.8
	Lower Middle Class	19.2
	Upper Class	76.9
	Total	100
People from lower classes should be involved in decision making as:	Active participant	80.8
	Passive participant	19.2

The abovementioned responses show the perception-based either upon their experience or observation that showed that more opportunities are given to the people from the lower class. Thus, it is preferred to ensure active participation in order to decrease the economic gap and disparities.

Conclusion

Ascribed status refers to the attributes that a person acquires at the time of birth. There exist several systems of stratification that are based upon ascribed status like class and gender. Stratification is essential in society to maintain social order. But there lie latent functions that

are executed by dominant people in society. The dominance is derived from wealth, power, and alliances that are subsequently attained by people who possess more assets than others. The dominant class is also referred to as the exploiter class who tyrannize exploited class and creates a lack of opportunities for them. Stratified societies unfold many inequalities in terms of discriminations, power manifestation etc. Other than class, gender-based differences are also found in the stratification system that is perpetuated through cultural stereotypes. But education is considered a way out in order to eradicate inequality and pave the way towards development and class mobility.

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