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Socio-Cultural Constraints to Girls' Higher Secondary Education in Malakand, Pakistan

Abstract

In Pakistan, girls are facing social, cultural, and structural challenges to get higher education. Researchers investigate the social and cultural constraints among girls in accessing higher education in Malakand, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In the present study quantitative research design with a probability sampling technique was used to conduct survey research from 336 enrolled girl students in the study locale. The data was collected through a self-administered questionnaire in selected girls' colleges. The data was analyzed with descriptive and inferential statistics. The results indicate a strong association between the lack of girls' higher education and gender roles in the study locale. The study explained that due to gender norms, girls' higher education is socially restricted by male family members, particularly when no higher education institutions are available nearby. It is recommended that higher education facilities be established, and the community should be aware of the importance of girls' education.

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Title

Socio-Cultural Constraints to Girls' Higher Secondary Education in Malakand, Pakistan

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Abstract

In Pakistan, girls are facing social, cultural, and structural challenges to get higher education. Researchers investigate the social and cultural constraints among girls in accessing higher education in Malakand, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In the present study quantitative research design with a probability sampling technique was used to conduct survey research from 336 enrolled girl students in the study locale. The data was collected through a self-administered questionnaire in selected girls' colleges. The data was analyzed with descriptive and inferential statistics. The results indicate a strong association between the lack of girls' higher education and gender roles in the study locale. The study explained that due to gender norms, girls' higher education is socially restricted by male family members, particularly when no higher education institutions are available nearby. It is recommended that higher education facilities be established, and the community should be aware of the importance of girls' education.

Keywords: Girls, Higher Education, Gender, Subordinate Position, Malakand, Pakistan

Introduction

Girls' access to education is one of the fundamental rights around the world (Fennelly, [2018](#); Stromquist, [2014](#); Larson, [1996](#)). The feminist perspective argues that, along with other constraints to girls in public and private spheres, their accessibility to education is hindered by various socio-cultural, economic, and geographical factors. Among the socio-cultural factors, families discourage girls' decision-making

related to their education (Islam & Asadullah, [2018](#)). Family prefers that their girls learn gender roles and concentrate on domestic chores (Marks, Lam & McHale, [2009](#)). Parents prefer their girls to get religious education and be loyal to their family (Nelson, [2006](#)). Girls are confined to the domestic sphere, and their mobility is restricted in the outer sphere due to the fear of their insecurity and harassment (Joda & Abdulrasheed, [2015](#)). Girls are



economically dependent on their men family members; therefore, they are treated as subordinate in the family affairs (Bradley & Saigol, 2012). It is stated that in developing countries, girls' education is the second priority of parents as compared to boys (Subrahmanian, 2005). Like other developing countries, in Pakistan, girls' access and enrollment in the education sector are minimal in comparison to men.

Pakistan is one of the developing countries with high gender discrimination in education, political participation, employment, and access to health facilities. According to the Global Gender Gap Index Report (2020), Pakistan is ranked 151st out of 153 countries in gender parity. In sub-categories, the country ranked at 143 out of 153 countries in education attainment, 150 out of 153 in employment, 93 out of 153 countries in political participation, and 149 out of 153 countries in access to health care services (World Economic Forum [WEF] report of 2020 by Ahmad (2019). According to the Pakistan Education Statistics Report (2017), in the country, 56% of men and 44% of girls are enrolled in educational institutions. It is statistically shown that in the country, 44% of higher secondary schools/inter colleges are run by the government, while the majority, 56% of higher secondary schools/inter colleges are run by the private sector. In the country, gender discrimination in the education sector is observed from the primary stage of education. In the country, boys' enrollment in primary education is 55% while 45% of the girls are enrolled. Similarly, in the country, girls' enrollment in secondary education is 42%, while the men's enrollment is 58%. The discrimination is also observed in higher secondary education, where 39% of the girls are enrolled and 62% of the men are enrolled. In the country Gross

Enrollment Ratio (GER) between men and girls is 104:92 girls at the primary stage. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the GER between men and girls is 125:94 at the primary stage. Similarly, in the country GER between men and girls is 47:38 at middle to higher secondary education, while in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, it is 72:35. It is reported that 6.29 million children in the age of higher secondary education are out of school in the country. In Pakistan, the girls out of school in the age of 15-16 years are 3,204,111. It is statistically shown that in the country, 40% of boys and 49% of girls are out of school (primary to higher secondary education). In the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 21% of boys and 49% of girls are out of school in the age of 5-16 years (Government of Pakistan [GoP], 2018).

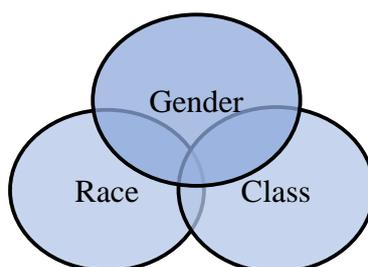
The above statistics show that girls' access to education is constrained by the socio-cultural factors in the country. In the present study authors focused on sociological analysis of the prevailing socio-cultural factors that play their role as constraints to girls' education.

Theoretical Framework

Modern feminist Patricia Hill Collins discussed the three main variables, race, gender, and class, as the source of girls' oppression in the private and public spheres. The authors mainly covered the gender variable of the theorist of Post-modern feminism, which highlighted that girls are discouraged from playing their role like men in the study. Due to gender roles and socialization, girls are expected to stay within in home to perform the role as nurse, caring and rearing of children, fulfillment of husband's sexual desires, and mainly to perform the reproductive role as mother.

Figure 1

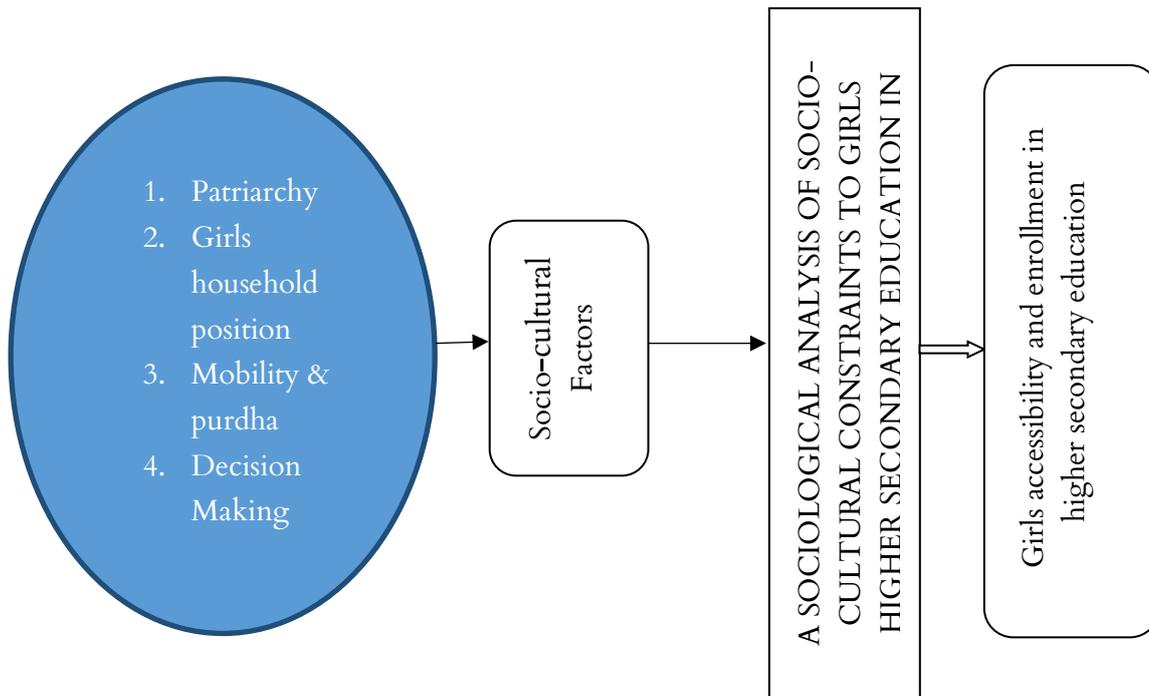
Interlock System of Girls' Oppression



Source: The Black Feminist Thought, 3rd Edition, (2002).

Figure 2

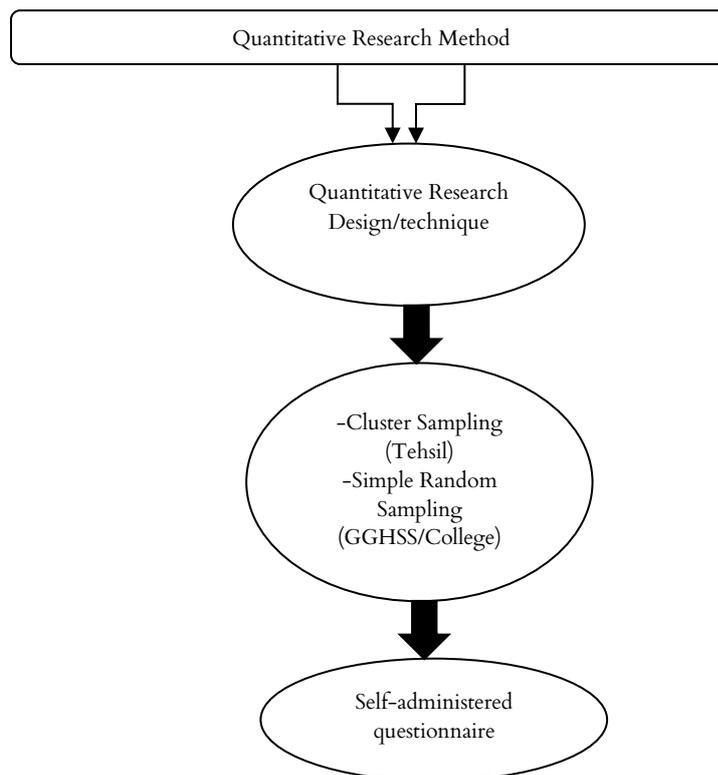
Conceptual framework of girls' access to higher secondary education



Methods

Quantitative research design was used in the study.

Figure 3



The present research study mainly focused on currently enrolled girls in higher secondary education schools/colleges. In district Malakand, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan, there are 15 higher secondary schools/colleges for girls. The total enrolled girls in the selected higher secondary education schools/colleges are 2505 (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa E&SE, 2020). According to the national census report 2017, the total population of Malakand

is 720295, and the total households are 91414 (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS), 2017).

In the present research study, 05 higher secondary schools/colleges are proportionally selected out of 15 higher secondary education schools/colleges. The researcher used the following formula for the sample selection of currently enrolled female students.

Formula.

$$n = \frac{N1 * n}{N}$$

n= sample population

N= total currently enrolled girls' students in selected schools/colleges

N¹= selected school/college total enrolled girls' students

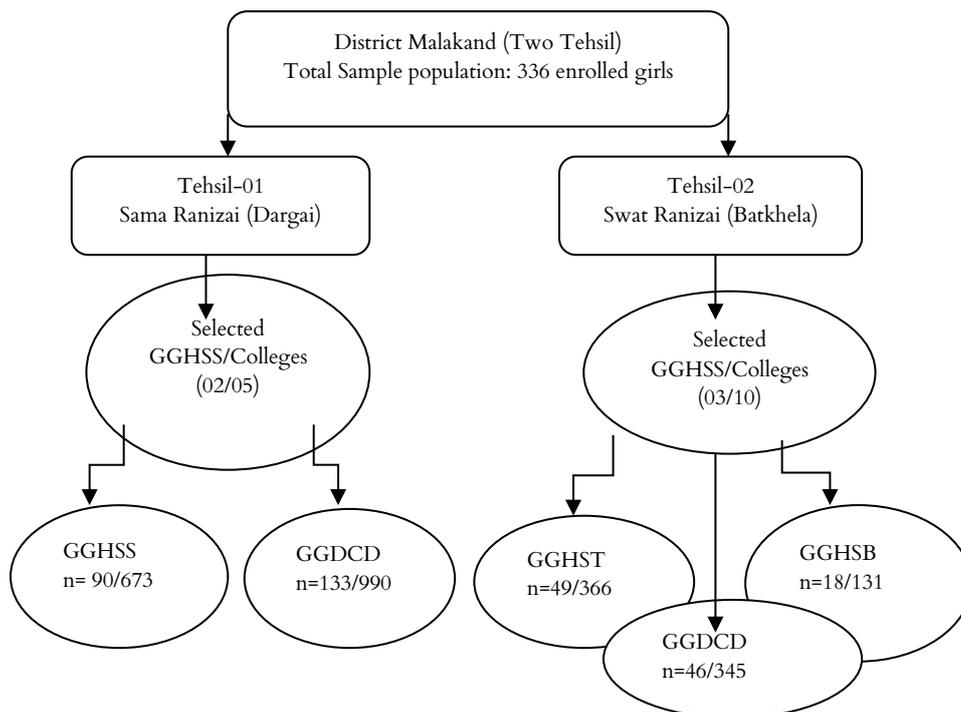
The total enrolled girls' students in the selected higher secondary schools/colleges are 2505 while as per Sekaran standard sample population selection

framework 336 currently enrolled girls are randomly selected as the respondents.

Researchers selected the currently enrolled girls' students with simple random sampling techniques. In currently enrolled students' researcher considered respondents representation from the first year as well as from the second year of their education.

Figure 4

Cluster and simple random sampling of the study population



Results and Discussions

Table 1

Demographic characteristics of enrolled girls students

Characteristics (Students)	f	%
Age of the respondents in complete years		
15 – 17	86	25.6
18 – 20	250	74.4
enrolled class of the respondent		
1st year	152	45.2
2nd year	184	54.8
Marital status of the respondents		
Married	47	14.0
Unmarried	259	77.1
Any other	30	8.9
Family monthly income in PKR		
0001-10000	52	15.5
10001-20000	90	26.8
20001-30000	87	25.9
30001-40000	41	12.2
40001-50000	36	10.7
Above than 50000	30	8.9
Father occupation		
Government employee	49	14.6
Private/self-employee	258	76.8
Unemployed	29	8.6
Mother occupation		
Housewife	234	75.0
Government employee	42	13.5
Private/self-employee	36	11.5
Residential area of the respondents		
Urban	158	47.0
Rural	178	53.0

The above table described the socio-demographic characteristics of the enrolled girls in higher secondary education. Among the total 336 respondents, nearly a third of the respondents (74.4%) are in the category of 18 to 20 years, and one fourth of the respondents (25.6%) are in the category of 15 to 17 years.

The table discussed the enrolled class of the respondents. Of the 336 respondents, more than half of the respondents (54.8%) study in their second year of intermediate, while the remaining 45.2% of the respondents were currently enrolled in their first year.

The table discussed the marital status of the respondents. Among the total 336 respondents, third and fourth (77.1%) of the students' respondents were single, 14% of the respondents were married, while the remaining 8.9% of the respondents were engaged.

The table shows the residential areas of the girls' students. Among the 336 respondents, more than half of the respondents (53%) were living in rural areas, and 47% of the respondents were living in urban areas. The family monthly income among the total 336 respondents more than one fourth of the

respondents (26.8%) family monthly income is between PKR 10000 to 20000, one fourth of the respondents (25.9%) family monthly income was between PKR 20000 to 30000 similarly, 15.5% of the respondents monthly income was from PKR 00001 to 10000, 12.2% family monthly income was from PKR 30000 to 40000, 10.7% respondents stated their family monthly income is PKR 40000 to 50000, and the other remaining 8.9% respondents' family monthly income was above than PKR 50000.

The table shows the occupation of the fathers of the respondents, among the 336 respondents, the majority of the respondents' (76.8%) fathers were self-employed/private employees. Similarly, 14.6% of the

fathers of the respondents were government employees, while the other 8.6% were unemployed. The occupation of the mothers of the respondents, Among the total 336 respondents third three-fifths of the respondents' (75%) mothers were housewives, 13.5% were government employees, and the remaining 11.5% of the mothers of the respondents were self-employed/private employees.

The Pearson correlation was applied to draw the statistical relationship between independent variables (parental support & socio-cultural determinants) and outcome variables (girls' higher secondary education). The Pearson correlation test was applied.

Table 2

Socio-cultural determinants of girls' higher secondary education in the district Malakand

Socio-cultural determinant & GHSS			WAHSE	PTEW	PEWE	EIWE	WIHC	PSWE	GRRE	GPCAE
Enroll ment	WAHSE	Pearson Correlation	1					*		
		Sig. (2-tailed)								
Socio-cultural determinants toward girls' HSE	PTEW	Pearson Correlation	0.470**	1.000						
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000							
	PEWE	Pearson Correlation	0.072	0.663**	1.000					
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.187	0.000						
	EIWE	Pearson Correlation	-.035	-.035	-.102	1.000				
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.522	0.528	0.061					
	WIHC	Pearson Correlation	0.672**	0.650**	0.387**	0.013	1.000			
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.808				
	PSWE	Pearson Correlation	-.108*	0.144**	0.241**	0.871**	0.037	1.000		
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.048	0.008	0.000	0.000	0.502			
GRRE	Pearson Correlation	0.055	0.170**	0.177**	0.289**	0.113*	0.343**	1.000		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.318	0.002	0.001	0.000	0.039	0.000			
GPCAE	Pearson Correlation	0.311**	0.788**	0.830**	-.101	0.558**	0.217**	0.206**	1.000	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	.063	0.000	0.000	0.000		

Denotation: WAHSE=girls are allowed to get higher secondary education, PTEW=public transportation exposes girls to the outer environment, PEWE=purdah encourages girls' education, EIWE=ethnicity influences girls' access to education, WIHC=girls' insecurity and harassment confines them, PWSE=pukhtunwali support girls' education, GRRE=gender role restricts girls' education, GPCAE=geo-physical condition affects girls' education

*** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

In the table, the Pearson correlation between girls who are allowed to get higher secondary education

and public transportation exposes girls to the outer environment is 0.470. The relationship is found to be

highly significant at 0.001. It is indicated that the girl's exposure to the public sphere, due to public transportation, influences the girl's access to higher education. Other research studies conducted in the study area discussed that no transportation facility in education compels parents to restrict girls from getting higher education. The parents are worried due to day-to-day harassment issues among girls in the country (Mehmood, Chong & Hussain, 2018; Naz, Daraz, Mughal, Alam, Khan & Hussain, 2012b).

In the table, the Pearson correlation between girls who are allowed to get higher secondary education and the *Purdah* restriction on girls' access to higher secondary education is 0.663. The relationship is found to be highly significant at 0.001. It is indicated that the *purdah* has a great influence on girls' access to higher secondary education. Another research study conducted in Bangladesh shows that *purdah* is not a barrier to girls' education and employment, while girls choose themselves to wear *purdah* (Sultana et al., 2018). Whereas another study also discussed that observance of strict *purdah* is one of the cultural barriers to girls in accessing higher secondary education (Qureshi, 2012).

In the table, the Pearson correlation between girls who are allowed to get higher secondary education and ethnicity influences girls' higher secondary education is -.102. The correlation is found to be negative with no significance. The same findings are also discussed in another study that ethnicity has less influence on the restriction of girls' education (Ma, 2009).

In the table the Pearson correlation between girls is allowed to get higher secondary education and girls insecurity and harassment confine girls access to higher secondary education is 0.013. The relationship is found to no significance. However, in many other research studies, it is discussed that due to the prevailing law and order situation in the country, girls are facing a threat to getting higher education in remote districts (Mehmood et al., 2018; Daraz, Khan & Sheikh, 2013).

In the table, the Pearson correlation between girls who are allowed to get higher secondary education and Pashtunwali influence on girls' higher secondary

education is 0.037. The relationship is found to be less significant. However, in other studies, it is discussed that girls are restricted to the domestic sphere with family chores as primary responsibility in rural settings in the country (Khurshid, 2016).

In the table, the Pearson correlation between girls who are allowed to get higher secondary education and gender role restrictions on girls' higher secondary education is 0.343. The relationship is found to be highly significant at 0.001. It is indicated that the limitations of gender roles restrict girls' access to higher secondary education. In other studies, it is also discussed that girls associate roles with gender influence adversely on girls' access to education (Jamal, 2014; Naz, 2011).

In the table, the Pearson correlation between girls who are allowed to get higher secondary education and the geo-physical conditions that affect girls' higher secondary education is 0.206. The relationship is found to be highly significant at 0.001. It indicated that the geo-physical condition of the area influences girls' enrollment in higher secondary education. It is found by a research study that the worst condition of the insecure and unsociable roads of the education institutions limited girls' access to education institutions (Daraz et al., 2013).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Globally, education is recognized as a powerful tool to empower girls and girls. Education protects girls from all kinds of human rights violations and strengthens their voices in the public and private spheres. It is internationally acknowledged that investment in girls' education can save their lives and the lives of their families. Education is one of the most effective means to achieve sustainable development for everyone. An educated woman plays a vital role in the provision of better nutrition, health care, and education to her family. Education provides an opportunity for a woman to contribute socially and economically to her family and overall society.

No doubt, today's girls' enrollment in education is higher than compared to previous years, but unfortunately, in developing countries, girls' education rights are denied, and two-thirds of the

world are illiterate adults are girls. The same situation has also prevailed in Pakistan and in remote geographical districts in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In the study area, girls' education is influenced by various socio-cultural, economic, parental, and institutional factors. Most of the girls live in a joint family structure where parents and elder siblings play a vital role in deciding about their girls' education.

It is concluded that socio-cultural factors greatly influenced the girls' accessibility and enrollment in higher secondary education institutions in the study area. Early marriage is a socially approved practice, and particularly early marriage is settled in the study area. In case of early marriage, a woman not only has to be ready for a young pregnancy, rather her education is stopped by in-laws. Socially, men are key decision makers and the earning hand of the families. Men are responsible for livelihood activities and financial support of their family affairs, due to which men's education is preferred over girls in the study area. Family argues that girls are not the permanent members of her father's family, rather they are considered the permanent members of in-laws' family. Due to girls' subordinate position in the family, their education is of less priority for their men. It is observed that religious education institutions called *Madrassas* are being established very rapidly in the study area and in the province of Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa. Parents prefer their daughters to be enrolled in *Madrassas* to educate girls about their loyalty to their husband, in-laws, and to fulfill their domestic chores. The patriarchal structure of the family oppresses its girls in deciding about their education, mate selection, and access to health care services in the area. Girls are restricted from outer mobility without the company of her family member, in most cases, the company of her male family member. Girls are confined to the domestic sphere due to the fear of their honor and daughters' harassment which directly constrains girls' access to higher secondary education in the study area. In the study area, gender stereotyping is also one of the main factors confining girls to the domestic sphere. Girls are mainly socialized to perform their role as nurses and caregivers of children and other family members. Girls are also regularly engaged in domestic chores and socialize that domestic chores are their primary responsibility both in their own and in laws families. Girls are treated subordinately in family affairs, and she was not allowed to make decisions by herself.

The study recommends that the government should establish higher education institutions for girls, and scholarships should be started to encourage parents to enroll their daughters in higher education. A community-driven awareness program shall be started to sensitize parents and other family members to enroll girls in higher education.

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