



## THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN ADDRESSING GENDER DISPARITY IN WOMEN'S DECISION-MAKING: A STUDY OF RURAL TOBA TEK SINGH

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### Abstract

*Traditional gender roles define gender in Pakistani society. Females in Pakistan are expected to marry and become members of their husband's family. Traditional beliefs hold that females should stay at home and care for their spouses and kids. When it comes to gender roles, males in Pakistan have sway. Despite the fact that women and men have equal rights in Islam. The dominant Indian culture has a significant impact on Pakistani culture, particularly its view on gender roles. Culture and religion in Pakistan impact how people learn. Literacy, educational achievement, employment position, media access, marital status, age at first marriage, desire for children, and access to the internet were some of the socio-economic and demographic variables examined in this research on gender inequality and women's empowerment. More specifically, it used a battery of concrete, evidence-based measures to evaluate women's empowerment on a household level. Most studies examining the role of gender in workplace decision-making have focused on either the supply-side, which concerns the difference between men's and women's social and human capital, or the demand-side, which concerns the difference between men's and women's expectations of status in the workplace. The current research aims to learn how people in rural parts of District Toba Tek Singh perceive gender inequality and how it affects women's ability to make decisions. After randomly selecting two councils of union (Uc-25 and Uc-26) from the tehsil, four villages were chosen, two from each UC. The villages in UC-25 were Chak No. 375/JB and 377/JB, while in UC-26 were Chak NO. 388/JB and 386/JB. The selection was made proportionately from a pool of 160 responders. For each hamlet that was chosen, forty women were questioned. First, in accordance with the study's goals, four villages were randomly picked from the tehsil of district Toba Tek Singh. The present research used a random sample approach to interview 160 respondents from chosen tehsils of Toba Tek Singh. A meticulously organized interview schedule was used to gather data for the research in order to investigate its aims. The appropriate statistical procedures were used to examine the gathered data. Only 30.6% of those who took the survey were between the ages of 26 and 30. Approximately one-third of the participants (30.6%) could not read or write, whereas one-third (33.1%) had completed high school or more. A little over half of the households surveyed were involved in agriculture, while 55.0% were not. Among those who filled out the survey, almost 50% were unemployed or housewives. Gender equality was supported by a large majority of respondents, with 90% of them being in favor. The overall findings reveal that most respondents are from middle to lower-income backgrounds, with a considerable proportion being illiterate or having limited education. While women are often consulted in routine domestic matters—such as cooking, household supervision, and attending ceremonies—their participation declines in critical areas, especially children's medical treatment. The analysis of the hypothesis confirms that higher education strongly enhances women's decision-making participation, suggesting education as a key driver of empowerment. Despite some degree of social freedom, persistent gender disparities remain, particularly in decisions requiring greater authority or financial control.*

**Keywords:** Gender Disparity, Role of Education, Women's Decision-Making, Rural Areas

### Introduction

Gender disparity is a social process in which people are treated on the base of gender. These distinctiveness, roles, behavior arrangements and authority associations are strenuous; they differ more than time and among edifying bonds since of the constant changing and disparity



of edifying and prejudiced meanings of sex. The difference in authority associations among men and women result in dissimilar gender roles, social roles and socially suitable uniqueness and behaviors. Every culture is exact recognized action, habit, dream and authority among other things as mechanism in the recognition of unusual roles of gender (Hirut, 2004) .

That masculinity and femininity space among gender in socio-economic gauge has harmful connection on overall development of the country in ordinary and on demographic and health results of persons in meticulous. Gender disparities in control, rights and performance influence on physical condition, productiveness manage, continued existence and food throughout women's entrance to healthiness care, inferior have power over their sexuality and bodies and limits in substance and non-substance assets (Kishor, 2005).

Decision making is the control of an human being to make a decision a few substance in his/her daily living .It can be noticed as an describing and selecting an another based on the principles and decisions of a choice –maker (Haris,2008). The allocation of responsibilities between women and men within societies significantly change women's capability to contribute in official service and to construct up management positions across circles. Although the gender space in official service has been contraction, women's and men's appointment in compassionate and home tasks is extremely imbalanced. The realism that women are typically accountable for caring and home duties give confidence pattern about women's abilities as workers. It is often indeterminate that mothers will be a smaller quantity devoted to their duties at work and as a result women with children might be less likely to be promoting to decision making positions. One consequence of the gendered allocation of tasks is the overrepresentation of women in part time work and unstable employment, which frequently offer fewer opportunities for career development. In addition, the substantiation suggests that women face significant difficulties when try to move from part- time to full-time service, both throughout and after periods of caring (Burkevica et al., 2014).

Education is a vehicle for transformation. It enhances socio-economic development of a nation. Quality education helps individuals to develop their potentials and adds value to lives. According to Madumere-Obike and Ukala (2013), quality education helps people give meaning to their lives, placing them in the context of human and natural history and creates in them an awareness which should protect them from violence and abusive form of employment. As a matter of fact, everyone has the right to education.

Women education is imperative to national development. It improves on their decision making ability. Robert–Okah (2011) observed that women education involves getting the woman to understand, recognize and further the power within her for the improvement of her life and situation. It is a process which is both on-going and dynamic and which enhances their ability to effect changes in those structures, practices and cultural elements which tend to relegate them to subordinate status. Women education will assist women gain more access to information and resources; become more active in the social process, especially participating in decision-making in areas that affect their lives as members of the human community; gain more control over their lives and become autonomous of domination and control by men.

Agriculture is the backbone of the economy of Pakistan, and the total contribution of the agriculture sector in the gross domestic product (GDP) is over 25 % (Faisal, 2018). Almost half of the total population of the country is engaged directly or indirectly in the agriculture sector. It has been reflected by Pakistan Labor Force Surrey 2016-2017 that more than 47 % of the total population is employed in the agriculture sector, and over 75 % of the agriculture labor force consists in women. In the rural areas of the country, over 62 % population resides where



women participate in the agriculture sector, dairy and poultry farming, and livestock from dawn to dusk with zeal and zest shoulder to shoulder with men without any discrimination contributing in the enhancement of their respective family incomes to enjoy a better living standard. The major responsibilities of women are: taking part in sowing, transplantation, weeding, crop management, harvesting and threshing, storage and the processing of major crops. Women are extensively engaged in the Punjab Province in both agriculture and horticulture value chains of all the major crops including wheat, rice, cotton, vegetables, fruits and flower (Rabail, 2016).

It is very pathetic that in spite of this great hard work their contribution in the decision making process is not recognized by the men-folk. Women are not included in the decision-making regarding agriculture, education, and marriage matters because it was considered that women are not good decision makers. There are many cultural and religious doctrines based on misconceptions which are shaping the opinion building among the men folk regarding women (Asma and Saira, 2003). They are not given much importance in the decision-making process in their family matters, despite the tremendous workload borne by women (Violetm, 1983).

Women remain limited to their access to critical resources and services, in almost all the provinces of the country despite their role as food producers and providers. Women lack ownership of land in most instance but they may have access to land for labor and utilization of agriculture products for household use. Furthermore, they also have no security for land tenure (FAO, 2017). The cropping patterns, selection of input, acquisition of agriculture loans, marketing of crops and the utilization of the proceeds from the crops is always determined by men and women are hardly consulted in this regard. In the middle-class farming families, however, they are changing rapidly, and they due to their level of education somehow accommodates women's opinions in decision making process (Economic Survey, 2016-17).

### **Objectives**

- To learn about the respondent's socioeconomic status.
- In order to identify the causes of gender inequality.
- To learn more about how women's education affects their decision-making.

### **Review of Literature**

Sleath and Rubin (2002) Gender-based disparity in analysis have been investigated in more than a small number of studies, mostly in the USA. These studies have argued that these differences might be a result of gender-based differences in appearance of complaints to providers. Studies in the USA have found that female patients are additional likely to commence and talk regarding issues of desolation with a dealer and providers are additional probable to bring up questions concerning despair with female patients.

Abed and Gupta (2002) pointed out that some boys indulged in troublesome behavior as a result of attempts to plan a "macho" picture. They frequently manipulate their whole peer cluster and had an outcome on the quality and contented of education. Though, on the whole, gender gaps awaken because of differences in male and female literacy skills. Gender was not as important a forecaster of educational achievement as was societal rank, and it was probable that gender was not as important as civilization moreover.

Chuadhry (2007) contended the most important reason of this report was to scrutinize the effect of gender inequality in education on rural insufficiency in Pakistan by earnings of cause deteriorating psychotherapy on major in sequence sets. It was done that gender inequality in teaching had adverse collide on rural shortage. The experimental answer not compulsory that female –male enrolment amount of earners and tuition of family part chief had bodily powerful



positive association with the probability of poverty. The conflicting relation among variables of gender disparity in tutoring and rural scarcity suggested that education provided additional service opportunities and unnecessary scarcity in developing countries in Pakistan.

Farhana et al., (2009) concluded that 71 % of the rural women consulted with their respective husbands regarding the agricultural, educational, and marriage decision-making in the rural areas of the southern part of the Punjab but their husbands did bother to involve them in the decision making process to a great extent. Mumtaz (2004) stated that women are usually less in decision making course at all levels. Their significant position was not familiar and so was not conventional in decision making. The split of women in group of people decision-making procedure for the reason that of the emotion of men that women were unable expressing their decision, due to illiteracy along with them.

Reddy and Narayn (2006) accomplished that the women engage in recreation a vital position in the economic wellbeing of the family. Women execute diverse household tasks depending on their socio economic arrangement, numeral of members in the family, the nature of professions they were concerned in a lot of factors. Adam and Ferreira (2009) viewed that gender disparity endure to a large degree because women pacific tolerate the burden of the not paid but inescapable home tasks of everyday life, alike as childcare and housework. In fewer developed countries, young women no more were additional probable than men to be neither in service nor in education or guidance, and when they enrolled the labor market ,were general additional probable restricted to the majority susceptible jobs, often in the official zone. Stress among employment and family unit life were at the spirit of the service mystery when it comes to gender. Families with adolescent kids require reasonable childcare if parents were to labor. If childcare eat up one salary so that there was slight or no economic increase from departure out to work, parents were less probable to look for a job.

Alam (2010) explained about gender disparity and its brunt on improvement and poor quality alleviation. He accomplished that women have low and no share in income of the family, few gentleman along with everyone gentleman defendant particular so as to present was rejection equivalent position of women, most of the women are not allowable to labor outer the house, women are extra susceptible to scarcity, women crack extra consignment of creative furthermore family work if household and productive load allocate fairness it can help in deficiency mitigation, domestic scarcity can be reduced when together male and female member be paid. Male member were assessment maker in their house, there were no equivalent opportunity in superior edification intended for women. Women are in front of difficulty in labor marketplace.

European Union (2012) explained causes of gender pay difference which were well known. In accession to straight prejudice, women face region and profession division, misinterpretation of their work, and imbalanced giving out of caring household tasks. These gender disparities on the labor marketplace reflect gender isolation and differences in training system and education, but current trend in education and identical compensate strategy have doubtless helped decrease the gender pay chasm. The gender employment and pay chasm still had major penalty for wages and women's involvement to household earnings, poverty and pension.

Hassan (2007) has concluded in his study that women were deprived in overall socio-economic situations in our country. They have lesser access to education and training, extension services and technology as compared to their male counterpart. At the global level, 43 % of the agricultural labor force comprises in women to support their families by performing different chores to earn in the developing countries around the globe (FAO, 2011). The findings reported



by Haseeb (1992) in his work entitled "Agricultural Research Extension and Development for Women in Pakistan" are very much in line with the present study. He concluded in his research study that the women are tremendously contributing both in the income generating and income saving activities to support their respective families.

But their efforts are not recognized by their respective families. At the global level, the Time-Use Survey reveals that the time contribution of women in the agricultural activities in Africa to provide economic support to their respective families is about 30 % in Gambia and 60-80 % in the different regions of Camero. In the Southern part of Asia, the time spent by Indian women is 30 % and the Chinese Women is up to 50 % in the income generating activities (FAO, 2011).

### Material and Methods

The study's rural areas were located in Toba Tek Singh district. Using a basic random sample procedure, 160 participants were selected to participate. In order to study the research goals, a well-planned interview schedule was created, which included both organized and unstructured questions. A basic random sample method was used to choose the region. Two union councils, Uc-25 and Uc-26, were picked at random from the designated tehsil. Afterwards, two villages from each UC were selected at random: Chak No. 375/JB and 377/JB from UC-25, and Chak No. 388/JB and 386/JB from UC-26. Using a basic random sample procedure, sixty women were selected. For each of the selected communities, forty women were interviewed. Data collection was facilitated by the interview schedule, and the collected data was analyzed using suitable statistical procedures in SPSS, the statistical program for the social sciences. It was in this similar setting when the preliminary testing was conducted. Some problems with the schedule were found during the first evaluations. In light of these results, the researcher made several deliberate modifications. While gathering data, the researcher ran into a number of obstacles. I really enjoyed the outdoor experience that accompanied the data gathering procedure. The responder had a cooperative approach. Inadequate education made it difficult for some responders to understand the questions. They were able to understand and answer the questions since I explained them in Urdu.

<b>Section 1: Socio-Economic characteristics of the respondents</b>		
<b>Categories</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Age of the respondents</b>		
Up to 20	11	6.9
21-25	19	11.9
26-30	49	30.6
31-35	41	25.6
36-40	33	20.6
41+above	7	4.4
<b>Family type of the respondent</b>		
Nuclear	50	31.3
Joint	72	45.0
Extended	38	23.8
<b>Level of education</b>		
Primary	8	5.0
Middle	12	7.5
Matric	21	13.1



Intermediate	17	10.6
Graduation	28	17.5
Post graduate	25	15.6
Illiterate	49	30.6
<b>Marital status of the respondents</b>		
Married	147	91.9
Unmarried	4	2.5
Widow	4	2.5
Divorced	5	3.1
<b>Status of respondent having children</b>		
Male Children	48	30.0
Female Children	28	17.5
Both	76	47.5
No Children	8	5.0
<b>Occupation of the respondents</b>		
Government Job	20	12.5
Private job	53	33.1
Labor	1	.6
Shop keeping/ Own Business	2	2.1
Jobless(house wives)	83	51.9
<b>Income from all resources (annually)</b>		
Up to 150000	32	20.0
150001-300000	99	61.9
300001-450000	27	16.9
Above 450000	2	1.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>100</b>

The table outlines the socio-economic characteristics of 160 participants. The majority of participants, accounting for 30.6%, fall within the age range of 26 to 30 years. This is followed by 25.6% of participants aged 31 to 35 years, and 20.6% who are aged 36 to 40 years. The demographic of younger individuals under 20 years constitutes merely 6.9%, whereas the least represented segment is those over 41 years, accounting for 4.4%. The predominant family structure observed is the joint family pattern, accounting for 45%, while nuclear families represent 31.3%, and extended families make up 23.8%. In terms of educational attainment, 30.6% of participants are classified as illiterate, while the remaining individuals possess diverse levels of education: graduation (17.5%), post-graduate (15.6%), matriculation (13.1%), intermediate (10.6%), middle (7.5%), and primary (5%). A significant majority (91.9%) are married, whereas a minor percentage are unmarried (2.5%), widowed (2.5%), or divorced (3.1%). In the analysis of children, nearly half (47.5%) consist of both male and female offspring, 30% are exclusively male, 17.5% are solely female, and 5% report having no children. Occupational statistics indicate that more than half (51.9%) of individuals are unemployed, primarily consisting of housewives. The remaining workforce is engaged in various sectors: private employment (33.1%), government positions (12.5%), self-owned businesses (2.1%), or labor roles (0.6%). The income distribution reveals that a significant majority of respondents (61.9%) earn between Rs. 150,001 and Rs. 300,000 annually.



Additionally, 20% earn up to Rs. 150,000, while 16.9% fall within the Rs. 300,001 to Rs. 450,000 range. A mere 1.2% of respondents report earnings exceeding Rs. 450,000. This indicates a primarily middle to lower-income socio-economic status.

<b>Section 2: Factors associated with Gender Disparity.</b>		
<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Respondents' distribution according to consultation on overall household income expenditure</b>		
Often	95	59.3
Sometime	62	38.8
Never	95	59.3
<b>Sample distribution based on consultation regarding household supervision</b>		
Often	99	61.8
Sometime	55	34.4
Never	6	3.8
<b>Respondents' distribution according to consultation on cooking-related family matters</b>		
Often	108	67.5
Sometime	48	30.0
Never	4	2.5
<b>Sample distribution based on consultation regarding house construction decisions</b>		
Often	77	48.1
Sometime	67	41.9
Never	16	10.0
<b>Respondents' distribution according to consultation on marriage of children</b>		
Often	90	56.3
Sometime	56	35.0
Never	6	3.7
<b>Respondents' distribution according to consultation on children's healthcare decisions</b>		
Often	8	5.0
Sometime	44	27.5
Never	100	62.5
No child	8	5.0
<b>Respondents' distribution according to freedom of visiting friends and relatives</b>		
Often	85	53.1
Sometime	64	40.0
Never	11	6.9
<b>Distribution of the respondents according to their freedom about to attend ceremonies</b>		
Often	103	64.4
Sometime	52	32.5
Never	5	3.1
Often	103	64.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>100.0</b>



The statistics in the table outlines factors linked to gender disparity by examining the level of consultation and freedom experienced by respondents in various household and social matters. A majority of respondents (59.3%) reported that they are repeatedly referred by their husbands or parents about overall income spending, while 38.8% are consulted sometimes, and a notable portion is never consulted. In family matters such as household supervision, most respondents (61.8%) are consulted often, and 34.4% sometimes, with only 3.8% excluded entirely. Regarding cooking decisions, consultation is even more common—67.5% are often involved, and 30% sometimes. When it comes to major decisions like house construction, 48.1% are often consulted, 41.9% sometimes, and 10% never. For the marriage of children, 56.3% are consulted often and 35% sometimes, whereas 3.7% have no input in this matter. However, decisions about children’s medical treatment show a marked difference—62.5% are never consulted, only 5% are often consulted, and 27.5% sometimes, reflecting a potential area of gender disparity. In terms of personal freedom, 53.1% report they often have the liberty to visit friends and relatives, 40% sometimes, and 6.9% never. Similarly, attending ceremonies is permitted often for 64.4% of respondents, sometimes for 32.5%, and never for just 3.1%. Overall, the findings indicate that while women are frequently tangled in domestic decision-making and certain social freedoms, their participation is limited in more critical matters such as children’s medical treatment, highlighting persistent gender-based inequalities within household dynamics.

**Section 3: Testing Hypothesis**

**"Women’s educational attainment positively correlates with participation in decision-making"**

<b>"Correlation Between Education and Participation in Decision-Making Among Respondents"</b>				
<b>Literacy Status</b>	<b>Participation in Decision-Making</b>			<b>Total</b>
	<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>High</b>	
<b>Illiterate</b>	17 (35.4%)	21 (43.8%)	10 (20.8%)	48 (100.0%)
<b>literate</b>	21 (21.4%)	24 (24.5%)	53 (54.1%)	98 (100.0%)
<b>Total</b>	38 (26.0%)	45 (30.8%)	63 (43.2%)	146 (100.0%)
<b>Chi square = 14.554      df = 2      p value = .001      Gamma = .462</b>				
<b>** Highly Significant</b>				

The results clearly support the hypothesis that higher education among women is associated with greater participation in decision-making. Among illiterate respondents, the majority (43.8%) showed only medium participation, with a smaller proportion (20.8%) having high participation. In contrast, literate women displayed a markedly different pattern—over half (54.1%) reported high participation in decision-making, and only 21.4% fell into the low participation category. Overall, 43.2% of all respondents reported high participation, 30.8% medium, and 26% low. The chi-square test result ( $\chi^2 = 14.554, p = 0.001$ ) indicates a statistically significant association between education level and decision-making participation.



The positive gamma value (0.462) further confirms a moderate positive relationship, meaning that as education increases, women's involvement in decision-making also rises.

### **Conclusion & Policy Recommendations**

The findings indicate that socio-economic characteristics, household decision-making patterns, and educational attainment have a substantial impact on women's roles in both family and social contexts. A significant number of participants come from middle to lower-income backgrounds, with a notable percentage being illiterate or possessing limited educational qualifications. Although women frequently engage in everyday domestic responsibilities—like cooking, managing the household, and participating in ceremonies—their involvement diminishes significantly in crucial domains, particularly in the medical care of children. The examination of the hypothesis indicates that advanced education significantly boosts women's involvement in decision-making, implying that education serves as a crucial factor in empowerment. Even with a certain level of social freedom, enduring gender inequalities continue to exist, especially in matters that demand higher levels of authority or financial oversight. Cumulative admittance to high-quality education for women across all levels can boost their confidence, enhance their skills, and strengthen their decision-making power within families. Community initiatives ought to prioritize the education of families regarding the significance of including women in every facet of decision-making, encompassing health, finance, and long-term planning. Efforts aimed at offering women avenues for income generation can diminish reliance and enhance their influence in familial decision-making. It is essential for awareness campaigns to promote the equal involvement of women in decision-making processes related to children's and family health. It is essential for governmental bodies and non-governmental organizations to contrivance strategies that advance gender equality in the realms of education, employment, and domestic rights.

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