

Critical Analysis of Life of Pakistani Women: Views of Educated Women

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Abstract

Role of woman is vital in the progress of a society. Women in Pakistan are facing problems that create hindrances in their progress. Present study aimed to analyze the attitude of society towards female. It was a descriptive study. Conclusions of study were based on responses of 792 women. It concluded that government is trying to empower women but women are facing problems due to some attitudes and customs of society. Women are facing problems in domestic and professional life. It suggested that implementation of laws should be strictly monitored. Male persons should review their behavior about the women at different phases of life. Education system should be used as a tool to bring improvements in the life of women.

Key words: Gender studies, women empowerment, women education, women harassment.

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Introduction

The role of women in existence of human life is vigorous. Different cultures define different roles of women in domestic, local, national and international perspectives. Role of women in a culture fixes the respect and position of women in the society. Analysis of respect of women in different societies and ages indicate that position of women was worse in ancient societies. Women were considered inferior to the men. They had no basic rights. The birth of the female child had no pleasure for her parents. Even parents used to kill or bury female baby at the time of birth. There were no systems, which could save the girls from cruelties of life and cruel fate of women. Women were deprived from the right of education and basic pleasures of life. Main role of women was considered to look after only the household matters and serve their family.

Advancement of education has changed the spectrum of society. Distinct impact of education on human life is that world has become a global village. Policies about the human rights, women rights and rights of even common citizens are open to all. Women of this age are also liberal in a number of ways. They have right of education, freedom to move in society, freedom to join a profession and freedom to live an independent life as according to their own wills. In case of facing some problem regarding the legal rights of women as human being, they have right to contact courts and register the case about cruel actions of their opponents. Government of Pakistan has implemented a number of policies to empower women. Still, in observations, many girls and women in Pakistan have blames against male members.

Review of different cases regarding women shows that life of women in different socio cultural environments is still difficult. Sometimes, even life of a household woman becomes very difficult due to different attitudes of male who are their legal guardians. In some cases, it is observed that even having liberty by family to get higher education, working at a workplace for earning at reasonable post and having a link with a liberal and educated family sometimes does not save female from some negative attitudes of society. The present study was conducted as result of observation of such situations. Title of this study was "Critical analysis of life of Pakistani women: views of educated women". In this study some attitudes of society towards women were studied and analyzed to suggest measures for getting improvement in women status.

Objectives of the study

This study aimed to:

1. Evaluate attitude of society towards women
2. Point out positive attitudes that are helpful in women empowerment in the country.
3. Point out negative attitudes that are hurdle for the promotion and empowerment of women in society.
4. Suggest measures for taking improvement in women status in the society.

Significance of the study

The study is valuable because results of this study present a picture about the status and life of women in Pakistan. It gives hints about the efforts by government for providing rights and facilities to women. On the other hand, the study is valuable to study attitudes of male society towards women in the country. Critical analysis of these attitudes is helpful to identify required changes for policy makers, educationists and common people to modify roles and attitudes of people to bring excellence in the lives of women.

Results of this study can help society to get view about required commendable changes in social structure and advancement towards a peaceful life of women. This can be a step to give a respectful status to women in Pakistani society. Ultimately, this will help women in playing positive role in life.

For educationists, this study is useful to select content for teaching for behavioral training of students. Curriculum developers can get view to select suitable examples for citing in text books to explain ways for social uplift of women status the country.

Review of Related Literature

Pakistan is an Islamic country where customs and laws are expected to prevail as according to Islamic laws. No doubt, status of women in Islam is excellent. Islam gives respectable status to women and never declare female inferior to men. She is acknowledged as equal partner in the reproduction of humanity, entitled to receive spousal gifts and keep assets for her security (Rashid, 2013).

Review of life of women in Pakistan shows that women are facing problems. Different studies have pointed out problems of women. Prominent issues pointed out by researches include gender discrimination, lack of authority for decision-making and poverty of women (Rukshanda, 2005).

Akhter (2011) has reported that women face violence at different phases in life. This negatively affects personality of women, damages mental and physical health and destroys creativity and productivity of their efforts. Ayesha (2013) has reported, low literacy rate of women, lack of medical facilities in different areas and no source of income for household women create problems for women. On the whole, male dominate on women in decision making regarding important decisions related to lives of women. Weak authority for decision-making and discrimination between men and women is common in Pakistan. No permission to work for earning and removal of property right by force makes life unpleasant for women. In addition, no security to move freely in society, performing duties at home as well as at work place, no respect for divorcee, dependency on husband after marriage, and no respect for women who raise voice for justice are key problems of women in Pakistan.

Different factors are behind the problems of women. Basic reason is dominance of male in approximately all matters of family (Ali & Bustamanate, 2008). Furthermore, low educational status of women, lack of women empowerment and traditional styles of society to degrade women at different phases and stages of life (Akhter, 2011) cannot be ignored evaluating the roots of this issue.

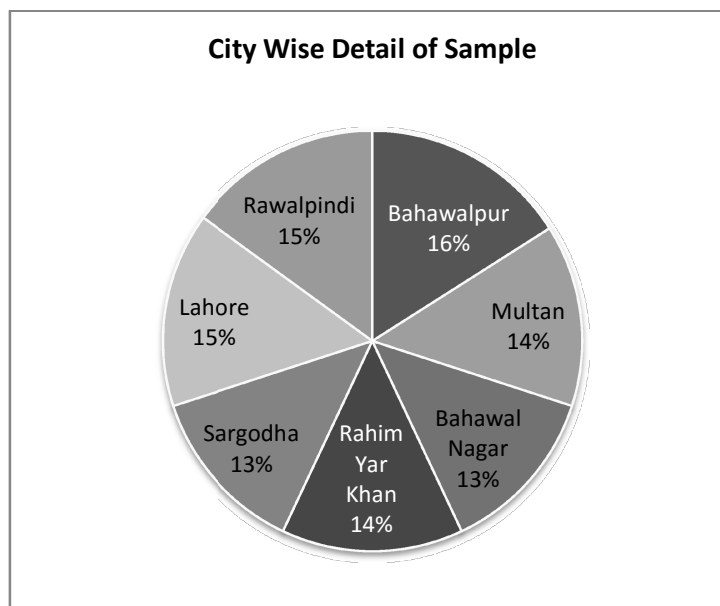
It is a reality that women who are surrounded by different problems, related to family or society cannot perform their responsibilities perfectly and productively. This situation is a limitation on the way of progress and uplift of status of women in society. It calls governments and all welfare organizations to work for women empowerment. Women empowerment is a source of empowerment of whole society. Chaudhry, Chani and Pervaiz, (2012) viewed, women empowerment provides new energy, insights, leadership, benefiting men and children of their families and can improve their quality of life.

Government of Pakistan has worked to empower women. Different rules have made and implemented in the country. A source "Women Empowerment Package" presented by the government of Punjab (2012) clearly supports women empowerment. According to the women empowerment package, women have right to attain share in property of parents, get higher education, facilities of transport and hostel by the government, fixed quota in jobs, up to three years age relaxation at the stage of fresh appointment, posting at same station where husband is working (wed

log policy) and facility of day care centers to look after children of working women. But, need is to monitor the application of laws in practical situations. Present study was planned keeping in view the above reported literature as background of this study to evaluate the status of women in Pakistan.

Procedure of the study

The present study was completed following procedure of survey method. Women of Pakistan were population of this study. Population was so large thus, this study was delimited to the Punjab province of Pakistan only. Furthermore, study was delimited to the working women and women studying at university level. It was assumed that educated women could better provide answers of questions designed for the study as compared to illiterate and low educated women. So, a group of 900 women having graduation level qualification from randomly selected seven cities of Punjab were chosen as sample. They were requested to answer the questions freely without hesitating, in light of their own experiences and observation regarding life of women in Pakistan. Out of total delivered, 792 female returned the questionnaires. Figure 1 presents city wise detail about the sample of study that provided data for the study.



A questionnaire on four point Likert scale was framed as data collection tool. A scale of 1 to 4 was given against each item. To find out results, mean score for each item was calculated. For reporting results, sum of strongly agreed and agreed was calculated and reported as agreed in the results. On the other hand, sum of disagreed and strongly disagreed was calculated and value of disagreement was showed as disagreed in the results. To interpret results of the study, mean value of 2.50 and above was taken as a criterion to accept respondents' agreement to the statement.

Results of the study

Results based on comparison of mean score regarding each statement have discussed below.

Table1 elaborates some statements asked to women about the role of government to give respectful status to women and empower women in Pakistan. Mean scores of all statements signified in the table were above than 2.50. This pointed out that efforts of governments were positive to empower women and help them to give respectable status in the society. It indicated that women have facilities for education, right for getting share in property, opportunities for skill development, provision of empowerment programs, basic health facilities, right to participate in political campaigns, equal status in laws as human beings as parallel to men, opportunities forgetting high potential jobs like male, and positive role by media to highlight the rights of women. This shows that Government of Pakistan is willing to empower women and facilitate them to enjoy respectable status in the society. On the other hand this also explores that government is in the process to facilitate women and has plans to take contribution of women services for the uplift of society.

Table 1

Role of Government to empower women and provide respectable status in the society

Sr. no	Statements	Percentage of responses		Mean score
		Agreed	Disagreed	
1	Government provides facilities of education to female like male.	82.7	17.3	3.35
2	Women have right of getting share in property of parents by laws.	82.1	17.9	3.37
3	Government runs skill development programs for women advancement.	73.6	26.4	3.04
4	Government implements strategies for woman empowerment.	81.2	18.7	3.13
5	Government organizes women welfare programs.	81.5	18.4	3.25

6	Government in all areas launches projects related to health of women.	85.9	14.0	3.32
7	Women can participate for political campaign like men.	80.0	19.5	3.26
8	Women and men have equal status in laws as human beings.	73.3	26.6	3.02
9	Women have opportunity for high potential jobs like men.	80.6	19.3	3.17
10	Media highlights the rights of women.	75.3	24.6	3.11

Table 2 identifies some positive attitudes of society that gives happy signs to the life of women. It elaborates that family welcomes birth of female baby happily. Women are proudly allowed to get higher education. They can attend excursion programs outside the home, have freedom of speech about family matters, allowed to cast votes in elections, feel secured at work places, and given right to select spouse for marriage. This also explored that Islamic values have some dominating contribution in the lives of women in Pakistan as well as accepting advancement in coping modern values to meet challenges of this age. As according to Islamic values, teachings of Islam order its followers to accept female baby as blessing of God. It gives them lesson to educate women to enable them to follow their religion, learn the art of successful life, make them able to educate their children, and participate in household and family welfare matters. Results in the table in series 1, 2, 4 and 7 purely indicates acceptance by inhabitants for the teachings of Islam. On the other hand, results of items in series 3, 5 and 6 indicates acceptance of people for modern traits of the age. This is the reason that women' participation in elections to cast votes and permission to attend excursion programs is allowed by their family members as well as by laws and social norms.

Table 2

Positive Attitudes of Society that are Helpful in Women Empowerment

Sr. no	Statements	Percentage of responses		Mean score
		Agreed	Disagreed	
1	Having birth of female baby is a matter of happiness for family.	66.0	33.9	2.76
2	Families proudly allow girls to get higher education.	75.9	24.0	2.92
3	Women are allowed to attend excursion programs outside the home.	63.9	36.0	2.74
4	Women have freedom of speech about family matters.	60.1	39.8	2.86
5	Women are allowed to cast votes in elections.	75.6	24.3	3.05

6	Women feel secured at work places.	60.9	39.0	2.74
7	Women are given right to select their spouse by self.	56.0	43.6	2.68

Table 3 elaborates some negative attitudes of society that are hurdle for the peaceful life and empowerment of women. These include: curse of dowry, pressurizing women by spouse and family to leave job/ business after marriage, Polarization of male for decision making about the family matters, tradition to value opinion of men on women in domestic matters, ignorance of dignity of women even in household matters, non-payment of decided/ promised wedding gifts to women at the time of marriage “Haqmahr” as according to Islamic rules, discouragement of women to register case in courts against men in case of facing problem, discouragement of job of women by male members, degradation of women by male colleagues at co-environments, forcing working women to perform dual responsibilities at home, harassment of women, honor killing of women by men and punishment of female even in case of their rape by their families.

On the whole, results showed in this table depict dark side of social norms in the life of women that has contradiction with the laws of Islam as well as legal rights of women. Almost all issues pointed out in this table have relation to married women. Evaluation of roots of issues signified here indicates impact of non practice of Islamic laws in domestic life. Review of teachings in Islam about the marriage laws never motivates people to receive dowry from female at the time of marriage as gifts by pressure. It allows parents and family members to just give some gifts according to their own status to help new couple to start an independent life after marriage. It orders a man to decide and pay Haqmahr to his wife. Unfortunately, both results in series 1 and 6 regarding dowry and Haqmahr indicate male persons’ ignorance to follow the teachings of Islam.

Results showed in series 2 to 7 highlights male dominance in married life in a sense to ignore women’ right to participate in decision making for herself as well as for her family matters. This signifies dominance of men on women in family life. Results in series 8 to 10, highlight problems of women regarding their discouragement to adopt a profession and work to utilize their talents. They are harassed at work places as well as discouraged by attitude of their families to play dual role in domestic life. This makes life more difficult for working women. Last three results showed in table indicate issue of women harassment and need for teaching of men to review themselves. This calls government and other welfare agencies to be careful about watching negative activities of society and help women by monitoring implementation of laws for their welfare.

Table 3*Negative Attitudes that are hurdle for the Empowerment and promotion of Women in Society*

Sr. no	Statements	Percentage of responses		Mean score
		Agreed	Disagreed	
1	Many girls are deprived of marriage due to the curse of dowry.	69.5	30.4	2.97
2	Working women are pressurized by spouse/ family to leave job/ business after marriage.	53.0	46.9	2.59
3	Male is authorized for decision making about the family matters.	78.5	21.4	3.28
4	In decision-making, the opinion of men is valued on women in domestic life.	86.8	13.1	3.29
5	Men ignore dignity of women even in household matters.	73.0	26.9	3.14
6	Husband pays decided / promised wedding gifts (Haqmahr) to wife.	43.1	56.8	2.17
7	Women are discouraged to register case against men.	73.8	26.1	3.08
8	Male persons of family discourage job of a woman.	80.1	19.8	3.23
9	Male colleagues degrade female while working in co-environment at workplaces.	81.5	18.4	3.18
10	Working women are pressurized to perform dual responsibility.	76.1	23.8	2.97
11	Harassment of women is prominent issue regarding life of women in Pakistan.	83.9	16.0	3.31
12	Honor killing of woman by man is encouraged.	85.9	14.0	3.37
13	Punishment of female even for her rape is a practice in our society.	82.7	17.2	3.29

Discussion

Empowerment of women is a process based on efforts by society. It demands men and authorities to change their behavior by analyzing their actions. Present study has pointed out positive efforts by the government of Pakistan for empowering and strengthening the women. Results of this study also have similarity with results of studies by Rukshanda, 2005; Akhter, 2011; Ayesha, 2013. It has supported gender discrimination, autocratic style of men, violence against women in shape of different actions, non-supportive styles of male in domestic matters as well as professional life of women and some customs as hindrances on the way of women empowerment.

Although government has taken many steps to control violence practices in the country but has not achieved the target completely. Violence against women is a worldwide problem. It is not only the problem of under developing or developing societies but also of the developed societies. Carilli and Campbell (2012) have reported that many research studies continue to find alarming and persistently high levels of violence in the UK that has serious consequences for individuals and society. In fact, society needs to review the situation and work hand by hand with the government to work for the betterment of women. Strengthening Pakistani women means strengthening families and Pakistani society as well.

Conclusions

1. Government of Pakistan is working for empowering and giving respectable status to women. It has a planning to educate women, launch skill development programs, transfer property to women, organize women welfare programs, launch health programs, support to participate in political campaigns and participation in high potential jobs.
2. Birth of female baby is greeted happily. Girls are allowed to get higher education. They are permitted to attend the excursion programs. They have freedom to speech about the family matters. They can cast votes in elections; feel secured at work places and not forced to marry against their will by laws.
3. Women are facing the problems of dowry. They are discouraged to do job. Male does not pay decided wedding gifts to their wives. A woman raising voice against man is disrespected. Furthermore, male dominance in different matters, degradation of female at work places, forcing working women to perform dual responsibilities by family, harassment of women, honor killing and punishment of female even in case of facing violence are issues that need attention for solution.

Recommendations

1. This study has explored that laws are not practiced properly. Therefore, Government of Pakistan needs to monitor the implementation of women rights in different social structures. Persons practicing customs against laws should be strictly punished.
2. Results have indicated practice of women harassment at workplaces. Therefore, Harassment of women at work places should be monitored and treated properly. On the other hand, male members should help women to register case of harassment.

3. Results have pointed out that many of the issues regarding women are related to behavior of family members especially during the married life. Therefore, behavioral training of male members is necessary to make them conscious to treat women equal to them and give them importance in decision making. It is suggested that curriculum developers and text book writers may represent examples in course books to explain ways to respect women and educate men to give equal status to women in domestic matters, give authority of decision to female and accept their potentials and rights as human being and citizen.
4. Society should utilize women potentials instead of accepting them just as a home based worker and ignoring their dignity.
5. Data for the present study was collected from Punjab province of Pakistan. A further study may be replicated involving samples from remaining provinces of the country to get a view about the depiction of life of women in whole Pakistan.

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