

DOES TRADITIONAL ATTITUDE MATTER? FEMALE EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN RURAL PAKISTAN

N. Hashmi, M. I. Zafar* and T. Ali**

Department of Statistics, GC University Faisalabad, Pakistan.

*Faculty of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology, University of Agriculture Faisalabad, Pakistan.

**Division of Education & Extension, University of Agriculture Faisalabad, Pakistan.

ABSTRACT: Female education plays an important role in the societal evolution and development. The literacy rate among rural females is 29% in Pakistan. In the developing societies like Pakistan, the traditional attitude towards women education is considered a major hurdle in girls' schooling. The study attempted to explore the effect of traditional attitude on the educational attainment of rural females in Pakistan. The present study was conducted in the rural areas of the province of Punjab. A sample of size 700 female children was selected using multistage random sampling technique. The final completed school grade was taken as the response variable. The analysis reveals that the girls, who belonged to households where the minds of the heads of the households were embedded in the local cultural values, had lower levels of educational attainment as compared to girls of households where the heads of the households were liberal. The study realizes the need to convince the male heads of the households for schooling of their daughters as a short-run policy. Efforts to defuse an innovative attitude towards females in the third world nations are the need of the hour. International organizations and States of the developing world should manage to propagate the importance of female education.

Keywords: Traditional attitude, female educational attainment, rural Pakistan.

INTRODUCTION

Education is the basic human right of every individual irrespective of sex, race or region. Investment in human capital development ignoring the female population is not workable strategy for any nation. In traditional societies, educated women are strong agents of women (Heise *et al.*, 1999). Educated females participate more effectively in political matters than their uneducated counterparts (Barro, 1999) and thus promote the democracy in a country. Rural population in Pakistan constitutes 64.57% of total population (GOP, 2008). The literacy rate among rural females (age 10 and above) is 29% as compared to 62% among their urban counterparts (PSLM, 2007). In the rural areas of Punjab province, the number of females with secondary and higher secondary level education were 7% and 5% respectively (MICS, 2005). Literature reported the cultural behaviors a major hurdle in the female schooling in developing countries. The experience of western countries reveals that traditions of females working in open market, absence of any restriction on their mobility, and a substantial autonomy play a significant role in their access to education. The present study explores the contribution of cultural behavior of head of the household towards educational attainment of their female children.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

To avoid the risk of censoring bias, it was decided to select the individuals who have attained their final educational grade within the past five years. The maximum-age of school enrolment in the Punjab is nine years (DPI, 2000); therefore, age of 'never enrolled' Units of Observation (UO) was decided up to 14 years. Among 'ever enrolled', the female children who had completed their schooling within the last five years were decided to be eligible for the study irrespective of a cut-point on age. The study was conducted in the rural areas of two irrespective of a cut-point on age. The study was conducted in the rural areas of two districts, Jhang and Faisalabad, of Punjab province. The next lower level division of districts Faisalabad and Jhang was in towns and tehsils respectively. There are eight towns in District Faisalabad and four tehsils in District Jhang. The rural division of Lyallpur Town and Chak Jhumra Town has 14 union councils each. The number of rural union councils in Tehsil Jhang and Tehsil Chiniot are 41 and 32 respectively (DCJ, 2000). Two towns, Lyallpur town and Chak Jhumra town, from district Faisalabad and two tehsils, Tehsil Jhang and Tehsil Chiniot, from District Jhang were selected randomly. With a view of proper coverage of the population area, equal numbers of union councils (five) were selected from each town and tehsil at second stage. The villages were selected from these union councils at the third stage of sampling. Households, which carried at least one female child who had attained final completed level of education within the last five years, were selected proportionally from the selected

union councils. The sample size of the study was decided to be 700 cases (Fitz-Gibbon and Morris, 1987). This sampling plan offered 412 cases from District Faisalabad while 288 from District Jhang. Similarly, the number of UO selected from Tehsils Jhang, Tehsil Chiniot, Lyallpur Town and Chak Jhumra town were 161, 127, 247 and 165. It was decided to select single female child fulfilling the criteria of selection from a household. This study interviewed the heads of the households to explore their attitude towards their female children's education.

Educational levels are better indicators of the educational attainment of the individuals than other measures of educational status (Sawada and Lokshin, 2001; Jaeger and Holm, 2003; Stith *et al.* 2003; Beblo and Lauer 2004). The response variable of study was obtained by classifying the final completed level of education of the Units of Observations (DO) within the educational structure of Pakistan. The educational system in Pakistan defines the academic qualification of an individual as primary (5th grade), middle (8th grade), matriculation or secondary school certificate (10th grade), intermediate or higher secondary school certificate (10th grade), graduation (14th grade.), master (16th grade), master in philosophy (M.Phil.), and doctor of philosophy (PhD). The completed 6th and 7th schooling years without completing 8th, 9th without 10th, 11th without 12th, 13th without 14th and 15th without 16th years of schooling do not add towards qualification of individuals in the prevailing education system of the country. Hence, this study coded the completed levels of education of DO into meaningful qualifications by categorizing them within the educational system of Pakistan. Categorization of a variable measured on interval or ratio scale into different sets is an appropriate approach used by researchers (Sentas *et al.*, 2005). The qualification of a DO who never enrolled or passed less than five classes was regarded as zero and has a code 1. Similarly, those who had passed 5 to 7 classes were considered as 'primary pass' and coded as 2; those passing 8 to 9 classes were considered as middle and coded as 3; those passing 10 to 11 classes were considered as matriculate and coded as 4; and the last category comprises of females passing 12 or more classes (intermediate and above) and were assigned the code 5. Although this categorization of completed level of education into classes like primary, middle and so on transforms the ratio scale variables into an ordinal scale variable, yet it reflects the educational status of individuals sensibly. The last category (completed 12 or more educational grade) of completed level of education of the cases was decided according to the sufficient number of females available with these final educational grades, and is in line with the coding strategy of Sawada and Lokshin (2001), Tansel (2002), Maitra (2003) and Beblo and Lauer (2004). The aim of this categorization was to regress a meaningful dependent variable for a given set of independent variables.

The statements for assessing the traditional attitude of head of the household were designed in the context of socio cultural norms of the society. The respondents were asked whether schooling introduces rebel attitude and sexual corruption (any sexual activity outside marriage) among girls. The respondents were also requested to submit their attitude on the statements relating to mobility, earning for cash and involvement in political activities of women. This variable was measured on ordinal scale using the Likert method. The response of each question had five options i.e. strongly agree, agree, no opinion, disagree, and strongly disagree. The respondents with greater score on variable named 'traditional attitude' were considered 'innovative'. The unidimensionality of these statements was tested through Cronbach's alpha (0.869). The traditional attitude index variable was obtained by adding the score of respondents for various on the measurement of this behavior. It varied from 7 to 35. Nachmias and Nachmias (1992) recommended eliminating the effects of other related variables to avoid the risk of establishing a spurious relation, while establishing a relationship between variables. This study planned to measure the effect of behavioral variables holding the effect of some other potential determinants of educational attainment constant. These potential determinants of female educational attainment include supply side factors (school distances) and financial capacity of parents (per-child income of the household), and were operationalized as 'control variables'. Researchers observed the effects of school distances on female educational attainment in both perspectives i.e. culturally and economically. The distances of educational institutions obstruct the higher-level schooling of females due to weak transportation system in rural areas, cost of traveling or chaperones' accompany costs, opportunity costs, physical costs, and the cultural restrictions on the mobility of adolescent girls. In traditional societies like Pakistan, the issue of 'school distances' becomes more serious for the girls attaining the age of puberty due to seclusion traditions, Islamic values and especially the risk of sexual harassment. The school for females include primary to post graduate level institutions. The study preferred to count the distance of secondary level educational institution for girls. Nearly all the villages had primary level schools within village, whereas only single selected village had intermediate level classes within it. II Literature viewed the educational impact of household income from varying dimensions i.e. total income (Hindin, 2005; Song *et al.*, 2006), average income (Aakvik *et al.*, 2005), per capita income (Khan and Ali, 2005), per capita expenditures (Dancer and Rammohan, 2006) and per adult expenditures (Maitra, 2003; Pal, 2004). Due to large number of extended families in the sample, present study preferred to regress the per child income of the household. It also depicts an accurate

picture of the financial capacity of family for educating their children in the context of resource dilution theory (Blake, 1989).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The response variable comprised of five-categories. The UO with educational status 'no education', 'primary', 'middle', 'secondary level', and 'above secondary level' were 42.3%, 21.7%, 8.4%, 8.4% and 19.1% respectively. The overall average educational attainment of the UO was 5.66 ± 4.78 classes. Similarly, the average educational attainment for Jhang and Faisalabad were 4.68 ± 4.38 and 6.34 ± 4.93 , respectively. Since there is a higher proportion of 'never enrolled' than those 'enrolled' in schools in the rural population, the average age of the selected cases was 15.03 ± 76 year. The majority of the selected cases (34%) belonged to the lowest age group (5-9) years. Those leaving school at the ages of '10 to 19' and '20 and above' were 57.6% and 8.4%, respectively. Relationship between age and response variable did not relate to the question of study, hence not discussed further the respondents with the status of 'strongly agree' and 'agree' on all the questions i.e. with score (7-14) for the traditional index variable, were assigned the status of 'traditional'. Similarly, the respondents falling on the other extreme i.e. with score (24-35) were classified as 'innovative'. The respondents falling between these two extremes on this index variable (15-23) were decided as 'low traditional'. Seventy three percent of the heads of the households of the selected area had traditional thinking either of low or high degree. Twenty seven percent of the heads of the households were considered to be 'innovative' towards their thinking about females. A positive coefficient for the variable 'traditional attitude of head of the household' (0.289) with small p-value suggested the higher educational qualification of DO as the most probable outcome category with an increase in the score of index variable for traditional behavior of head of the household (table 1). The parental attitude towards children's education is more important for children's educational outcomes than material forces (Keng, 2004). Buchmann and Hannum (2001) expressed that cultural behavior of head of the household, cultural beliefs and attitude towards women's role in society play an important role in deciding the educational levels of girls in family. Stith et al. (2003) are of the opinion that low social and cultural values placed on female education reinforce the notion that young girl is not a viable candidate for education. Liu (2004) attributed low value for women education in Taiwan to the cultural behavior of society. Parish and Willis (1993) argued that cultural attitude and patriarchy cause parents to manipulate their daughters for the benefits of brothers and themselves. A number of studies found the

conservative attitude of parents responsible for less schooling among females (Rose and Al-Samarrai, 2001; Ahmad, 2005; Smits and Hosgor, 2006). The heads of the households with innovative attitude towards females' mobility and their participation in the social and economic activities of life suggested higher levels of education for females. Therefore, the female children belonged to heads of the households with the innovative attitude had higher education as compared to those belonging to heads of the households who had strong belief in the old traditional values of the rural society. Rural women in China gained better access to higher education during the Cultural Revolution (Hannum, 1999). Rural society of Pakistan is honor-based society. People expect their girls to be unconditionally submissive of parents and secluded to male adults except brothers or very near relatives within the value system of the society. Sexual relations outside marriage are strictly prohibited, specifically for females. The norms of the rural society demand an adult female to observe the tradition of limited mobility outside home. To earn bread for family is the responsibility of male members. Majority of the parents discontinued schooling of girls at the initial level due to misconception about religious teaching and perceptions of the special treatment towards females in their grooming. They wanted their females not to differ with the decision of male head of the household even on the matters relating to them. The rural society viewed that a college or university level education can empower a female to differ with the decisions of elders of family. Hence, females with higher education are more likely to take decisions about them on the matters like the selection of life partner and nature of job. The heads of the households viewed such an attitude as a 'rebellious behavior' and suggested a limited schooling for female children, thereby hampering the educational levels of their females. The findings of the study are in line with the socialist feminists. The heads of the households who suggested devalued role for women as low paid workers or wanted them to be limited to domestic chores have low schooling for their female children.

As stated earlier, present study aimed to explore the role of parental behavior on the educational attainment of female children. However, it was decided to measure the contribution of this role relative to other potential determinants of the response variable. The school distances ranged from 0 to 35 km with average 6.03 km. Less than one fourth of the VO (23.6%) had secondary level school within village, whereas 10.5% had these schools at more than 10 km from their village. A negative coefficient for the school distance (-0.053) with small p-value indicates that school distances are one of the major hurdles in the educational attainment of rural females in Pakistan. The annual per-child income of the household ranged from rupees 1 to 1100 thousand per annum (Rs.80=\$ 1) with the sample of study. Similarly,

average annual per-child income was rupees 22.08 ± 56.13 thousand. The contribution of per-child income of the household also emerged statistically significant with regression coefficient 0.01 (Table 1). The proposed model fulfilled the criteria of model adequacy. A large value of R square (0.60) is a strong evidence for the goodness of fit of the model. Traditional thinking towards women is a common problem of undeveloped nations, especially the Muslim world. Changing the behavior of society is the first step in expediting the modernization in these societies. The practice of discrimination against women in the backward areas of developing countries in the 20th century is a challenge for the UNO and civilized world. International community should come forward to get rid of this curse.

Recommendations: The statistical findings on the predictor variables suggest feasible strategies for raising the educational levels of rural females. A very low rate of females' enrolment in the higher-level institutions cannot be enhanced without introducing an innovative behavior towards females in the rural society. Situation calls for work on both short run and long-term policies to change the perceptions of society towards rational attitudes and practices. Male head of the household attains the major powers in these rural areas. 'Father-focused campaign' for the school enrolment of girls should be introduced through NGOs and State. Senior male members in the households should be narrated the benefits of women education. They should be convinced to allow their daughters to study in higher-level institutions in coeducation system and further participate in other societal activities. The state with the help of civil society should develop a culture of women working in government and private organizations to counteract the bias against females' mobility in the society. During field visits, the women look in compromise with their status towards low education, limited mobility and working 'not outside' home. To harden the educational aspirations among rural females as their constitutional and basic human right is the need of time in the era of social change. Women organizations are the most suitable channel of motivation among rural females for the purpose.

Acknowledgements: This article is part of PhD dissertation of principal author. The authors gratefully acknowledge the financial support of Higher Education Commission, Islamabad, Govt. of Pakistan for conducting this research. We are also thankful to anonymous referee for his/her valuable suggestions on first proof of this paper.

Table-I. Ordinal regression estimates of the final completed educational qualification of UO

Independent variables	Estimate	P-value
Traditional attitude of HOH	0.174	0
Control variables		
School distances	-0.053	0
Per-child income of the household	0.01	0.001

REFERENCES

- Aakvik, A., K.G. Salvanes, and K.Vaage. Educational attainment and family background. *Gennan Economic Review*. 6: 377-394 (2005).
- Ahmed, S. Socio- economic determinants of female education in a Muslim family: An econometric analysis. Paper presented in Global GQN conference on education held on March 31 to April 2, 2005. Organized by Academy of Sciences, Czech Republic.
- Barro, R. I. Determinants of democracy. *J. Political Economy*. 107: 158-183 (1999).
- Beblo, M. and C. Lauer. Do family resources matter? Educational attainment during transition in Poland. *Economics of Transition*. 12: 537-558 (2004).
- Blake, J. Family size and achievement. Berkley, University of Californian press, USA (1989).
- Buchmann, C. and E. Hannum. Education and stratification in developing countries: A review of theories and research. *Annual Review of Sociology*. 27: 77-102 (2001).
- Dancer, D.M. and A. Rarnrnohan. The determinants of schooling in Egypt: The role of gender and rural-urban location. *Econometrics & Business Statistics*, Building H04, University of Sydney, Australia (2006).
- DCJ (Deputy Commissioner Jhang). Notification No. LG-2000/LGE/383. Office of Deputy Commissioner Jhang, Govt. of the Punjab (2000).
- DPI (Director Public Instruction). Memo No. 11003 dated August 16,2000. Govt. of the Punjab, Lahore (Pakistan) (2000).
- Fitz-Gibbon, C.T and L.L. Morris. How to design a program evaluation. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications (1987).
- GOP. Economic Survey of Pakistan- 2007-8. Economic Advisor Wing, Finance Division, Islamabad, Govt. of Pakistan (2008).
- Hannum, E. Political change and the urban-rural gap in basic education in China, 1949-1990. *Comparative Education Review*. 43: 193-211 (1999).
- Heise, L., M. Ellsberg, and M. Gottemoeller. Ending violence against women: population reports Vol. 27(4). Population Information program, Centre

- for Communication Programs, The Johns Hopkins University (1999).
- Hindin, M.J. Family dynamics, gender differences and educational attainment in Filipino adolescents. *Journal of Adolescence*. 28: 299-316 (2005).
- Jaeger, M.M. and A. Holm. Which background factors matter more in intergenerational educational attainment: Social class, cultural capital or cognitive ability? A random effect approach. Centre for Applied Microeconometrics, Institute of Economics, University of Copenhagen (2003).
- Keng, C. Household determinants of schooling progression among rural children in Cambodia. *Int. Education J.* 5: 552-561 (2004).
- Khan, R.E.A. and K. Ali Bargaining over sons and daughters' schooling: Probit analysis of analysis of household behaviour in Pakistan. Working Paper 01-05, Department of Economics, Islamia University Bahawalpur, Pakistan (2005).
- Liu, A.Y.C. Flying ducks? Girls' schooling in rural Vietnam- A revisit. *International and Development Economics*, National Centre for Development Studies, Asian Pacific School of Economics and Government, Australian National University Canberra, Australia (2004).
- Maitra, P. Schooling and educational attainment: Evidence from Bangladesh. *Education Economics*. 11: 129-153. (2003).
- MICS- Multiple Indicator Survey 2003-4. Punjab Bureau of Statistics, Lahore, Govt. of Punjab, Pakistan (2005).
- Nachmias, C. F. and D. Nachmias. *Research methods in the social sciences*. Fourth edition. Edward Arnold, A division of Hodder & Stoughton, London (1992).
- Pal, S. How much of the gender difference in child school enrolment can be explained? Evidence from Rural India. *Bulletin of Economic Research*. 56: 0307-3378 (2004).
- Parish, W. L. and R. I. Willis, Daughters, education, and family budgets Taiwan experiences. *The Journal of Human Resources*. 28: 863-898 (1993).
- PSLM (Pakistan Social and Living Standard Measurement Survey- 2006-07). Federal Bureau of Statistics, Islamabad, Pakistan (2007).
- Rose, P. and S. Al-Samarrai. Household constraints on schooling by gender: Empirical evidence from Ethiopia. *Comparative Education Review*. 45: 36-63 (2001).
- Sawada, Y. and M. Lokshin. Household schooling decisions in Rural Pakistan. Policy Working Research Paper 2541. Poverty and Human Resources Development Research group, World Bank, Washington D. C (2001).
- Sentas, P., L. Angelis, I. Stamelos, and G. Bleris. Software productivity and effort prediction with Ordinal regression. *Information and Software Technology*. 47: 17-29 (2005).
- Smits, I. and A.G. Hosgor. Effects of family background characteristics on educational participation in Turkey. *Int. J. Educational Development*. 26: 545-560 (2006).
- Song, L., S. Appleton and J. Knight, Why do girls in rural China have lower school enrolment? *World Development*. 34: 1639-1653 (2006).
- Stith, A. Y., K. S. Gorman, and N. Choudhury. The effects of psychosocial risk and gender on school attainment in Guatemala. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*. 52: 614-629 (2003).
- Tansel, A. Determinants of school attainment of boys and girls in Turkey: individual, household and community factors. *Economics of Education Review*. 21: 455-470 (2002).