
ROLE OF EDUCATED WOMEN IN PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN BALOCHISTAN: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF CULTURAL, SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS BARRIERS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the current research study is to determine the importance of women's education in sustainable development and to dig out the factors involved in hindering women's education in Balochistan. This research also aims to draft productive ways forward for enhancing women's role in sustainable development. The present study was quantitative and the type of this study was exploratory. The study was conducted in the Makran division, Baluchistan. The researchers selected the purposive sampling technique from the nonprobability sampling method to select respondents from the population. The data was collected from 150 Baloch adult women including students, working women, and house wife's living in districts Gwadar, Kech, and Panjgur, 50 from each district using a close-ended questionnaire as a tool of data collection where the data was analyzed with the help of SPSS and the hypothesis were tested with chi-square. The results indicate that there are very limited educational opportunities for women in Balochistan and the women mostly do not complete their desired education, there are several factors involved including cultural practices, financial barriers,

limited education facilities, and poor educational environment. The women in Balochistan face challenges for participation in the workforce and they cannot independently select their profession which leads to dropping professional activities. The study recommends mass-level awareness, women's access to free education, and indecency in the selection of professions and jobs which is necessary for making women active and contributing members of the society who always promote development and change.

KEYWORDS

Sustainable development, education, women, cultural practice, barriers, Balochistan

INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the most important tools for human resource development. Education is considered a universally accepted human right that is significant to be provided to all men and women. (Chaudhry & Rahman, 2009). Giving equal educational opportunities to women is quite essential which enables women to become a significant part of the social, economic and political development of the society (Lagachu, 2016; Salik & Zhiyong, 2014). Although most of the world's population consists of women, and they face and experience discrimination in every step of life due to the male-dominated society most of the world (Khan, 2011; Naz, 2011).

In Pakistan, women have a very different status as compared to the Western world. Pakistani society is recognized based on gender (Chaudhry & Rahman, 2009) which creates discrimination on very a broad scale in females' lives and this causes several problems in their daily lives. According to UNESCO and UNDP, Pakistan suffering from multiple consequences in the field of health, and economy due to not prioritizing the provision of education for girls. (UNESCO, 2000; UNDP, 2011). In Pakistan, multiple variables affect women's status differently including economic status, cultural background, and the location where they are located urban or rural (Bukhari & Asim, 2013) regardless of their status they are always vulnerable and at risk in general (Yousuf & Wani, 2016).

Education has a very close correlation with development, it is the key to sustainable development. In the sustainable development framework education is the primary indicator, which is interlinked with other indicators, education ensures the achievement of sustainable development goals. In September 2015 the countries registered with the UN agreed to take initiatives for the achievement of 17 goals that are recognized as Sustainable Development Goals, which include ending poverty, quality education, gender equality, ensuring prosperity, protecting the planet, etc. These goals are set to be achieved by 2023. (United Nations, 2024).

In the UN 2030 agenda education has taken place at the center of Sustainable Development Goals. Education received the most important place in the framework of the global development framework. The UN SDG-4 deals with education, it is not only limited to this specific goal, but education is also mentioned as other key indicators which are health and well-being economic Prosperity and gender equality and interlined with all set SDGs by UN. (United Nations, 2017). SDGs aim to defeat and overcome the rising inequalities throughout the world. Moreover, it focuses on conflicts, economic crises, and climate change (Sayed & Moriarty).

Pakistan is one of the affected countries in terms of socioeconomic problems illiteracy, education, poverty, environmental and health issues, etc. mostly all the challenges are associated with education and economic growth (Khushik & Diemer, 2020). Pakistan is also a member of UN and being a UN member committed to achieve the agenda by 2030, for that has taken different initiatives and taken it in the national development policies and plans through National Assembly Resolution. (Government of Pakistan, 2019). According to one of an IMF report published in 2012, in developing countries a very high output is obtained by educating girls. It is one of the top and most productive investments of the nation that's why it is very important that the women's to be educated (IMF, 2012). The right to education to many children throughout Pakistan is denied and not accessible and the situation of the access to education and literacy in Balochistan is miserable. The statistics showed that 70% girls drop out from their schools in Balochistan and the situation is worst in rural areas (SHAH, 2014).

Here women are suffering from illiteracy, malnutrition, and discrimination and they are not active members of society, and they cannot be supportive members of society until and unless a gender supportive environment is created. Until we realize that women are can be potential members of society no initiative would be taken, we have to understand that only education is the key and indicator for eliminating the gender inequalities in society, but one of the challenges is to address the inequalities in education system (UNESCO, 2009). Area wise Balochistan is one of the largest province of Pakistan and less developed and backward. The people here are less civilized and has lack of access to basic rights including education and health. In Balochistan the female literacy is considered the lowest in the world. Most of the female are not permitted to get education, the literacy rate of rural females is less than 10% which is very low and these all females are not developmental supportive member of the society and they are not good support for the family and children education. Baloch men are represented as power-oriented and strong, and they are culturally dominant members of society. Women are represented as dependent, weak, and home-confined. In every male-oriented and dominated society women are suppressed and pressured in every aspect of life including receiving education (Kakar et al., 2016). Bringing change and diversity in gender equality face challenges and resistance unless

a broader and larger aspect of awareness and mobilization is not taken place (Ruxton, 2004). To achieve gender equality and justice in society is the initiative to alter the men's concept and image made women's role in society (Shafiq,2018).

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are number of researches conducted and highlighted the importance of women education and sustainable development, the issues factors involved in hindering women education. A few of the research are as below. Murphy Graham conducted a research in 2008 and determined that education as a source of information can raise women's empowerment by improving and strengthening their knowledge and understanding of their issues. Education enables women to be aware of their rights and makes them capable of taking necessary action to secure their appropriate place in society. It also gives women insight to understand their environment. (Murphy, 2008) Education is a game-changer for women as per the research by Heaton et al (2005). It equips them with valuable knowledge and skills, opening doors to better job opportunities. This, in turn, leads to an improvement in their social standing. When women are empowered through education, they become powerful agents of change, driving positive transformations in society (Heaton et al, 2005).

Faridi stated in his research that better education is a key factor in obtaining improved employment opportunities for women. When women have a higher level of education, they are more likely to be knowledgeable about current technologies, which can directly enhance their efficiency in the workplace. Additionally, educated women with formal employment tend to have higher levels of confidence and are often sought after for advice and consultation (Faridi et al, 2009). According to Sohail, in today's world, education and technology are the keys to empowering women. When women are educated, they become aware of their rights and can make their own way in society. On the other hand, if women are illiterate, it's difficult for them to have a voice and they may remain dependent on men (Sohail, 2014). Reni also supports this idea by saying that when women have the ability to earn money and are literate, they gain independence and can make decisions for themselves. It's really important for women to have access to education and technology so they can break free from limitations and empower themselves (Reni et al., 2014).

Ahmed in his research analyzed that there are indeed several issues in the education field that still need to be addressed. Misuse of educational institutions and increasing corruption have led to poor infrastructure, including ghost schools, lack of proper furniture and facilities, and political pressure. Additionally, there is a lack of career and moral counseling for children. (Ahmad et al., 2014). Abbas posits in his research study that health, economic growth, quality education, and climate control are indeed the crème de la crème among the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). They

underscore the imperative of implementing sustainable procurement in developing countries to curtail health, energy, and environmental costs by ushering in cutting-edge technology and fostering the propagation of quality education for future generations (Abbas et al., 2021). Zaidi also underscore the pertinence of Sustainable Development in higher education. They note that while it is still in its embryonic stage, the primary objective is to forge a sustainable future for forthcoming generations, enabling their ascendancy in pivotal domains such as the environment, economy, society, and culture. (Zaidi et al., 2019).

Dodds, Donoghue & Roesch (2016) believe that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of 17 goals with 169 targets that were adopted by UN member states as an international development agenda to be achieved by 2030. They describe this as a significant global policy agenda of the 21st century (Dodds et al., 2016). Ferguson, Iliško, Roofe & Hill focus specifically on SDG-4, which is all about education. They highlight that education is crucial for development and prosperity, and SDG-4 aims to ensure that everyone has access to quality education and lifelong learning opportunities. They also emphasize the important role of teachers, teacher educators, and the curriculum in achieving inclusive and quality education (Ferguson et al., 2018).

In Balochistan, the society follows a tribal structure, with Chiefs playing a pivotal role and enjoying high prestige (Sajid et al., 2016; Sarparah et al., 2016). The Baloch people have a deep appreciation for their own culture, considering it to be superior (Majeed, 2010). Unfortunately, this can sometimes lead to limitations on the mobility and educational opportunities for Baloch girls. Traditional beliefs and interpretations of religion often hinder women's empowerment in Balochistan (Kakar et al., 2016). The conservative nature of the society acts as a barrier to redefining gender roles and promoting women's empowerment (Paterson, 2008). Balochistan is indeed ranked as the least developed province in Pakistan, and unfortunately, it also has the lowest Gender Parity Index (GPI) among the provinces. Baloch women face numerous challenges, including limited access to education and healthcare. The literacy rate for Baloch women is reported to be as low as 20% in urban areas. It is disheartening that some tribal men exert excessive control, denying women their rights and decision-making abilities in the name of tradition and honor. The issue of violence against women is also a grave concern, with many cases going unreported and being accepted as the norm. It is crucial to address these issues and work towards creating a more equitable and inclusive society for women in Balochistan (References: Vision 21, 2010; Kakar et al., 2016; Addison, 2008; Bhatti et al., 2011).

The situation in Balochistan regarding access to education and the challenges faced by women is a pressing issue. It's crucial for us to raise awareness about these cultural

barriers and work towards creating a more supportive and empowering environment for women. Education plays a vital role in empowering women, as it provides them with knowledge, skills, and opportunities for employment. By promoting education and breaking down societal norms that restrict women's mobility and access to services (Paterson, 2008). When women have access to education, it opens up a world of possibilities for them. Education equips women with knowledge and skills that can help them secure better job opportunities, earn a living, and contribute to their communities. It also boosts their confidence and self-esteem, empowering them to make informed decisions about their lives. By investing in women's education, we can break the cycle of gender inequality and create a more inclusive society. (Rai et al., 2007)

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To determine the importance of women's education in sustainable development.
2. To dig out the factors involved in hindering women's education in Balochistan.
3. To draft productive ways forward for enhancing women's role in sustainable development.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

1. There is a significant relationship between women's education and sustainable development.
2. There is a significant relationship between cultural practices and women's role in development.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study research is quantitative in nature where the type of this study was exploratory. The current study was conducted in the Makran division, Baluchistan. The researchers selected purposive sampling technique from the nonprobability sampling method to select respondents from the population. The data was collected from 150 Baloch women including students, working women, and housewife's living in districts Gwadar, Kech, and Panjgur, 50 from each district using a close-ended questionnaire as a tool of data collection where the data was analyzed with the help of SPSS.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Table 1: *Frequency distribution of demographic characteristics of the respondents*

Age	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
18 to 28 years	127	84.7	84.7
29 to 39 years	21	14.0	98.7
40 to 50 years	2	1.3	100.0
Total	150	100.0	

Marital Status	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Married	46	30.7	30.7
Unmarried	104	69.3	100.0
Total	150	100.0	
Family status	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Joint	80	53.3	53.3
Nuclear	70	46.7	100.0
Total	150	100.0	
Education	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Uneducated	4	2.7	2.7
Matric	13	8.7	11.3
Intermediate	49	32.7	44.0
Bachelors	53	35.3	79.3
Masters	18	12.0	91.3
M.Phil.	13	8.7	100.0
Total	150	100.0	
Occupation	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Housewife	24	16.0	16.0
Teacher/lecturer	25	16.7	32.7
Doctor	6	4.0	36.7
Civil Servant	12	8.0	44.7
Student	36	24.0	68.7
Businesswomen	4	2.7	71.3
Health worker	11	7.3	78.7
Others	32	21.3	100.0
Total	150	100.0	

The above is about the demographics of female respondents, which shows that the highest 84.7% of respondents were between the ages of 18 to 28 years, while the second highest 14.1% of respondents were between the ages of 29 to 39 years, meanwhile, 1.3% of respondents were between the ages of 40 to 50 years. However, the table indicates that 69.7% of the respondents were unmarried and 20.7% were married. The above table also indicates the family status of the respondents where the highest 53.3% of respondents live in a joint family system and the remaining 46.7% of respondents live in a nuclear family system.

This table also shows the education level of the respondents, according to which the highest 35.3% of respondents' education was bachelor's and the second highest 32.7% of respondents' education level was intermediate. Moreover, 12% of respondents' education level was master's and 8.7% were M. Phil and Matric and the lowest 2.7% of respondents were uneducated. This table also reflects the occupation data of the respondents where the highest 24% of respondents were students and 16.7 % were

teachers and lecturers however 16% were housewives and 8% were civil servants and the rest were businesswomen, health workers, etc.

Table 2: Frequency distribution according to completion of desired education?

Completed Desire Education	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	48	32.0	32.0
No	102	68.0	100.0
Total	150	100.0	

The above is about the competition of respondents' education, which shows that the highest 68.0% of respondents said they did not complete their desired education while the remaining 31.0% of respondents said they have completed their desired education.

Table 3: Frequency distribution according to the reasons for not completing the desired education.

Reason for Not Completion	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
Due to lack of availability of educational resource	59	19.7%	57.8%
Poor environment in the educational institution	59	19.7%	57.8%
Cultural social and religious practices	50	16.7%	49.0%
Financial barriers	77	25.8%	75.5%
Early marriage	54	18.1%	52.9%
Total	299	100.0%	293.1%

The above table is regarding the reasons for not completing the desired education, which shows that the highest 25% of respondents said that due to financial barriers they did not complete their desired education while the second highest 19.7% did not complete their education due to lack of availability of educational resource and poor environment in the educational institution however 18.1% said due to early marriage they could not complete their desire education while the remaining 16.7% respondents said cultural social and religious practices become the reason of not completion of desire education.

Table 4: Frequency distribution according to community/ society support for female education and appreciation of desired jobs independently in your society?

Community/Society support	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
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Yes	65	43.3	43.3
No	85	56.7	100.0
Total	150	100.0	
Desired jobs independently in your society	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	59	39.3	39.3
No	91	60.7	100.0
Total	150	100.0	

The above table regarding the community/society support for female education and appreciation of desired jobs independently in society. The above shows that 56.7% of respondents said their community and society do not support female education and the remaining 43.3% of respondents said their community and society support female education. However, 60.7% of respondents said they cannot do jobs independently and only 39.3% said they can do jobs independently.

Table 5: Frequency distribution according to any kind of income to bear your family's and own financial needs.

Financial Income	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	60	40.0	40.0
No	90	60.0	100.0
Total	150	100.0	

The above table is regarding any kind of income to bear your family's and own financial needs, the results show that 60% of respondents said they do not have income to bear their financial needs and only 40% of respondents said they have the financial income to bear their needs.

Table 6: Frequency distribution according to taking part in society's developmental activities.

Take part in society's developmental activities	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	47	31.3	31.3
No	103	68.7	100.0
Total	150	100.0	

The above table is regarding taking part in society's developmental activities where 68.7% said they do not take part in society's developmental activities while only 31.1% of respondents they take part in society's developmental activities

Table 7: Frequency distribution according to the women in Balochistan taking part in sustainable development.

Women in Balochistan taking part in sustainable development	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	18	12.0	12.0
Agree	38	25.3	37.3
Neutral	23	15.3	52.7
Disagree	40	26.7	79.3
Strongly Disagree	31	20.7	100.0
Total	150	100.0	

The above table is regarding the opinion of respondents on Balochistan’s women taking part in sustainable development where the highest 26.7% disagree that the women in Balochistan taking part in sustainable development while 20.7 strongly disagree that the women in Balochistan taking part in sustainable development however 25.3 respondents were agree that the women in Balochistan are taking part in sustainable development 12% were strongly agree and 15.3% were neutral.

Table 8: Frequency distribution according to factors affecting female education in Balochistan.

Factors affecting female education in Balochistan	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
Cultural practices	112	25.2%	74.7%
Religious perspective	62	14.0%	41.3%
Poor education infrastructure	105	23.6%	70.0%
Affordability	97	21.8%	64.7%
Political inflammation	68	15.3%	45.3%
Total	444	100.0%	296.0%

The above table is regarding the opinion of respondents on the factors affecting female education in Balochistan where the highest 25.2% said cultural practice is the factor affecting female education in Balochistan while 23.6% said poor education infrastructure and 21.8% said unaffordability is a factor affecting female education in Balochistan however 15.3% said political inflammation and 14.0% said religious perspective is the factors affecting female education in Balochistan.

Table 9: Frequency distribution according to how females can take part in sustainable development in Balochistan.

How females can take part in sustainable development in	Responses	Percent of Cases
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Balochistan	N	Percent	
By providing a higher level of socialization	110	36.7%	73.3%
Political participation	52	17.3%	34.7%
Social and economic empowerment	99	33.0%	66.0%
Indecency in decision-making and minimizing male-dominant perspectives.	39	13.0%	26.0%
Total	300	100.0%	200.0%

The above table is regarding the opinion on how females can take part in sustainable development in Balochistan where the highest 36.7% of respondents said by providing a higher level of socialization we can make Baluchistan’s females capable of taking part in sustainable development in Balochistan while 33% said social and economic empowerment of females can make Baluchistan’s females capable of taking part in sustainable development in Balochistan however 17.3% said political participation and 13% said indecency in decision-making and minimizing male-dominant perspectives can make Baluchistan’s females capable of taking part in sustainable development in Balochistan.

Hypothesis No. 1

Ho: There is a significant relationship between women’s education and sustainable development.

Table 10: *The contingency table illustrates the relationship between women’s education and sustainable development*

Completed your desired education	Take part in developmental activities		Total
	Yes	No	
Yes	12 (15.0)	36 (33.0)	48
No	35 (32.0)	67 (70.0)	102
Total	47	103	150

Interpretation:

Value of the Chi-Square: 1.316

Table value of Chi-Square: 3.84

Level of Significance: 0.05

Degree of Freedom: 1

Result

We find that the computed Chi-Square value is less than 3.841 with 1 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance therefore Ho is accepted, and it is concluded that there is a significant relationship between women’s education and sustainable development. The findings support the results of Reni et al., 2014; Sohail, 2014.

Hypothesis No. 2

Ho: There is a significant relationship between cultural practices and women's role in development.

Table 11: *The contingency table illustrates the relationship between women’s education and sustainable development*

Community/ society supports female education	Take part in developmental activities		Total
	Yes	No	
Yes	18 (20.4)	47 (44.6)	65
No	29 (26.6)	56 (58.4)	85
Total	47	103	150

Interpretation

Value of the Chi-Square: 0.707

Table value of Chi-Square: 3.84

Level of Significance: 0.05

Degree of Freedom: 1

Result

We find that the computed Chi-Square value is less than 3.841 with 1 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance so therefore Ho is accepted, and it is concluded that There is a significant relationship between cultural practices and women's role in development. This is also identified by Faridi et al, 2009 in their research that the cultural practices has a huge association with women's role in development.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of the current research study is to determine the importance of women's education in sustainable development and to dig out the factors involved in hindering women's education in Balochistan. This research also aims to draft productive ways forward for enhancing women's role in sustainable development. The present study

was quantitative in nature and the type of this study was exploratory. The study was conducted in Makran division, Baluchistan. The researchers selected the purposive sampling technique from the nonprobability sampling method to select respondents from the population. The data was collected from 150 Baloch adult women including students, working women, and housewife's living in districts Gwadar, Kech, and Panjgur, 50 from each district using a close-ended questionnaire as a tool of data collection where the data was analyzed with the help of SPSS. The chi-square test was also applied to check the relationship between cultural practices, women's role in development, women's education, and sustainable development. Most of the respondents 84.7% were between the ages of 18 to 28 years, and 69.7% of the respondents were unmarried females, 24% of respondents were students and 16.7% were teachers by profession, the majority of the respondents 35.3% education bachelor's.

The research study indicates that most of the females in Balochistan face issues in the completion of their desired education due to multiple reasons. They skip their education which they dreamed of getting. These are females will not be an active member of society and just become a passive agent in society. These findings are similar to a research study conducted by (Naz Samina, 2003). This research study also aimed to dig out the factors that compel females from getting and completing their desired education, it was identified in the current study that financial barriers, early marriage, lack of availability of educational resources and poor environment in the educational institution are one of the main factors which compel the women in Balochistan to complete their desired education. These findings were also identified in the research conducted by Karar (Kakar et al., 2016).

In Balochistan, the social and cultural practices do not appreciate the environment which promotes women's education. The women's image is developed to be home-oriented and home care rather than come out from the boundaries of the house independently (Shafiq et al., 2018) as in the current study table no 4 shows that 56.7% said their community does not appreciate female education and 60.7% confessed that they cannot do jobs independently. Completion of education and joining the workforce is very important for women as this reflects their participation in sustainable development. The females in Balochistan do not consider themselves to be part of the development workforce as more than 40% of Baloch females living in Balochistan through this research agreed with the above opinion, Bibi 2022 also identified in their research that females are not considered as developing agent of the society (Bibi et al., 2022).

The Baloch females can bitterly take part in sustainable development when they are provided with a high level of socialization and social and economic empowerment,

independency in decision-making, and minimizing the male-dominated society. We have multiple pieces of research that highlighted and supported the idea (Heaton et al, 2005). Education is the only key source for sustainable development, when women have access to education, it opens up a world of possibilities for them. Education equips women with knowledge and skills that can help them secure better job opportunities, earn a living, and contribute to their communities. It also boosts their confidence and self-esteem, empowering them to make informed decisions about their lives. By investing in women's education, we can break the cycle of gender inequality and create a more inclusive society.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and results the below recommendations are drafted.

It is identified that the women in Balochistan drop their education due to the non-availability of educational resources, so this research recommends that access to education should be ensured for all men and women irrespective of gender inequalities.

According to the results, the social, cultural, and religious practices hinder women's education in Balochistan, therefore it is recommended that the mass-level awareness programs should be introduced for the importance of education.

Poverty and financial issues in Balochistan are very high and women cannot afford to get or continue their education to a higher level, so it is suggested special programs should be introduced for women's free education.

It is identified that women in Balochistan are not independent in the selection of their profession which leads to dropping professional activities, so this research recommends that the females should be given indecency in the selection of their profession and desired job.

According to the current study women are not taking part in developmental activities, therefore it is suggested that different programs should be introduced for women to take part in developmental activities.

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