

## Status of Rural Women: Patriarchy and Inevitability of Subjugation; A Study of Rural Area in Multan, Pakistan

Safdar Abbas<sup>1\*</sup>, Muhammad Hashim<sup>2</sup>, Ali Abdullah Mohammed Alzuhairi<sup>3</sup>.

1. School of Education, Southwest University, Chongqing 400715, China.

2. Department of Sociology, University of Sargodha, Pakistan.

3. School of International Studies, Southwest University, Chongqing 400715, China.

\*Correspondence and request for materials should be addressed to Safdar Abbas (safdarbloch1986@yahoo.com).

### ABSTRACT

Women are oppressed in every walk of life but oppression may differ from place to place. Urban Rural divide has shown the different social structures for women. The present research was conducted with these objectives: to identify the status of women in rural settings, to analysis perception of society about social status of women, to explore the impact of Patriarchy on women in context of rural settings of Multan, Pakistan. Mix research methods were used to carry this research. Interviews were conducted from 100 married women, living in rural areas of Multan. A Focus Group Discussion was also conducted to address the research questions. The findings of the study suggest that women's health, education and economic status is poor, whereas women's status stems from patriarchy, the power and controlling structure where men dominates over women. This is patriarchy which maintains the women's submissive role and it generates a structure which subjugates women of rural area. The study suggests that by expanding the canvas of formal economy, it may channelize the women's low paid or unpaid work. This can help enhance women's economic and social status in rural areas.

**Key Words:** Patriarchy, Status of Women, Rural Women, Gender Inequality

### 1.Introduction

There is a long history of patriarchy, an institution to get control and power in society. This politico-social system emphasizes that male dominance is natural and female is to obey them. It maintains men have every right to oppress women and they hold privilege status. It works through internalizing its core values by socialization process. In this sense, women and men become the strength of patriarchy (Hook, 2013). The term "patriarchy" hold central position in feminist literature. Its use meant to highlight existing inequalities between women and men at every level including household to societal level. There are new forms of patriarchy where a woman wants to preserve their supremacy over another woman within the household. This is known as neo patriarchy. There are different power hierarchies within family to oppress women, in this view, by women. The result of this may be domestic violence due to clash of interest by different forces working to hold power. This, once again, increases women's dependency on family (Rehman, 2009; Sultana, 2012).

According to Global gender Gap Report 2012, presented in World Economic forum, Pakistan stands 134<sup>th</sup> position out of 135 countries. It can be said this country is worst place for women to stay. Whereas, Pakistan ranks 123<sup>th</sup> in Gender Inequality Index, out of 180 countries. Women's low participation in economic, social and political sphere has many causes. Women lack job opportunities and to attain the rights. This situation leads women to be regarded as deprived class, this maintains male dominance in society (Kazmi, 2005: 94). In the educational sector, poor infrastructure, social relations and perception about women in education is not in their favor. Moreover, poverty plays an important role to restrict women from education (Sheikh, 2009).

There is further divide in a society where women are deal differently, known as urban rural divide. Public and private spheres create the other form of oppression. All these divides have certain impact on the status

of women. There exist gender discriminatory laws and misogynistic culture that restricts development. Only 3 percent women own land, a vast majority of them do not have right to move in public life independently due to patriarchal customs. According to a report, published by Multan Civil Society Network states 27 percent cases of violence against women, occurred in Multan last year, this includes honor killing, kidnaping, setting fire, rape, Wani, police torture, killings and domestic abuse. Multan is witnessed 123 violence against women out of 464 cases in south Punjab.

The important point is that from the independence, Pakistan generated laws to protect women in public and private sphere. There was a great difference between women and men when Pakistan came into being (Weiss 2012: 3). Constitution of Pakistan clearly states there shall be no discrimination on the basis of sex, and steps will be taken let women participate in all walks of life. State is to protect marriage, family, mother and child. After the 18<sup>th</sup> amendment, it is the responsibility of provisional government to grant and safeguard women's autonomy and to uplift the social status of women (UNDP, 2013). Policy implementation always remained a challenge, and still social status of women is lag behind.

Pakistan has signed certain international and regional conventions which ensures gender equality and rights in every sphere. United National Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and Beijing Plan of Action are the treaties which Pakistan has signed and ratified. Pakistan has shown commitment to work with every means, and without delay, to implement policy that ensures to eliminate discrimination of women. This is the reason the country has to have remove distinction, exclusion or restriction, based on sex. On basis of gender equality between men and women, there are fundamental rights and freedom (UN, 2011: 19). Islam is the religion that provides equal status of women in different walks of life including right to divorce, land rights etc. Women can buy, sell, earn money, can do a job in public place, according to Islam. It also ensures women's autonomous identity (Adeel 2010: 106). Moreover, inheritance rights are given to women in Islam. As time goes by, this gender equality turned to and mixed with misogynistic culture, degrading women. Culture plays important role in shaping women's status, which is patriarchal in its nature. Religion is compromised in Pakistan with gender biasness, in the absence of equality violence becomes a law.

Previously, researches emphasis was confined to substitutive measures or they were confined to only urban locale. In this regard (Sathar, &Kazi, 2000) highlighted the ingredients of rural women's autonomy in Pakistan. They showed that women in northern Punjab have greater mobility while they have low economic autonomy as compare to southern Punjab women. Gender system worked as key factor in this regard. Economic autonomy has uncertain effect on women's freedom. Although labor force participation is high in rural areas as compare to urban, but, women's autonomy is challenged by the cultural beliefs that dictate misogyny. Education plays important role but it has no positive effect on women's freedom in case of rural Punjab. Their mobility helps them to go beyond four walls but patriarchal culture restricts them to be a first-class citizen. Moreover, their paid work is turned to low paid work due to systematic subjugation of women.

Patriarchy is not new phenomenon, states Ume Habiba et. al. (2016), since decades feminists focused on power use against women to control them by men. The study explored type of patriarchy, within household, which oppresses women's status. The data for this study was collected through case studies method including focus group discussion, using qualitative research techniques. Results showed that women internalize patriarchal values in their early age through gender socialization. This socialization continues after marriage, in-laws become oppressor. In-laws, in this sense, help men to maintain control over women. All the process end in women's subjugation and women's control over other women while supporting the power structure.

Women are confined to live within four walls most of their life span, they are allowed to go in public independently in emergency cases, sometimes even not allowed in emergency cases. In this regard Mahmood, & Bashir (2012), asserted that inequity patterns hurdle illiterate and poor women's access to obstetric services. Researchers have analyzed secondary data, Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey (PDHS), of two decades. They also showed decline in inequity from urban areas while it is shifting towards rural locales too. There is a significant effect of education on usage and selection of health services. Although women participate in agriculture sector on massive scale but they have limited access to economic or social opportunities. The other study conducted by Amir et.al. (2009) showed men dominate and control most activities while women perform remarkable contributions including crops binding, threshing and harvesting, and preparing land. Whereas women's participation is higher in picking vegetables and seed cleaning. Rural women work in the fields and at home as well, but deprived of their basic rights. Systematic controlling system is patriarchy which has oppressed

women in Pakistan at both public and private spheres, asserted Samina&Manzoor, (2012). They studied experiences of inequalities faced while at home and in public life.

Rural women significantly participate in the fields and in household chores including looking after animals, reported Government of Pakistan (2012). Kumar and Vargese (2005) admitted that rural women have least opportunities and they are oppressed by men. Violence against women costs tremendously and its consequences are prevalent in every country (Levy, 2008). One in three women is the victim of violence in all over the world, reveals Population Information Program (1999). The most important tool of patriarchy is to control over women's sexuality Ilkharacan (2000, p.1). Contribution of women in public life is not recognized by the family and the society in India, showed Acharya (1993). Aurat Foundation (2011), reported there are 8 women to be rape daily in Pakistan, half of the victims are minor. Saigol (1995) stated that family institution is considered sacred in Pakistan, one cannot even attack this institution. Babar (2007) asserted that lack of economic opportunities and education restrict women's potential to realize their citizen rights.

Women in Pakistan faced a violent form of patriarchy which restrict their social status as vulnerable to men. Situation further deteriorates when rural and urban divides their social status, this makes the situation more complex. One thing is clear that rural women are less likely to be educated and have least access to public services because infrastructure for these services is not as good as in urban areas. Such inequity leads to more aggressive and illogical form of patriarchy in rural areas, where women work in the fields and at home as well. Thus, it is of paramount significance to explore the impact of patriarchy on the social status of women.

### **1.1 Significance of the Study**

Pakistan had failed to achieve Millennium Development Goal 4 and 5 in 2015, and still ranked at second last position in Gender Inequality Index. Local dynamics have its own impact on women's social status. The urban-rural divide indicates different social status of women. While it is known majority of Pakistan's population live in rural areas, it is important to find out social status of rural women and what patriarchy effects their status.

### **1.2 Objectives of the Study**

- To explore rural women's status
- To analysis opinion of society about women's social status
- To find out impact of Patriarchy on social status of women

## **2. Methodology**

Mix research methods were used to carry this research. Interviews were conducted, using survey method, from 100 married women, living in rural areas of Multan. Interview schedule was used as a tool for data collection and descriptive analysis is conducted. A Focus Group Discussion was also conducted to address the research questions. Six men, including a lawyer, a teacher, a health worker, a politician, and two women were requested to participate in Focus Group Discussion.

### **2.1 Sampling**

Two union councils were selected from rural areas of Multan, using purposive sampling technique. Those union councils were selected that were of most populated. Researcher used convenient sampling to reach the respondents.

## **3. Results**

South Punjab is mainly an agriculture-based economy and have least infrastructural development when compare to north and central Punjab. Cotton picking is performed by only women, and they also harvest vegetables and chilies. Embroidery and stitching cloths etc. are the other income generating activities for women. Moreover, as compare to central and north Punjab, the southern Punjab is least developed in terms of facilities.

**Table: 1. Distribution of Respondents by Education**

Education	Frequency	Percentage
Illiterate	54	54.0
Primary	42	42.0
Middle	3	3.0
Matric and above	1	1.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table number 1 shows that a significant number of respondents, 54 percent, were illiterate. Primary education was received by 42 percent and only 3 and 1 percent of respondents have received middle and matric level education respectively. Education plays an important role in uplifting the status of women, here it indicates that education level of respondents is not up to the mark. It shows the dichotomy of urban rural divide, in terms of educational attainment. Patriarchal influence makes its way systematically, to let women remain illiterate or have minimum level of education. Culturally, women are deprived to their right to education. Religious orthodoxies restrict women's active role in a society.

**Table: 2. Distribution of Respondents by Occupation**

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Land lord	1	1.0
Employ	3	3.0
Laborer	44	44.0
Beggar	15	15.0
Others	20	20.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Table shows occupation wise distribution of resources, with majority (44 percent) of them work as laborer, only 3 percent were employed and 15 percent of them were beggars. This indicates women's occupational status; significant number of respondents work in the field of agriculture. They cultivate different crops, and they have to perform household chores too. This makes their life more vulnerable and hectic. This work is low paid as compare to their male counterparts. Women are double burdened in this regard because they have to work within the house and as laborer in the fields. This is what patriarchy wants from women, work as hard as they can, under the control of men. Moreover, 15 percent of beggar respondents depict most vulnerable women, whom are systematically denied to their right to be human.

**Table: 3. Status of Women in Private Sphere**

	Less than two hours	More than two hours
<b>Time Spent on Cocking in a day</b>	74	26
<b>Time Spent on cleaning house in a day</b>	40	60
<b>Time Spent on washing clothes in a day</b>	45	55

The table number 3 highlighted that those respondents who spent less than two hours on cooking, were significant majority (74 percent) whereas, only 26 percent spent more than two hours. The join and nuclear

family is depicted in this wide gap. Women in nuclear family are unlikely to spent more time in cooking than the women of joint family. Importantly, this unpaid work of women, in both either nuclear or joint family, is not even considered paid within the intellectual discourse of feminists of Pakistan. The time spent cleaning the house is the indicator that describes not only women's role but their ascribed status as well. Culturally, women are to live their whole life within four walls and they have to perform unpaid work including household chores. The 60 percent said they spent more than two hours whereas 40 percent of the respondent stated they spent less than two hours while cleaning the house. Washing clothes are among other works attached with women's traditional role. The 45 percent of respondents said they spent less than two hours washing cloths and significant number of them stated they spent more than two hours. Patriarchy limits women's economic opportunities, this is the reason, culturally women's household works are unpaid.

**Table: 4. Distribution of Women's Social Status (in Percentage)**

	Yes	No
<b>Access to Health Services</b>	58	42
<b>Access to Clean Drinking Water</b>	25	75
<b>Own any Land</b>	11	89
<b>Work to Earn for their Family</b>	59	41
<b>Can Make Decision about family matters</b>	41	59
<b>Ever beaten by husband or in-laws</b>	48	52
<b>Ever been seriously ill</b>	41	59

Table number 4 shows 58 percent women have access to health services and 42 percent said they have no access. Women are, socially and culturally, not allowed to be in public life without any male member of society. There is a considerable of respondents who have no access to available health services. This systematic exclusion of poor and rural women, indicates the patriarchal grip over women's social status. Significant majority of respondents (75) have no access to drinking water and remaining do have this access. The figures are alarming that majority of women are not even getting the clean drinking water, making women vulnerable to water-born diseases. This is systematic deprivation of women under the world of men.

A vast majority of rural women do not have ownership of tangible assets; this shows the economical vulnerability of women which is persistent by the patriarchal structure. Historically and systematically deprivation of women's access to economical assets is fact that describes women's social status, particularly of rural women. Those married women who own any land are less likely to be divorced, the process is actually maintaining the patriarchal equilibrium. A significant number of women (59) work to earn for their family, although this is low paid than men. The low paid work is the reason to let women work in the public life, but this make their life more oppressed than the other women because they have to work household chores. Their job in the public life and work at home, such a status is consistent in the system of patriarchy.

Another finding suggests that significant number of women (56) are not even allowed to make final decisions regarding family matters whereas remaining are likely to be those who own any land or work to earn for their family. Family is the basic unit of society, but women on massive scale are deprived of the right to make decisions independently. They are oppressed by the structure of male dominance. Nearly half of the women (48) has been ever beaten by their in-laws or husband and remaining said they have never been beaten. Continuation of violence against women, while several women centered legislation has been made, is core value of patriarchy. The process shapes women's social status, the process of control over power. Men hold power over women through or by the violence against women. Social status of women is constructed in a way that women can idealize only a submissive role and then to perform after internalizing patriarchal values.

Serious illness is traumatic to the patience yet 41 percent of women has been seriously ill once in their life, whereas remaining 59 percent said they have never encountered serious illness. Health status of women is alarming to public health stakeholders, a threat that has no political will. Patriarchy at its work. The result is women's poor social status, and this process is consistent. Reforms are dealing with women victims of certain class or region but poor rural women are the victims of the system first, secondly they are servant to their men.

### **3.1 Focus Group Discussion**

A focus group discussion was conducted to identify and analyze the perception of community about social status of women. For this purpose, rural area's men and women from different social backgrounds were contacted. Six men, including a lawyer, a teacher, a health worker, a politician, and two women were requested to participate in Focus Group Discussion.

Lawyer asserted social status of women is quite low compare to men, women are confined to four walls or they go to work against low wages. Moreover, women are deprived in the field of law, which is systematic subjugation of women. This is also linked with the cultural beliefs that women must not be given land rights. Teacher highlighted women's educational status, which is quite low in case of enrollment. He said girls are sent to school but they don't get any support from family or public life about getting higher education. Women are considered a burden on the family, so that families, particularly the poor ones, don't allow them to study. Moreover, girls are meant to be live within four walls due to household chores, it is perceived. This leads to their subjugation.

Health worker showed women's health status, which is quite low as compare to their male members. Women are not allowed to visit even doctors, even when they are seriously ill. This makes their life more vulnerable. Their dependency on men, as dictated by culture, leads them to be the second-class citizens. State approves low budget for public health, that make poor women, particularly of rural area, subjected to be vulnerable to diseases. A local politician asserted that women are deprived because they are unable to challenge or face the public world, this makes their position very poor. He asserted women must be trained in such a way that they may face any situation to uplift their social status. Although he believed "Women are to bear children, they have to perform their duty within the four walls, so that no one can put finger on their character". Such a perception about women in the rural settings describe how their social status is seen without gender sensitivity, moreover, their perception works as agent of patriarchy to keep women under subjugation. A female participant said women are to live their life within four walls, but if necessary women should work to enhance their family's economic status. They believe women should get education to challenge their current unbearable social status.

### **3.2 Conclusion**

The study was aim to identify social status of rural women and impact of patriarchy on it. The results reveal rural women's poor health, economic, social and educational status is maintained by patriarchy to keep them under men's control. Significant number of rural women work as cheap labor in the fields, though women get economic benefits but on the behalf of their double-burdened life, making them more vulnerable to violence. What women's social status is perceived by rural community, focus group discussion revealed the fact that their status is considered under complete men's control. What "woman" is perceived under rural settings is a submissive role of women, which reflects in the social status of rural women. Those women who live within the lines of social status accepted by men, they can live their life submissively but others have to live on the margins. Patriarchy has strong grips in Pakistan, particularly in rural areas, where women's social status is maintained by patriarchal structure.

### **3.3 Suggestions**

There is a dire need to fight systematic-working patriarchy with systematic struggle. Rural women contribute in agriculture on massive scale and yet have poor social status within their vicinity. The finding of the study reveals certain suggestions to mitigate the problem.

- Policy must reflect to formalize the agriculture sector, so that women workers may get equal pay for equal work, avoid harassment and have social security.
- Government need to end gender discriminatory laws, so that women will feel state is supportive to their rights
- Gender sensitizing is the main source of knowledge to fight patriarchy, this may be done through comprehensive awareness campaigns



- Females should be encouraged to get education, for this reason, governments need a special focus on girl's education. Education is the important tool to challenge ignorance.
- Government should train women in industrial or services sectors, which are male dominated, so that stereotypes about women, as dictated by patriarchy, can be fought.
- Government need to increase health budget so that women may get standardized medical care and states must need to provide quality food to every citizen, especially the rural women.

## References

- Acharya, J. (1994). *Women in Development: The Sericulture Experience in India*. New Delhi: Indian Publishers.
- Adeel, G. H. (2010). "Status of Women in Islam: A Critical Analysis on a Matter of Equality", *Message of Thaqaalayn*, 11(1): 101-114.
- Amir, H., Ali, T., Ahmad, M., & Zafar, M. I. (2009). Participation level of rural women in agricultural activities. *Pak. J. Agri. Sci*, 46(4), 294-301.
- Babar, Z. U. (2007). *Violence Against Women in Pakistan: Current realities and strategies for change*. Austria: European University Centre for Peace Studies.
- Government of Pakistan, (2012). *Situation Analysis of Children and Women in Pakistan*, Islamabad: United Nations Children's Fund.
- Habiba, A, Rabia A., &Asia A. (2016). From Patriarchy to Neo patriarchy: Experiences of Women from Pakistan. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*. 6(3).
- Hook, B. (2013). *Understanding Patriarchy*, [imagineborders.org/pdf/zines/Understanding Patriarchy.pdf](http://imagineborders.org/pdf/zines/Understanding_Patriarchy.pdf)  
Retrieved on May 22, 2016 from <http://www.dawn.com/news/1060643/violenceagainst-women>.
- Ilkharacan, P. (2000). *Women and sexuality in Muslim societies*, Turkey: Women for women's Human rights.
- Isran, S., &Isran, M. A. (2012). Patriarchy and Women in Pakistan: A Critical Analysis *Interdisciplinary Journal of Contemporary Research in Business*. *Institute of Interdisciplinary Business Research*. 4(6).
- Kazmi, S. W. (2005). Role of education in globalization: A case for Pakistan. *SAARC journal of human resource development*, 1(1), 90-107.
- Kumar, H. & Varghese, J. (2005). *Women's Empowerment Issues and Strategies: Source Book*. New Delhi: Regency Publications.
- Levy, B., (2008). *Women and Violence*, California: Seal Press.
- Mahmood, N., & Bashir, S. (2012). Applying an equity lens to maternal health care practices in Pakistan. *Working Papers & Research Reports*,2012.
- Population Information Program. (1999). *Ending Violence Against Women*. USA: Centre for Health and Gender Equity, The Johns Hopkins University School of Public Health.
- Rehman, F. (2009). Violence against women turning from bad to worse. *Retrieved on October, 12, 2016, from* <http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-englishonline/>.
- Saigol, R. (1995). *Knowledge and the production of identity: educational discourse in Pakistan*. Lahore: ASR Publications.

---

Sathar, Z. A., &Kazi, S. (2000). Women's autonomy in the context of rural Pakistan. *The Pakistan Development Review*, 89-110.

Sheikh, S. (2009). Problems of Pakistani Women, Lecture delivered on 14 May, 2009 at Institute of Policy Studies: Islamabad.

Sultana, A. (2012). Patriarchy and women's subordination: A theoretical analysis. *Arts Faculty Journal*, 4, 1-18.

UN (2011), Forgotten Dowry: A socially endorsed form of violence in Pakistan, Accessed on 16 March. 2016, URL: [http://www.sachet.org.pk/web/user\\_files/File/Forgotten.pdf](http://www.sachet.org.pk/web/user_files/File/Forgotten.pdf).

UNDP (2013), "Human Development Report 2013", Accessed on 17 may. 2016, URL: <http://hdrstats.undp.org/images/explanations/pak.pdf>.