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Female Illiteracy in Panjgran Kalan, Gujar Khan

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Abstract: *The focus of the study was to define the reasons for female illiteracy in the area of Panjgran Kalan, Gujar Khan, Pakistan. Education is a basic right to humanity irrespective of gender, race, ethnicity or any other identity. But there are certain regions of the world where education is ignored. Females are the ones who are most probably affected, increasing the female illiteracy rate. In such a scenario, the locale of Panjgran Kalan was addressed. The data was collected by the use of in-depth interviews, for which an interview guide was used as a tool of study. Out of the total population of 2049 with households of 355, only 36 households were addressed due to covid-19. Results indicated that there were multiple reasons for female illiteracy in the village of Panjgran Kalan such as early marriage, traditional boundaries, poverty, long-distance from school, lack of awareness, ignorance, poor infrastructure of the school.*

Key Words: Female Illiteracy, Early Marriage, Poverty, Poor Education, Poor Infrastructure of schools

Introduction

Education is considered a basic right of every person. It plays an important role and is essential for the development of any country. On the other hand, the literacy rate of rural areas is very low. Specifically, female illiteracy is high in rural regions where female education

has become a major issue. As Community, country and nation cannot develop without the contribution of women. Women have to achieve status in economic and political development. In some societies, women are considered the heart of societies and

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communities. They are required to perform three main roles in our life such as daughter, wife and mother. Their performance or the involvement in development sector can be enhanced by education or gaining skills.

The primary support system is family. Relating to female education parents are considered the major contributors. As they play important role in girls' life. They also help them in promoting their talent and abilities. On the other hand, most parents do not allow girls to get an education. One of the reasons is that they are against the coeducation system which is common in this contemporary world. Some students consider coeducation as a tool for enhancing the confidence-building process ([Porter, 2016](#)). Therefore, informal and formal trainings are needed for the improvement of the education system. Parents in rural areas are more traditional and therefore they are unaware of the importance of female education; the government should organise workshops for students' parents ([Mahmood, Hussain, & Mehmood, 2005](#)).

There are certain parents who show a positive attitude towards female education. Campaign through mass media is established. A negative attitude is a big hurdle in the way of female education. Previous education is considered unimportant or uncertain. Gender differences prevail in rural societies. Parents show negative attitudes or low involvement in girls' education ([Dornbusch & Ritter, 1988](#)). Cultural factors play a very effective role ([Sen, 1992](#)). Girl's dropout ratio increases with an increasing pattern of discrimination or inequality treatment. The teachers in Pakistan are not well trained and skilled. They should need to attend workshops and organizational meetings.

The majority of the people are poor. Male are labours and females are housewives. The

education of parents is very low. So, they have a positive attitude towards female education. A favourable attitude enhanced the parent's involvement in girls' education. There are many causes of illiteracy such as poverty, long distance to school and colleges, financial issues, shortage of teachers and lack of resources. These causes are a big hurdle in the way of female education ([Jan & Sharma, 2019](#)). Several studies have identified various causes of female illiteracy, including poverty, a lack of resources, gender inequalities, societal and parental attitudes. The nation's development is dependent not only on literacy but also on female literacy. A nation cannot develop if women are not educated.

Mostly girls face transport problems. Schools and colleges are at long distances. They do not travel because parents are unable to pay buses to fares. They cannot afford it due to poverty ([Mehdi, 2007](#)). Cultural barriers effects female education. In tribal areas females are strictly bound to follow the principles of their culture otherwise they are punished ([Evans & Davies, 1993](#)). Dropout percentage increases in communities where schools are located far away from the societies and communities ([Afridi, 2006](#)). Reward and motivational alternation are very important in public management. Education is improved by regular testing of children, in results produce better results. Parents, as well as students, are satisfied by the improvement of education ([Filmer & Pritchett, 1999](#)).

Literature Review

[Murtaza \(2013\)](#) stated that education is important for females, furthermore he discussed some factors which are vital and facilitate women's education in Pakistan. Education of women not only increase the productivity of the country but also produce a

skilled labour force that is capable of growth and leading toward the pathway of development and prosperity. When international donor agencies and governments work together and put in an effort, then there will be hope for change. Meanwhile, [Alkman and Rao \(2012\)](#) also emphasize the education of women, where he described that the quality of education requires the understanding of the ways in which inequalities interrelate and seeking multi-faceted strategies that are not only concerned with female education and lives but also recognized the gender relationships and removing of inequalities between men, women, boys and girls”.

By taking the previous statements in view, [Oztunc, Oo, and Serin \(2015\)](#) described that female participation are found to be having a great impact on the economic growth of the country. [Rehman, Jingdong and Hussain \(2015\)](#) conducted research on the province-wise literacy rate in Pakistan and its impacts on the country's economy. The literacy rate in 2012 was 56% with which both males and females are included from urban to rural areas. This study shows that half of the population of the country contribute to the development of the economy. Punjab is the most popular province. The literacy rate in 1972 and 1978 were decreased but in 2012-2014 literacy rate increased. Improvements occur in elementary schools. Sindh is the most populated province but education facilities are not provided to each. The literacy rate in KPK, Gilgit, Baltistan is very low. These provinces contain many problems including mountains etc. So, there is a problem in building the schools and colleges. Few of them are getting access to secondary and university levels. Early marriages are common. Parent thinks that girls are born to be married. Parents and the people of the community are uneducated so they

cannot interpret the value of female education. Government should improve the country's literacy rate. Large population and poverty play a negative impact on the country.

In regard to the rural areas' education system, [Montero and Tovar \(1999\)](#) discussed the difficult life of teachers and students in the rural region. As there is a harsh environment because there are no such facilities or resources to be available in rural schools. These facilities include drinking water, sanitation and electricity. Teachers in Peru, are less experienced and are more aged as compared to urban teachers. According to these researchers, the training facilities are not arranged for the teachers. Most of the time is wasted on celebrating the extra-curricular events. There is no proper education system in rural areas such as Peru. Parents in Peru are illiterate, they are unaware of the importance of education.

In Latin America, poverty is at its highest peak. In all of these cases, education is the only solution, with the help of education people seek knowledge, obtains jobs, increase income and reduce poverty. In this regard, [Stromquist \(2001\)](#) stated that poverty exists all over the world. One needs to Focus on educational institutions, organize new policies for the improvement of the education system. Problems are still present in rural areas, Parents in rural areas are unable to provide primary education to their children.

The education system is also not good in Latin America, they provide a reward to higher social classes and ignore the rights or values of the children of poor people. Women face many problems in the way of education. They face gender discrimination, inequality and ignorance in society. They are considered a burden in the family. [Gebreyess and Mohammed \(2019\)](#) claimed that the parents have an idea about the importance of female

education but in reality, they are not giving equal importance to education to girls as boys. Therefore, the Girls are unsatisfied with their education system. As their dropout ratio is higher than boys. On the contrary to this, [Mathangwane and Arua \(2006\)](#) stated that parents show a positive attitude toward children reading. They are aware of the importance of female education. Education is basically the transfer of skills and knowledge from one person to another [Saqib and Ahmad \(2014\)](#).

[Odusolaetal., \(2017\)](#) researchers conducted research to study the gender inequalities in Africa. When men and women are working together to promote the development of the country. Equal rights are not provided to each. The people of Africa face many problems like Hunger, Poverty, Live in small houses and Starvation. Equal opportunities both for men and women in promotion, training, employment and benefits. They focused on removing the gender gap between men and women. [Devi \(1992\)](#) reported that India is a highly populated country. Poverty is at its highest peak. The people who live in rural areas face many problems. The education rate in India is very low. [Saeed, Soomro, and Abro \(2012\)](#) stated that the status of women's education is unsatisfactory. They cannot enrol in a school for getting an education. Early marriages are a major hurdle in the way of female education. And also, women are not supported to get an education as the study by [Han \(2014\)](#) suggested that the girls are born

to get married. They live in Poverty, Suffer domestic violence, Harassment, Physical violence, Sexual abuse and Rape cases. [Zarar, Bukhsh, and Khaskhali \(2017\)](#) stated that gender inequality causes negative effects on the lives of females.

Methodology

The research was conducted in Village Panjgran Kalan, Tehsil Gujar Khan, Punjab, district Rawalpindi, Pakistan. The respondents selected from the village included parents, teachers of government schools, girls and community people. The total number of households was 355 but due to the condition of COVID-19, only 36 households agreed to give data. The data was collected from respondents by conducting in-depth interviews. A total of 36 interviews were arranged from each household. The method of interview proved to be a very helpful research method as it allowed interviewers to elucidate their answers from their own perspectives ([Goldbart & Hustler, 2005](#)).

For conducting the interview, the researcher used the tool interview guide for data collection. It contained a list of questions, which were easily understandable. A qualitative interview assists to collect information relating to a specific topic ([Knight, 2013](#)).

Results

The data was collected from 9 males and 27 females. The respondents were mostly the school teachers of the village

Table 1. Sex Ratio of the *Respondents*

Sex	Ratio	Frequency
Male	9	25
Female	27	75
Total	36	100

There are a number of reasons identified which causes female illiteracy through the literature review, while some were indicated in

the current research which was leading to female illiteracy in Panjgran Kalan.

Table 2. Reasons for Female Illiteracy

Reasons Identified Of Female Illiteracy	Yes	No
Coeducation	31%	70%
Early marriage	81%	19%
Traditional boundaries	81%	19%
Poor family	91%	5%
Long-distance to school	83%	17%
Poor infrastructure of schools	58%	36%

Coeducation

The respondents were asked about their perspectives on the co-education system. They were asked if they feel uncomfortable with their females studying in co-education to which they gave their responses. The majority of the responses were in favour that they do not have any issue with studying in co-education. The table shows that only 30 per cent of respondents were against coeducation and 70 percent were not against coeducational institutions. Some parents believed that coeducation is helpful for building confidence in girls.

While those people who were against coeducation wanted the government should need to establish separate institutions for both boys and girls (Eram, 2017). But majority having no issue relates that the people of Panjgran had an acceptance of co-education system. But there is still a need for Government to arrange workshops for parents who do not understand the importance of female education and are against coeducation. As young generation have the view that coeducation assists in a better way of building self-confidence (Mahmood, Hussain, & Mehmood, 2005).

Table 3. Co-education as a Reason for Female Illiteracy

Are you against coeducation ?	Frequency	Percent
Yes	11	30.55556
No	25	69.44444
Total	36	100

Early Marriages

The female of the Panjgran Kalan was married at a young age. So, when the researcher asked about early marriage as a reason for female illiteracy, most respondents agreed. After the marriage, females had many other responsibilities to fulfil and were not able to

continue their education. The table shows that 80 percent of respondents agreed with early marriages as the main hurdle in the way of education. As most of the girls were getting married between the age of 18 to 20. But 20 percent of respondents thought that even if the girls were married at the age of 18 to 20, they

could continue their education with the help of their in-laws. They thought that gaining education after marriage depend upon their interest in getting an education and seeking knowledge. After marriage, the standard of life was changed as well as the priorities, due to

which females do not pursue their education. Moreover, early marriages are common in Pakistan. Most parents who live in rural areas think that girls are born to be married ([Rehman, Jingdong and Hussain \(2015\)](#)).

Table 4. Early Marriage as a Reason for Female Illiteracy

Early marriages are the main problem so girls can't go to school?	Frequency	Percent
Yes	29	80.55556
No	7	19.44444
Total	36	100

Traditional Boundaries

Traditional boundaries did not mean the strict environment and cultural objection to female education. But it referred to early marriage, gender role specification, responsibilities etc.

the data indicated that 29 percent of respondents were agreed that traditional boundaries were a hurdle in the way of female education but 7 percent were not agreed upon such a scenario.

Table 5. Traditional *Boundaries* is major *Hurdle* in the way of *Female Education*

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Yes	29	80.55556
No	7	19.44444
Total	36	100

Parent Poverty

Education had always been a treasure but now it has become costly. As in the current age, one has to pay a handsome amount in order to get well-educated. It has become a business for many, so it does not suit those who are economically not well. Relating to the research locale, the data indicated that, poverty was a

reason for female illiteracy. Most of the parents faced poverty, as they were working as labour to earn money. They could hardly earn 3 to 6000 per month. So, they could not afford the expenses of education. Also, in Africa where parents and children were facing poverty, and equal rights were not provided, education got affected by parents' poverty and the illiteracy rate increased ([Oduola et al., 2017](#)).

Table 6. Poverty as Reason for Female Illiteracy

Parents' poverty is the major Hindrance to female Education	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	15	41.66667
Agree	18	50
Neutral	2	5.555556

Parents' poverty is the major Hindrance to female Education	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	1	2.777778
Total	36	100

Long Distance

In the village-like Panjgran Kalan, it was not possible for the female to travel alone for long distances. While males of the family were also busy with other economic work. While the schools were at long distances which the respondents consented that it created a problem for families and children if females go

to school for education. The table shows the majority i.e., 83.33% agreed while only 16.67% disagreed. In village Panjgrankalan, only primary education was given to the children, and they had to go to other villages and cities for getting matric and higher education. Thus long distances created problems for female literacy ([Jan & sherma, 2019](#))

Table 7. Long-distance to school as Reason of Female Illiteracy

Long distance creates problems for children's and family	Frequency	Percent
Yes	30	83.33333
No	6	16.66667
Total	36	100

Poor Government School Infrastructure

Another problem identified was the poor infrastructure of the schools. The data in the table shows that some respondents agreed that the infrastructure of schools affects the education of children. Infrastructure includes

school equipment like furniture, washrooms etc. They affect not only girls but also the education of boys. The lack of washrooms caused many problems for girls mostly in village life. Water scarcity is another major problem. They also affect the educational system.

Table 8. Poor Infrastructure of School as a Reason for Female Illiteracy

Government infrastructure is the cause of female illiteracy	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	4	11.11111
Agree	17	47.22222
Neutral	2	5.55556
Disagree	13	36.11111
Total	36	100

However, the present research was conducted on female illiteracy in Village Panjgran Kalan, which was a very small village. And the Educational facilities were not provided there. Schools and colleges were at long distances;

thus, girls could not go too far off places to get an education. Most of the people were uneducated, so this was the reason people could not understand the importance of female education. But on the other hand, after the

research, the researcher has addressed some other issues which include the perspectives of the women of that village, who were not interested in getting an education. There is a number of reasons behind their perspective, which is one of the poor facilities there. Therefore, this research addressed the issues faced by women in gaining education whether it's the poor facilities or the other barriers.

Discussion

The researcher discussed the girl's views, teacher's views, parent's views and community people's views towards the education of women. The discussions were drawn upon the basis of data that was collected from the respondents. Girls between the age of 15 to 20 were having the point of view that education is important both for boys and girls. Most girls also got enrolled in school and colleges. But colleges were located at a long distance from the village PanjgranKalan. Girls had to travel from one village to another for sake of getting an education. There were certain cases where some girls were dropped out of school or college because their father died, and after the death of their father, they face many problems like poverty, Early marriages, religious constraints etc making it impossible for them to get educated. Some of them also had a point of view that after getting an education they could be able to acquire equal rights at the home, in society and in the country. Education could have also improved the living standard of life and they could support their family.

According to the girls' point of view, inequality affects the girl's education. The gender gap also affects the education of girls. They thought that they were living in a male-dominated society, everything was provided to the male members of the family such that, better food, education etc. Because they were considered the future earner. It was also easy

for males to move from one place to another, but not for girls. There was a school in the village that was considered in the study.

The total population of the school was 100, 48 girls and 52 boys. According to the principal of the school, the quality of education had been improved in discipline, timely period and daily homework. All basic facilities were functional. Girls that were studied in the school were regular and punctual and also performed well. According to the principal point of view, out of the total 100 students enrolled in the school (both boys and girls), one girl and three boys dropped out of school. There had the following reasons for dropping out.

- Parents did not pay attention to the education of boys and girls.
- Parents' poverty was the main reason for dropouts of school. Mostly the father of children in Village PanjgranKalan was a labourer, they earn minimum money. So, they cannot manage the school's equipment like uniforms, bags etc.
- Most girls were not interested in getting an education, they were only interested to do domestic work.

The population in the government school were less, a total of 100 students were enrolled. Many of the parents prefer a private school, they think that the quality of education was not good in the government school. According to them, teachers in government schools do not pay attention properly. The parents of those children that were studying in the government school believed that the quality of education has improved. Teachers' attitude toward education has become better. Recently qualified teachers were appointed, and they were paying full attention to the education system. Parents allow girls for seeking knowledge because they were the only ones who help in future life. Researchers

collected data from those parents (mostly mothers) that were illiterate and were allowing their children for getting an education. But some obstacles were in the way of education like poverty. Most children's parents were labourers and worked in lands, hotels and houses, they earn minimum money for their families and children. They could not afford the expenses of schools and colleges. Those who could afford the expenses of school and college did not show interest in the education of their children. Some children were enrolled in school but they cannot attend school properly. Parents of children were careless about children's education.

Educated parents greatly influence the attitude or behaviour towards the education of the girls. Parents who belong to urban areas knew the importance of female education. They show a positive attitude towards girls' education. On the other hand, parents who belong to rural areas do not understand the importance of female education. They show a negative attitude towards girls' education. Parents who were living in rural areas had a lack of awareness. Discrimination still existed in some societies. Both parents from urban or rural areas show discrimination. Educated parents show a positive attitude towards girls' education. On the other hand, cultural lag showed negative behaviour towards girls' education ([Chingtham&Guite, 2017](#)).

Most mothers (respondents) were working in the homes of landowners and rich people. They could hardly earn a maximum of 300 per day, in those rupees they could not afford the expenses of their family and children. Many difficulties were occurring in managing the situation. Illiterate parents were aware of and understand the importance of female education, but their financial conditions were not in favour to provide education to their children.

Conclusion

This study was all about the attitude toward female education, causes of illiteracy and gender-based inequalities leading to female illiteracy in the village Panjgran Kalan. The findings of the research identified that poverty was the main factor that affect the education of the girls. Parents thought that boys were the future earner and girls were born to be married. Most of the parents were also afraid of violence and harassment cases against females. Long-distance to schools and colleges created many problems for parents and children. Community people were not against the education of girls, they showed a positive attitude towards the education of girls. But due to a lack of resources, they do not allow to get an education. Most people work outside for earning money and fulfil their expenditures. Only primary school was located in the village Panjgran Kalan, so for this reason parents had to send their children to another village for getting an education. According to respondents, early marriages do not affect the education of girls. People thought that after marriage if the girls have shown interest in seeking knowledge so their in-laws had allowed to get an education.

Recommendation

- The current research was conducted at the time of covid-19 so it had many limitations regarding interaction with respondents as well as limited the number of respondents to be included in the research. So, it is recommended to study the locale in more detail, making an ethnography of the Panjgran Kalan.
- The data indicated the reasons for female illiteracy in the village of Panjgran Kalan, and this data can be used by the government or the

policymakers to use for the development purpose of these areas.

- By tackling the issues and reasons for female illiteracy, the literacy rate can be improved and awareness of the importance of female education can be spread.
- Poverty is a major issue for these people, so means can be generated for people so that they can educate their children.

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