

Full Length Research Paper

Division of labour as a barrier to female education (A case study of village Dasuha, District Faisalabad)

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ABSTRACT

This paper deals with gender based work assignments and literacy levels in Dasuha village, Faisalabad district, Pakistan. It explains perception of local people regarding the household work assignments and hindrances observed on female education. The reasons for low rate of receipt of formal education by the female folk on grounds of household division of work were given. Qualitative anthropological techniques were used to collect empirical data. Parents perceived that there was no direct financial benefits for them to induce them to send their daughters to be trained in formal schools, so they kept them busy at homes for household chores which provided indirect benefit to the household. We recommended a constitutional approval and government intervention to enthrone conscious and persistent efforts in the education of the girl child as is the case with the boy child.

Keywords: Gender, Literacy, Discrimination, Patriarchal.

INTRODUCTION

Education is necessary for both male and female child without any discrimination. (Ghafoor: 1994). In spite of fact that Government has taken several measures and suggested much for improvement of literacy rate in villages, the female literacy rate is very low in rural Pakistan. According to Census Report of 1998 and as quoted by UNESCO report on "Literacy Trends and Statistics in Pakistan" the literacy rate in Pakistan is 45.0%. Among the females in rural areas this rate is 20.80%. UNESCO (2002) reports, "A comparison between the urban and rural population of Pakistan and between males and females reveals that rural literacy (34.4%) is less than that urban literacy (64.70%) and female literacy (32.6%) is less than male literacy (56.5%)." The lack of education among females especially in the rural areas creates many serious problems. The females being half of the population cannot fully play their roles in the national development because of low literacy level. They cannot find jobs, they cannot make decisions, they are not aware about their health; they cannot contribute in educating their next

generation. According to Rehman and Biswal (1993) "Education is an important indicator of women's development. It is also an important instrument for attaining economic power and dependence. However, educational opportunities available today have not been shared equally by both men and women; as compared to men, women have benefited much less from educational opportunities across different regions of the world."

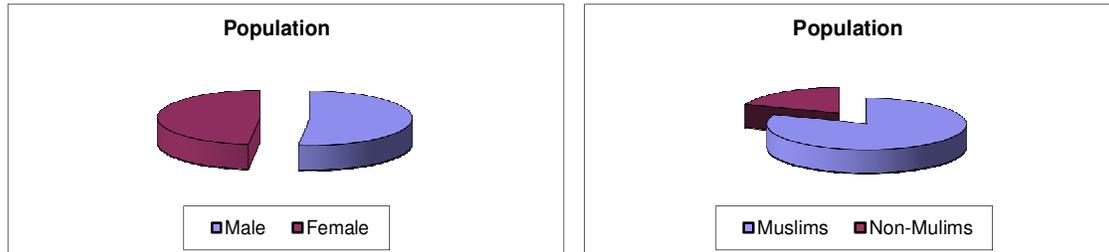
Theoderson and Theoderson (1969) pointed out "Division of labour as a functionally integrated system of occupational roles or specialization within a society. The concept of division of labour in a society has been a theoretical tool used frequently in sociological analyses. It is assumed to exist in all societies. Sex and age are usually the most important variables for differentiating occupational activities in non-literate societies. In more complex societies, the division of labour is more elaborate. Extreme elaborate of division of labour is one of understanding characteristics of individualization".

Paranjape (1999) observed that "One of the principal reasons which keep many girls out of school system especially in rural areas is that they are required to work at a very young age in various domestic chores." Mumtaz and Shaheed (1987) stated, "As the socially prescribed role of women as limited to raising a family, education is

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Table 1. Population of the Village

Total Population	Male	Female	Muslim	Non-Muslim
9557	4952	4605	7721	1836

Figure 1. Population of the Village

never a priority for girls. The result is that the literacy rate for women in Pakistan is one of the lowest in the world.”

The process of child education aims at fitting the boys and girls into gender roles as prescribed by their society. People believe that the girls are different from boys so they try to ensure that this difference is maintained through adopting some distinct patterns of social training for boys and girls. Commonly, it is assumed that strength, self-assertiveness, valour, confidence and interest in matters outside the house are exclusively male child characteristics. On the contrary, a girl child is kept in narrow bounds and is supposed to be docile, shy and non-sociable. Kumari, Singh and Dubey Kumari et al., (1990) stated, "These girls, as we have seen, are socialized to play expressive roles, i.e. social roles within the private domain of the family, unlike their brothers who are trained to play the instrumental roles, i.e. to take up the responsibility of productive functions in the public domain. May be this role expectation leads to discrimination vis-à-vis the 'productive members' of the family." The objectives of this study therefore are to:

- describe the daily work pattern by gender in the households;
- describe the daily work pattern by age of members of the households; and
- explain observed hindrances to the formal education of the girl child on grounds of household division of work;

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Area of Study

This study was conducted in Village Dasuha (242-R.B.), in District Faisalabad. The village is situated in South West direction and at a distance of 15 km from Faisalabad city and 2 km from Samundri road. It is

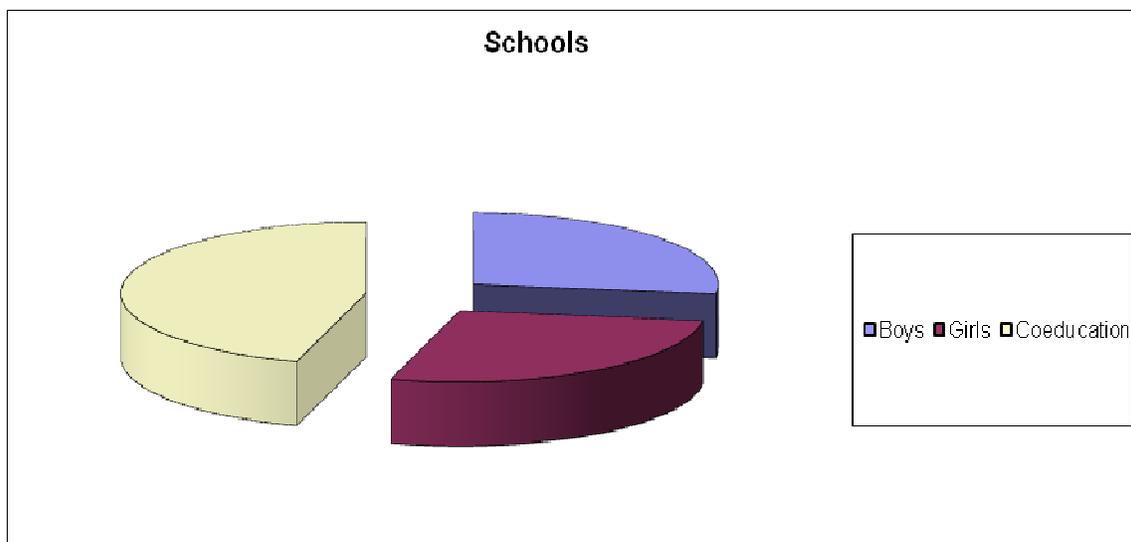
situated within 32° and 35° N. and 73° and 75° E. (map of Asia). According to 1998 population census report of district Faisalabad the total population of Dasuha is 9,557, which includes 4952 males and 4605 females. This total figure includes 7721 Muslims and 1836 Non-Muslims (Table 1) (Figure 1).

The educational facilities are present in the village for both boys and girls. The total number of schools present in the village is 11. There is one high and two primary schools for boys, one higher secondary and two primary schools for girls provided by the government. There are two middle schools, two primary schools and one nursery school in the private sector providing coeducation for the young boys and girls. The schools in private sector are providing both Urdu and English medium education to the students. The number of male students in English medium sections of the school is more than females. Computer education is also present in Kinder Middle School. People send their sons to the Colleges and Universities in Faisalabad for acquisition of higher education (Table 2) (Figure 2).

Pakistani women are not expected to play any occupational role. Men are supposed to be the breadwinner of the family in Pakistani culture. Husband is supposed to provide comfortable living to his wife. It is extremely shameful and a matter of concern if he cannot provide that for her. Women need not to do anything other than farm work and that is why in rural areas four-fifth of the women participate in farm activities which includes threshing and cleaning of grains. Girls generally are limited to doing domestic activities like assisting their mothers in household chores, looking after their younger siblings and sometimes working to earn income, in which case, it is usually embroidery, stitching clothes and crochet work which they have to do inside their own homes. As the girls grow up, especially when they reach the stage of puberty, they are discouraged from going outside the house unaccompanied and from mixing with

Table 2. Position of the Schools in the Village

Schools	For boys	For girls	Coeducation	Status
Higher secondary	-	1	-	Government
High School	1	-	-	Government
Middle School	-	-	2	Private
Primary School	2	2	-	Government
Primary School	-	-	2	Private
Nurseries	-	-	1	Private

Figure 2. Position of the Schools in the Village

male relatives. The "honor" of the family is the main reason for the segregation and differentiation between the two sexes. The daughters are isolated from the main society to a certain extent to protect the *izzat* (honour and repute) of the family. Their chastity has to be protected, and for this reason confining them to the house and keeping them under the watchful eyes of the family is considered to be important. This is especially true for the girls who have reached the stage of puberty.

Sampling Technique and Data Collection

Sampling and data collection for this study was based on qualitative anthropological research methods which include socio-economic survey, participant observation, key informant interviews, interviews, case studies and focus group discussions used to collect empirical data.

For socio-economic survey 100 households were selected through simple random sampling. An internal map of the village was acquired from the Union Council Office which helped us to select the households randomly and the sample of 100 households was chosen for adequate coverage and to keep the calculations simple. We chose on our personal judgment basis, two key

informants who knew most of the people in the village and are familiar with their socio-economic conditions. Participant observation was used to get first hand and accurate information about the respondents. We participated in the daily activities of the village for 4 months. In-depth interviews were conducted with the Village elders (male and female) to get detailed information. Key informants, many of who were teachers and other working women, very willing to give information were interviewed for much reliable information. Case studies were conducted to get detailed data on specific events. The first visit which lasted for 3 months was conducted in October November and December 1996, and the second for 30 days in December 2006. Mainly this research was conducted in 1996 and in 2006 the researchers wanted to observe the changes during the last decade.

Analytical Technique

According to Kazi and Sathar (1991) "The primary role of women is viewed as mother and wives and most often women in Pakistan derive their status from their male kin. There is a conventional division of responsibility between

men and women: economic provision is the responsibility of the men while women must procreate and raise children."

Household division of work was observed based on the classic principle of public and private sector dichotomy. The work inside the house was supposed to be for the females, whereas the work involving outside mobility was the duty for the male members of the society. A male was considered to be the main source of household income. He works in the fields or employed elsewhere to win bread and butter for the family.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the village, labour was divided according to age (Men, Women, and Children) and sex. Males and Females had different activities and roles to play in the production of goods and services.

Division of Work by Gender

The usual day of a woman in Dasuha village began with work and end with work in households. She gets up very early in the morning, prepares the breakfast, and serves it to the family members. After having breakfast she sweeps the house, makes the beds. Her daughter usually helps her by sharing the chores like washing the utensils and clothes, kneading the flour, preparing food for lunch and by taking care of the young ones if any. If she is studying in the school, then she gets ready and goes to the school. She also does crotchet work and embroidery on the sheets and pillowcases etc. for her dowry or as labour for the middleman and thus helping the family economically. Then in the afternoon the food is served to the family members.

After having food, people have some rest in the summers but in winters as the days are short, dishes are washed and tea is prepared and served to the family members. After tea, the food is prepared for dinner and while having the dinner, people watch television dramas or news. After the dinner, the kitchen is cleaned, leftover things are taken care of, utensils are washed, and beds are made by the women. Then some girls start doing the embroidery and crochet work again, those girls who are students do their homework and are usually the last ones (like their mothers) to go to sleep. The females usually keep on talking and gossiping while doing the household chores. Some girls were seen watching television programmes, or listening to the radio, especially while doing crochet work or embroidery.

The males got up in the morning, get ready, had their breakfast and go out to work, and come back in the afternoon for lunch. After that they are usually free to spend their time in leisure, or to go to meet their male friends and relatives. Men and boys get together and

discuss the daily events or politics. The young boys usually help the family by bringing the fodder for the livestock from the fields or grocery, and things for everyday needs. The only males visible inside the houses during the daytime are very young boys and those who are too old to work and in need of care.

Boys, on the other hand, are allowed to play outside. Their work is mostly related to the outside world like bringing things of everyday needs for the family, working outside to earn money etc. They are not responsible for taking care of younger siblings and doing household chores. The food is served first to the male members of the family; they are given the best part of the serving, as they are considered to be worth great respect. The rest of the food is for the children and female members of the family. The girls are trained to be more self-sacrificial, helpful and considerate of their brothers, fathers, husbands and sons. They have to control their voice, behavior, emotions, whims and wishes.

Division of Work by Age

Elders (more than 60 years of age)

Males who have passed more than sixty years of their lives had daily activities different from those in other age groups. They participated in any work in the household of their own choice and will. They did light jobs i.e. they took cattle out for grazing and gave tender care to the crops. In many families where the young people are not available to work in the fields the elders even up to the age of sixty-five had to do some very hard works. The elders, who had gotten attached the traditional occupations of farming, continued to do that. Their important hobby was gossips and smoking of *huqqa* (A smoking instrument made with pipes having fire in a cap on the top and water at the bottom.) with their age-fellows. They talked about their past, the deceased fellows and the daily politics.

The females in this age group had their own activities. They did small works at home and outside the homes. Their important duty was to knead flour, look after their grandchildren, watch and take care of the homes and advised the young girls in the maintenance of the homes. Their important duty is to milk the cow and buffaloes. The mothers and grandmothers take care of the children and infants.

The Young (from 18 to 60 years)

Young males play important role in development of the village economy. They are responsible for carrying out the difficult tasks. Many youths are occupationally engaged in different jobs in the cities or trying to find some work for themselves in the cities. The young men of

all ethnic groups come to the village at the time of seed sowing and harvesting to help their households in such tasks.

Young females also play very important role in increasing the economy of the households. They do all kinds of jobs like housekeeping and looking after their younger brothers and sisters. Washing, cooking and cleaning are their important domestic tasks. They make animal dung cakes which are burnt as fuel. Embroidery, knitting and crochet are their hobbies. Females do these works to help provide additional income to their families. Young girls also give *laip* (coat of mud on the walls).

They can do or help in almost all work inside and outside the house. They go to the fields, take the lunch, and help their males. The females of *kami* class (worker, scheduled castes, marginal groups of village) work in the fields of others to earn money. The women go to the fields in group of friends and cut grasses and fodder for the cattle. They cut the fodder with the help of fodder machine called *toka* (Fodder cutting machine). They take care of the livestock at homes.

Children (less than 18 years of age)

The children who do not go to school help their fathers or just play the whole day. Children help their parents in the household work. They go for shopping from the village. They fetch water and take cattle for grazing in the fields. The *kami* (Worker, scheduled castes, marginal groups of village) children also adopt their family occupation. Children work as the helper on the fields also. Child labour is common among the villagers. Boys who go to school get up early in the morning and after breakfast go to school. They come back at around lunchtime. After lunch, they do not take any rest. Instead they start playing in the streets with other children.

Majority of girl children who do not go to school helps their mothers in domestic work and also play in the streets with their friends. This playing in the streets continues up to the age of 6 or 7 years. After that they are not allowed to play outside. The school going girls do the entire household work after coming back from the school. They start learning cooking, washing, dusting, and embroidery in their early age. They serve meal to the male members of the house.

It was observed in most of families that the girls, who were aged roughly 11-15 years, are put under complete restrictions. They have to be accompanied by their parents, siblings or relatives while going out. Some parents even stopped their daughters from going to school at this stage. Parents also start thinking about giving such daughters out in marriage when they reach

the stage of puberty (14-15 years). They are told that they'll be going to *aglay ghaar* (next home means husband's home) and should be respectful, obedient and tolerant towards their husbands and in-laws. The mothers are more relaxed and in comfort *araam wich hondian* (to stay in peace) when their daughters reach this age because they know that they will be working in their place. Now the daughter takes care of the house and the family. Devasia and Devasia (1991) pointed out "The Pakistani society encourages five year old girls to behave differently from their male counterparts in their outer behaviour as well as in developing inner control. They are discouraged from being noisy and rough in their play and trained to adopt an attitude of care and service towards male members of the society. They are also discouraged from spending time in outdoor activities."

Economic activities of the girls are restricted due to "purdah" limitation, which confines them within the bounds of the houses. Home associated work is then a convenient choice and with that comes the handicraft of embroidery and crochet work, appropriate expertise which is acquired by majority of the girls of Dasuha who utilize it for making their dowry items. Thus besides doing the household work the majority of girls, in particular from lower income group also help the family by earning money through the sale of crotchet work, embroidered and stitched items to middlemen who visit their homes and buy their output at very cheap rates. Liddle and Joshi (1986) pointed out "It ranges from the strictest purdah to the general idea that a woman's place is 'in the home'... women's work is defined as domestic and unpaid. Such work is often not even considered to be real work."

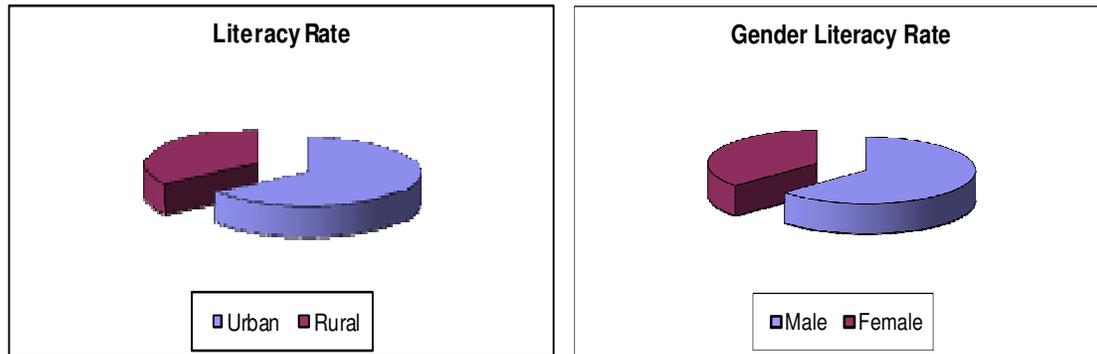
Hindrances to Girl Child Formal Education

There is no balance between the work assigned to the males and females especially at the school going age. The boys at this age have very little to do. They have a lot of free time for their studies. On the other hand the girls of the same age have to do a lot of work at home. They have to help their mothers in household work. The household work though is apparently easy and light, is not so in reality. The girl child is supposed to help in all household chores, which is a full time job. In most of the households she takes care of the siblings and then doing embroidery, crochet work and stitching to earn money or making dowry. On the other hand the boy's responsibility is usually limited to earn money and to bring grocery etc. After that he is free from all responsibilities of the household and can spend rest of the time in the company of his friends or by watching movies, listening songs or resting in his room while her sister is working for his and

Table 3. Literacy Rate in Pakistan

Literacy rate in Pakistan	Urban	Rural	Male	Female
45%	64.70%	34.40%	56.5%	32.6%

Figure 3. Literacy Rate in Pakistan



the family's convenience. If he needs anything, he can just order her and his demands will be fulfilled. The males get a holiday on Sundays from work but there is no off day for the females, as the household work never ceases to exist. The males can skip work for a day or more from their labours if they are ill, but there is no rest for the females unless they are seriously ill and can't move. The greatest tragedy is that all this hard work goes unnoticed, unacknowledged, and unearned. This imbalance is a major barrier for the girls regarding education.

In the family, parents differentiate among their children. Mother plays the major role in this differentiation. When a woman is expecting she says that a son should be born. If a son is born she thinks of herself as a great woman who has given birth to a man. This man will continue the lineage of his father. The females even managing the whole of household work are supposed as doing their routine work. The data shows that the males and females in the patriarchal Punjabi society are not rewarded for what they do. Females are the ones who suffer most. They do contribute in the family income in one way or the other but still their contribution is not considered as an extra work.

Then literacy level of the population shows that the women are the one who are less educated (Table 3) (Figure 3).

A change has also appeared in context of education too. In the past people didn't even allow their daughters to study, but now they have started getting their daughters educated. Most of my respondents (73%) attribute the progress to the media. People have been made aware that it is as important for daughters to get education as it is for boys. There are many girls who were not allowed to study in the past but now their younger sisters are being sent to school by their parents.

There was a time when girls were not allowed to speak against any order of their parents, especially fathers, uncles and brothers. But now it was observed that girls have started speaking against not being allowed to acquire higher formal education. Some girls (16%) confessed getting higher education by force or enforced sending their younger sisters to schools.

Although these are only few of the aspects in which change was seen but these changes were seen in majority of the families. Although the pace of social change is extremely slow but it is happening, showing that the rural society is not static and exposure to media and interaction with the urban community has also affected the Dasuha society in some ways.

CONCLUSION

In spite of the fact that there are certain changes in the village regarding gender assignments and literacy levels, the harsh reality still holds a strong position as the girls of Dasuha, which is a fusion point of Punjabi Culture, are living in a conservative patriarchal and partilineal society where they are assigned with the roles of a domestic worker expected to be submissive, chaste, "purdah" observing, dowry making and ready to be wed off and to nicely settle down in the house of their spouses. A little education with full devotion to household works is the routine schedule of most of Dasuha girls who are groomed to accept the dominance of men as father, brother and husband and hindered from satisfying their innate potentials to receiving formal education.

This study recommends a constitutional approval and government intervention to enthrone a conscious and persistent effort to educate the girl child as she educates

the boy child. The girls are to be allowed to get educated so that they can have the confidence to face the world. The parents should have flexible attitude towards their children as it affects the life and personality of the children.

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