

**MISS SHAMAAS GUL KHATTAK****ATTITUDES OF PARENTS TOWARDS CONTEMPORARY FEMALE HIGHER EDUCATION****Abstract**

This paper is derived from the author PhD dissertation (gender issues in higher education of Khyber Pukhtunkwah (KPK) Pakistan). This study aimed at exploring the attitude of parents towards contemporary women higher education. The population for the study was the students' parents of four colleges of Peshawar, capital city of KPK, although the original study did not included the parents. Twelve Parents (mother and father) of each college were selected randomly as a sample of the study. Thus the sample consisted of 48 individuals. The respondents confessed the domination of the paternalistic culture in KPK society that majority of parents make decisions about their daughters' future life. Although they agreed that Islam highly valued woman higher education therefore parents have to encourage women education in the province.

*Keywords:* Khyber Pukhtunkwah, Pakistan; Attitudes; Female Higher Education

**Introduction**

According to Good (1959) attitude is the predisposition or tendency to re-act specifically towards an object, situation or value, usually accompanied by feelings and emotions. Some writers differentiate a verbal attitude from behavioral attitude; attitude cannot be directly observed but must be inferred from overt behavior, both verbal and non verbal.

Islam gives the right of education to the female gender. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) commands that acquiring knowledge is obligatory for every man and woman. Both men and women have to face accountability on the Day of Judgment on equal footing, justice demands that none of them should be deprived of knowledge (Ali, 1997).

The importance of women's role in the process of development was recognized long ago. Women have economic, political and social roles to play. Keeping in view the importance of female education, it is believed that major cause of lagging behind in general, in economic and social progress, in most of the developing countries, including Pakistan is the absence of a higher percentage of educated and technically qualified women (Ahmad, 1994).

It is an economic fallacy to suppose that females are not suitable for economic platform. Women can play an important role in this field and can provide surety for prosperity (Haq, 2003). There can be no doubt that the women of Pakistan are striving to play their part in raising the status of themselves, their families and their nation. Women have already won for themselves an enviable reputation at the highest level of our national life as well as in international circles. We are confident from the spirit which the women of Pakistan have shown in such achievements as those of the All Pakistan Women's Association that they can assume roles of great importance in the consolidation and development of the country if their dynamism

and dedication can be nurtured and their efforts guided into those channels where they can be of the greatest service (GoP, 1959).

Pakistan is a developing country. It is quite clear that without imparting education to the female, progress of the society will be very difficult. Khyber Pukhtunkwah Province includes tribal areas of Khyber Agency, Malakand Agency, Mohmand Agency, Kurram Agency, Orakzai Agency, North Waziristan and South Waziristan Agency. Almost 90% of the females with secondary education have very limited access to higher education. There are social, economic, geographic, and tribal Pukhtun culture, war against terrorism and other reasons for their limited access to higher education. However, importance of female education is never denied in the history. Therefore it seems appropriate to study the attitude of parents towards contemporary female education.

In the light of the above discussion the study main objective is to explore the attitude of parents in different economic strata (upper, middle, lower middle and working classes) parents towards contemporary female higher education of KPK society. The researcher is very positive about the implication of this research that more parents will be encouraged to send their daughters to higher education in KPK society.

### **Population and Sample**

This small scale research study comprised four different economic class of Peshawar City of KPK (Pakistan). Random sampling technique was used to select the sample from each of the following strata: upper class, higher middle, lower middle, and working class. 12 individuals (mother and father) from each class were selected randomly. During the course of the research, the law and order situation in the country, particularly in KPK, did not allow the researcher to access more than four colleges, secondly the researcher rely on those respondents who could easily accessed. Thus the total number of respondents was 48.

### **Instrumentation**

For the collection of data a questionnaire containing 25 items was developed using five-point Likert scale for parents, both mother and father. Questions were translated into Urdu and Pukhtu languages for the convenience of the respondents.

### **Data Collection**

The researcher collected data through personal visits to these four colleges. It was observed that their attitude towards the research was very cooperative. The questionnaire was distributed to the students (as they have been selected in 2008, for the author's PhD sampling for more details see Khattak, 2009). The questionnaires were taken by the students to their home, filled and returned to the researcher on their next visit after a week. In order to get the required information the researcher had a glance over the questionnaire after receiving it back from the respondent. In the light of information received through the questionnaires, results have been drawn.

## Analysis of Data

Data collected through above mentioned instruments was tabulated, analyzed and interpreted category wise as mothers and fathers. The data chi square was not used due to the small sample size. On the basis of the analysis and interpretation of data, conclusions were drawn and recommendations were made. (All tables available upon request from author)

## Discussion

Education is essential for every member of the society. The process of education is from cradle to grave. The secret of survival of nations lies in education. The nation which lags behind in the field of education dies soon. Pakistan as a developing country has a dire need for educating the individuals irrespective of the economic and gender differences for rapid progress. At this time, Pakistan is passing through a very critical situation due to extremism and terrorism and the western world blames Pakistan, especially KPK, for extremism on the basis of religious extremism. As far as Islam is concerned, it does not forbid seeking knowledge rather it obligates upon learning on every men and women. Islam invites the people to ponder and concentrate on the creation of the universe. It develops the attitude of its followers to come forward for enhancement of knowledge.

The ultimate aim of the study was to examine the attitude of parents in different economic class towards contemporary female higher education in KPK. The religious class always leads the nation according to the teachings of Islam but it has been blamed for negative attitude towards contemporary female higher education.

The results of the study revealed that higher education is the right of women. Because women form 52% of our society, closing the doors of higher education to the female gender results in the deterioration of the nation as well as the country.

The majority of the parents of different class were of the opinion that females can play a vital role in the society as well as in the development of the country by getting higher education according to the norms and values of Islamic society. The main objective of higher education is the social and economic growth of the society and the female higher education helps a lot in this connection. Haq (2003) supported this idea by saying that the major cause of lagging behind in economic and social progress is the absence of educated and technically qualified women.

The study results found that educated women perform their duties better than other women of the society. As the educated women have lot of options before them and it is very easy for them to find a desirable solution of a problem Malik and Courtney (2011) supported this idea which states that higher education empowers women to exercise their rights and responsibilities as a citizen of the society and enables them to make efficient choices.

Majority in the parents were of the opinion that highly educated women behave fairly well with her husband and with other members of the family and the higher education based on Islamic ideology imparts and preserves the moral and social values of the Islamic society to the students. During the most important period of infancy and childhood of a person, the female is considered responsible for the intellectual, emotional, social, physical and character development in the families of Muslim society. Saleem (1990) supported this by stating that all...Telling about the

training of the children the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon Him) says that every child is born in original purity; it is his parents who make him a Jew, Christian, or an idol worshipper – quote from Bukhari: a compilation book of *Hadiths* (saying of prophet Muhammad Peace be upon him). Rao (2000) also supports this idea by saying that the spread of education made women aware of their role in society and the impact of higher education made them realize the importance of improving their rights, privilege and status.

The study results found that the establishment of women universities would play a vital role in women higher education because Islamic and the traditional Pukhtun culture do not permit co-education at any level, especially, at higher level and in Pakistan, establishing of separate government schools and colleges for female students under separate female administrative authorities is of great importance. Iqbal (1997) supported this idea and noted that Pakistan had inherited one university in 1947, and, in order to provide qualified manpower a large number of colleges, universities and professional institutes were opened. Siddiqui (2004) also supported this idea by viewing that Fatima Jinnah and Frontier women universities were established on the demand of parents who preferred to educate their daughters in female institutions. Siddiqui (2004) further supported the view that female universities in Indian subcontinent had helped increase female enrolment in higher education because most of the Muslims are not in favour of co-education system at any level.

The majority of the respondents viewed that highly educated girl is vitally important for grooming and upbringing of children. As the major role of education is the transfer of cultural heritage to the next generation and a highly educated girl can transfer the Islamic values to the next generation very sensibly. Akhter (1996) supports this idea by saying that in the Muslim families rearing of children and their character building is the responsibility of women, so it is necessary for a woman to be educated. If the mother is bearing good thoughts and good traits, she may transfer them to her kids. The lap of mother is the first institution of the child. If she is away from ignorance and equipped with knowledge, the coming generation will get good training from this institution and in the future this generation will produce good Muslims. Khanna (2005) further supported this idea and views that women should be given the opportunity to receive education in order to transmit this knowledge to future generations.

The study reveals that most of the people want to educate the female gender up to a higher level without any class difference for the betterment of society. Virk (2003) supported this idea by viewing that women and students from lower income groups have much less participation in higher education which is against the principle of equity and this demands expansion of the base for higher education to give equal access to all the groups of society. The study results show that female education helps in increasing family income while taking into consideration the Islamic values and boundaries. World Action Plan (1990) supports this idea by stating that female education has a positive effect on family income.

The study reveals that higher education is not the source of all social evils if it is based on Islamic principles. Moreover it develops character of women. However, sometimes, the environment of higher education institution promotes a negative role to make the women of Muslim society a show piece. Maududi (1995) supports this

idea by stating that Islam permits women to gain all sorts of knowledge, which build their character provided they do not exceed the limits, which are prescribed for them in Islam.

The study shows that educated females always abide by the social values because a highly educated woman can understand well the social norms and she can go deeper to understand what has been described as social value. Veer (2004) supports this idea by saying that the education of girls means alteration of gender roles and to understand exercise all human rights.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The study had its flaws as well. The responses might be invalid and unreliable because the age difference of the respondents may influence their views. The responses might be unreliable as with the passage of time the views of the respondents may change. The results were drawn and findings were made by using data spreadsheet. There are other methods of collecting and analyzing the data as well but Likert scale was used only. The researchers selected only urban sample small sample therefore sample size and urban parents could be a limitation of this study. Keeping in view the real world constraints, the study was limited only to one district; however, it was necessary to investigate the subject on a limited scale since there was no previous study on parents' attitude to their daughters' higher education.

### **Conclusions**

The following conclusions were drawn from the findings of the study:

- The respondents viewed that higher education is the right of women and it is helpful in developing their personality and administrative capabilities and they can easily find the solution of the problem by differentiating between right and wrong along with the skillful hand in domestic jobs.
- A highly educated girl is more social and obedient to her parents and her husband due to the understanding of worldly affairs and those social values, which are part and parcel of higher education. Most of the respondents viewed that the highly educated girl is more intelligent and develops mutual understanding with her husband and other members of the family effectively.
- Most of the respondents viewed that it is necessary to impart higher education to females without any class difference because the highly educated girl of low income family is a big support in eradication of poverty of that family by using her faculties. The results showed that keeping girls away from higher education is injustice and the whole family would be lagging behind and the consequence is less ratio of development of the society as well as country, for both male and female are part of the same society and society develops more with the education of the both.
- Separate institutes for female higher education were helpful in enhancing the number of female students for higher studies as most of the parents were against the current co-education system due to their adherence with the

culture but the sample were misunderstanding religious and culture discourses.

- Higher education is considered as a precious thing and parents could include it as a dowry for their daughters and it is good to equip them with higher education in the current difficult situation for safe future of their children and society. They viewed that highly educated girl maintains her respect in society by paying equal attention to the responsibilities of upbringing of children along with the jobs for economic development of the family as well as the country.

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