

## **Why Girls Disown Business Education: A Qualitative Study**

Nadeem Uz Zaman<sup>\*</sup>, Zainab Bibi<sup>\*\*</sup> and Jahanvash Karim<sup>\*\*\*</sup>

---

### **Abstract**

Though differences in the choice of university major between girls and boys are well-documented in academic literature, there is no stand-alone study that explores as to why girls are less inclined to opt business education than boys. This qualitative study, therefore, explored the same phenomenon using semi-structured interviews of girls who have recently made or are about to make their choices of university major. As the first step, a focused group discussion resulted in five major areas to develop a protocol for the semi-structured interviews from 20 girls by a team of female interviewers across five different universities including University of Balochistan (UOB), Balochistan University of IT, Engineering and Management Sciences (BUIITEMS), Sardar Bahadur Khan Women University (SBKWU), Iqra University, Quetta and Alhamd Islamic University. There emerged four major categories that explained why girls disown business education which include ideological, psychological, professional and socio-cultural barriers to account for women being less inclined towards business education. In essence, we found that girls make deliberate and intelligent decisions by avoiding business education as their major.

**Keywords:** Girls, business education, qualitative study

---

<sup>\*</sup> Assistant Professor, Balochistan University of IT, Engineering and Management Sciences, Quetta.  
Email: naz\_e\_zeest@yahoo.com

<sup>\*\*</sup> Associate Professor, IMS, University of Balochistan. Email: znb2005@hotmail.com

<sup>\*\*\*</sup> Associate Professor, IMS, University of Balochistan. Email: j\_vash@hotmail.com

## Introduction

The difference between men and women in the choices of university major is a commonplace academic phenomenon. Gender-based differences have, in fact, been studied across several disciplines and subjects. For example, Arts and Design, and Psychology are earmarked for their femininity as they are often opted by girls more than boys. Business education, on the other hand, is one of the subjects that are more masculine in nature and the inclination of girls towards them is relatively low. However, no study has yet tried to explore why women are less inclined towards business education and as such there exists a need to carry out such a study.

Gender differences in subject choice are well-documented in academic research (Colley, Comber, & Hargreaves, 1994; GCE, 2012; Hagedorn, Nora, & Pascarella, 1996; Leslie & Oaxaca, 1998; Machin & McNally, 2005; Murphy & Whitelegg, 2006; Schagen & Schagen, 2002; Spielhofer, O'Donnell, Benton, & Stables, 1990). In a world-wide comparison of data on subject choices of girls and boys, GCE (2012) have reported that girls are more likely to opt English as the most favorite and Physics as their least favorite subjects (GCE, 2012). Girls also prefer studying Psychology, Art and Design, Sociology and Media Studies. Boys, on the other hand, are rather interested in choosing Physics, *Business Studies*, Geography and Physical Education (GCE, 2012). Girls, thus, have little interest in business education and seems to disown it as a major (GCE, 2012).

Several general reasons have been attributed to gender differences in the subject choices. Some of these include: consequential earnings differentials (Hagedorn et al., 1996; Leslie & Oaxaca, 1998), preference for some professions like medicines and dentistry (Smithers & Robinson, 2006), personal interest in specific subjects (Hagedorn, Nora, & Pascarella, 1996; Leslie & Oaxaca, 1998; Smithers & Robinson, 2006), cognitive, learning and skill differentials (Murphy & Whitelegg, 2006), type of school (Stables, 1990; Spielhofer, O'Donnell, Benton, Schagen, & Schagen, 2002), age (Colley, Comber, & Hargreaves, 1994) and teachers' influence (GCE, 2012). However, there is no standalone study that specifically explores why girls have lesser interest in business education.

We, thus, undertake this study to explore why girls are less interested in business education than boys in the very peculiar context of Balochistan. The province, infamous for its deep-seated socio-cultural makeup, illiteracy, male-domination, early childhood marriages, domestic violence, political instability, religious extremism and racism (UNICEF, 2010; Vision21, 2009), is a compelling platform, somewhat like a deviant/extreme case, enabling us to find answers that could otherwise be veiled in many

other settings (Creswell, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Mays & Pope, 2000; Patton, 2001; Patton, 1999). Thus, the study being a deviant case analysis can somehow explain a general understanding of the phenomenon under study (Patton, 2001) particularly in the developing world.

## **Methodology**

This study is as an exploratory qualitative research that made use of semi-structured interviews. Interviews were conducted from 20 girls enrolled in different subjects in 5 different universities including University of Balochistan, Balochistan University of IT, Engineering and Management Sciences, Sardar Bahadur Khan Women University, Iqra University, Quetta and Alhamd Islamic University. These five universities were selected as the target population for this study because these are the major seats of learning in the province. Girls come from all over Balochistan to graduate from these institutions. As a result, the data collected from these universities is well-representative of the entire province. The following sections give details of our methodology:

## **Interviewees**

We interviewed a sample of 20 girls at university level to reflect upon the choices of business education as major subject. The interviewees were enrolled in different academic disciplines. In order to recollect recent and fresh memories of respondents, we decided to interview girls who had recently joined university education and could recall firsthand information on the subject under study. Initially, we had decided to interview 30 girls with knowledge of the topic under study. However, following the Glaser and Strauss's (1967) data saturation recommendation we had to cut short our interviews at 20 as new themes stopped to emerge and there were only repetitions of the themes.

## **Instrument**

The first step in the data collection phase was to develop a protocol in order to know what to include in our semi-structured interview. We, thus, arranged a focused group discussion with 10 female university students to highlight major areas that we would explore in our interviews. This was to limit our focus only on the most relevant areas. The focus group discussion also highlighted some relevant probes that could be used during the interviews. The notes taken during the focus group discussion ended up in five major areas including personal inclination, family background, socio-cultural environment, availability of resources and career orientation for our interviews.

### **Training of Interviewers**

After devising the protocol as a sample list of areas and some optional probes, we decided to develop a team suitable for interviewing girls. This was a crucial decision in our study as in a society as conservative as that of Balochistan it was almost impossible for a male interviewer to interview girls for around an hour. Moreover, the girls in Balochistan are shy enough to openly respond to males or aged interviewers. Thus, our team mostly comprised girls of university-going age with good knowledge of research methods and interviewing. We had a session to train the girls as to how to approach the study, the objectives of the research, areas to explore, appropriate probes and prompts.

### **Interviews and Transcription**

Interviews lasting about an hour were executed in a face-to-face setup where the interviewer at first developed rapport by introducing herself, the study, its objective and its importance as well as ensured confidentiality. Interviewees were asked several questions exploring all proposed areas one by one in reasonable lengths while tap-recording the interviews. Interviewers ensured that they gathered somewhat equivalent data for all the areas. The data, thus collected, were transcribed into word documents with only a only minute grammatical corrections in this paper.

### **Analysis**

From the transcripts, major categories were manually sorted out via thorough reading and re-reading which served as the bases to elaborating why girls disown business education as their major subject. The categorization and re-categorization of the data resulted into the following areas as barriers for girls to join business studies:

- (1) Ideological Barriers
- (2) Psychological Barriers
- (3) Professional Barriers and
- (4) Sociocultural Barriers

### **Results and Discussion**

The categories or themes that answered our objectives are discussed in detail in the subsequent sections:

### **Ideological Barriers**

*Low inclination- 'Not in Genes'*. Our interviews revealed that women had somehow developed a sort of 'gender identity' (Astin, 1993; Jacobs, 1986; Lackland, 2001; Solnick, 1995) in not opting business education as their major. Therefore, this first sub-category, low inclination, explains that girls have little interest in business studies owing to an identity attachment. In exact, this was a common in point most of the interviews. One of our interviewees expressed the same point through her observation of the low number of girls in her business class,

“I have seen in my department that females are very few (in number) in my class compared to males.”

We recognized that most of the girls believed that they were not made for doing business. While some of our interviewees seemed to blame high fee structure, difficulties in some subjects, lack of facilities etc. We, nonetheless, had reasons suggesting that these were not the real issues that kept women at bay from business education, primarily because these problems were of general nature and should have affected every field and not business education only. One of our interviewee supported this claim of ours,

“I think females naturally have less interest in business education; rather, I would say it is not in their genes.”

This statement in itself was a good representation of this category explaining why girls disown business education. One of the most probable reasons for this perception is in the societal appreciation that it is men who are fundamentally responsible for the bread-winning roles of families and not women (Khan, 2007), a stereotype that women seemed to embrace (Steele & Aronson, 1995; Steele 1997). We realized that girls have accepted this stereotype and do count on this. One of our female interviewee responded by these words towards her perception of income earning role, ‘Male is responsible for earning...’ Another said,

“They (rural people) think that females should only look after the home and males are responsible for earning and providing them with all they need. So they (girls) should not get education which they think is of no use to them.”

Several previous studies have similar supportive inferences that have linked gender differences in subject choices with a sense of belongingness to a particular sex group (Jacobs, 1986; Lackland, 2001; Solnick, 1995), personality differences (Astin, 1993) and peculiar gender-based preferences (Dickson, 2010). Thus, we can establish that girls perceive business education as a subject that they are not meant for and thus disown it as their major in university.

***Different mindset about career.*** Conforming the findings of Currie (1997), Montmarquette, Cannings, and Mahseredjian (2002) and Zafar (2009), we further uncovered that the earning potential of a career was not a primary source of motivation for girls, rather their educational endeavor is incited by the splendor embedded in a profession. As a result, they do not fantasize business as a profession noble enough to deserve an academic pursuit. So why they should take such a toilsome conduit in obtaining a business degree they do not long for. Here we quote one of our interviewees saying, *‘Long duration of MBA has discouraged girls even more.*

Girls tend to fascinate respectable jobs like medicines, dentistry, leadership etc. (Smithers & Robinson, 2006). But they do not envision this allure in business education. Most of our interviewees voiced that girls merely had the choice of teaching after business education, but they wanted jobs in banks, corporations and other organizations. Whereas, they foresaw little likelihood of this happening which in turn renders these option undesirable. One of our interviewee complied,

“Both medical, and teaching are honorable professions. Females seem to be more fit in these professions.”

She further explained,

“In our society 9 to 5 job is not considered favorable for females. Teaching is usually 9 to 3 jobs. But banking and (other similar) jobs are usually 9 to 5 or 9 to 6 or 9 to 7 and females do not seem to be fit with these timings. But they perfectly fit in teaching and that is (a) very respectful profession. Medical is also (a) very respectable profession for female. These are not new in our society; our people accept these professions very conveniently.”

Previous literature supports our findings. According to Zafar (2009) some important determinants of subject choices include number of years in graduation, socio cultural environment and family approval. Moreover, Di Tomasco (1998) and Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs and Tamkins (2004) have suggested that perceived work-environment makes some profession undesirable for women as they are unsupportive.

In particular, it is the non-price determinants (Easterlin, 1995; Fiorito & Dauffenbach, 1982) that play their part in impeding girls' entrance in the business education's arena. There is strong support for this finding in the academic literature. Beutel and Marine (1995) and Hakim (1991) have suggested that the relative importance of intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of a profession vary with gender. Moreover, Zafar (2009) has claimed that in case of men 45% of the subject choices are determined by non-pecuniary outcomes of a profession; however, this value is 75% for women. Thus, Girls are charmed more by the prestige and nobleness of a profession rather than the income it might generate: similar claims have been made by Hagedorn et al, (1996) and Leslie and Oaxaca (1998).

In drawing our conclusion, we considered several opinions tossed by our interviewees which included timing problems, conveyance problems etc. Several problems claimed to have discouraged girls are common with every job that goes 9 to 5. In fact, medical profession requires lot more dedication and devotion than business and girls even have to work overnight to perform their nursing or medical duties. Consequentially, we have a strong case to suggest that it is the impression of pride and charisma in a profession that lures girls to such a profession.

***Perceived difficulty.*** Academic literature suggests that girls find some subjects "chilly" and unpleasant such as engineering (Ulku-Steiner, Kurtz-Costes, & Kinlaw, 2000; Ecklund, Lincoln, & Tansey, 2012). But it is often not the inherent difficulty in a subject that debar girls from choosing it, rather it is the element of risk-aversion and a perception of practical incompetence (Bertrand 2010; Croson & Gneezy, 2009; Eckel & Grossman, 2008; Gneezy, Niederle, & Rustichini, 2003; Niederle & Vesterlund, 2007). Consequently, girls find some subjects more difficult than the others (Murphy & Whitelegg, 2006).

Our study confirmed this through multiple accounts of claims that girls found some subjects more difficult- accounting and finance were two of them. So, girls believed that business education was rather boyish kind of thing- this finding was in line with the empirical data of GCE (2012). A girl reported,

"Basically I want to say that some of my class-fellows left just because they found it (business education) difficult. They might not have that much interest in this field. Just because their friends were coming they initially felt the spirit of doing business education, which was later on totally lost and girls become dispirited."

Nonetheless, it was important to note that girls were quite complacent with medical studies that were far more difficult than business education. We, thus, establish that it is fundamentally not the difficulty in the subject that makes girls struggle in business related subjects; it was rather being- what one interviewee termed- '*dispirited*' that makes girls feel so. So, we postulate that girls form a sense of inconvenience in business education that makes them perceive this field as a difficult one.

**Psychological Barrier.** Psychological aspects are important determinants of gender-based subject choices. Astin (1993) argued that personality characteristics differ among sexes and are responsible in shaping subject choices. There are several variables that account for the differences in girls' psychology in assigning value to non-pecuniary aspects of a profession like security, flexible hours, leaves and vacation etc. (Abbasi & Saeed, 2012; Currie, 1997; Zafar, 2009; Montmarquette, Cannings, & Mahseredjian, 2002). In the context of our study, girls considered crimes and security as major determinants of their choices of university majors. An interviewee reported this fear,

“The condition of our city is really bad. There is firing and bomb blasts everywhere. So how can a female work in such environment?”

Yet another said,

“Yes, as you might have seen in television that today; this bank is robbed and that bank is robbed and target killing is also common. So for security reasons parents do not allow females in this field.”

However, we appreciated the fact that it was not, per se, the fear of crimes which molded this attitude of girls' towards business education rather it was a realization of their own natural physical weakness that made them afraid of opting business as their university major. In fact, an interviewee made such a demarcation in her interview,

“...People are leaving educational institutes because of the fear of terrorists. They are worried about their lives so how it can be possible for women as women are weaker than males. They are not able to fight against crime...”

Another girl confessed,

“As far as decision making is concerned females are not as good decision makers as male”



Yet another made a somewhat clearer confession about the helplessness of girls in the society,

“We can handle it through males. If males mentality will change then society becomes more forward (progressive). If males accept females as coworker, give respect to them and (do) not consider them showpiece for organizations or pass harassing comments. When men change their views and give respect to women then society will move forward and women can avail opportunities and polish their skills and abilities properly.”

Furthermore, another girl came up with similar conclusion,

“May be you disagree with my opinion that as compared to women, men are stronger than women in physical and intellectual abilities. Women are sensitive and sometime behave emotionally so they cannot handle business as properly as men can.”

We do not deny that increased crime-rates have discouraged females from jobs and education; we insist that crimes are a general social problem for everyone without any gender orientation and have affected education in general rather than business education particularly. Thus, girls tend to ensure that they will not be exposed to problematic situations where they lead their careers and lives. We were also able to highlight some important reasons why girls had this attitude. A girl stated,

“Most of the girls lack this (self-confidence) because of unawareness, strictness, shyness, gender discrimination and less priority because of the introvert behavior of females. They get detached from good education and well-mannered society...”

This makes it obvious that girls see the world around them as a place where they are maltreated right through their childhood. They face the family strictness and see priority given to boys not only in their families but also all around them. Consequently, girls develop psychological connections of these stereotypes in life and act accordingly. This conclusion is in line with the threat theory (Steel & Aronson, 1995; Steele, 1997) which establishes that groups are aware of the stereotypes about them, and disregarding the validity of such stereo typing, they remain vulnerable to anxiety about the possibility that these stereotypes are true.

Manski (2004) and Zafar (2009) suggest that consistent with the observations in life and expectations from the future girls feel threatened and their fears are reflected in their decision making in life and of course choosing university majors. Porter and Umbach (2006) have also reported conforming findings establishing that subject choices

are results of socialization in traditional gender roles. These psychological elements make women become more risk-averse and less competitive than men in practical life (Bertrand, 2010; Croson & Gneezy, 2009; Eckel & Grossman, 2008; Gneezy, Niederle, & Rustichini 2003; Niederle & Vesterlund, 2007).

Thus, girls are meant to be conservative towards choices in life and education is no exception. We view the choice of girls not taking business as their major as an intelligent foresight and scrutiny of the world around them which an interviewee confirmed,

“In our area of Balochistan no doubt women are leaning towards business studies but yet they are still in service industry and will take lot of courage to properly become part of banking or finance industry.”

### **Professional Barriers**

One of the major hurdles that our interviewees perceived in their choice of business was the domination of men in the field. They were anxiously uneasy by the mindfulness of lagging behind men in professional life due to fewer choices, lack of their availability and the inevitable glass ceiling. We recorded these points as themes in our study, discussed here in turn:

***Fewer opportunities for girls.*** Girls perceived business profession as being saturated for both men and women as the supply of business graduates has risen too high for the market demand. What’s more, whenever new jobs are created, men are likely to be preferred over women. Thus, in the business world, girls perceive that they have to create their own opportunities- for which most of them are neither willing nor seem to be available. Two excerpts from our interviewees clarify this point- one interviewee said,

“After completion of their studies especially in business education female students face the problems of availability of few jobs as the market is very saturated with candidates having business education degree in Balochistan and in this case male students are given preference over females most of the times.”

Another said,

“There are rare opportunities but females can generate (jobs) by themselves. For example, there are a lot of females who are doing embroidery as their own business but they do not highlight themselves and (do) not sell their products directly to potential customers. They sell their products to the distributors (men) who further sell them in the market place.”

This claim, in our opinion, is valid as in the business world women have little scope and fewer opportunities than men especially when it comes to high-rated jobs. Nonetheless, at low level positions women have lots of opportunities. But why they should be intrigued in such pint-sized offers after painstakingly toiling years in the pursuit of a degree in business education. So women do not picture the endpoint as a convincing return to their hardships as business students. They simply do not perceive a future in business education.

Brown and Corcoran (1997) and Joy (2000) have found similar evidence that distinctive professions offer varying levels of opportunities across the sexes which then affect their willingness to invest in those professions. So, an otherwise attractive profession might have an identity issue and low probability of success (Allon, 2013; Altonji, 1993; Zafar, 2009). Therefore, we conclude that one of the reasons why girls disown business education is their frustrating assessments of a career in business education which, on part of girls, again seems to be an intelligent foresight.

***Low on-job availability.*** An important problem that our interviewees did, in fact, face was their unavailability to jobs especially when it comes to travelling outstations and being available all year round. One of the interviewees told us,

“The main barrier is the availability of jobs because of the harsh and strict environment and gender discrimination in offices. Females are not welcomed in organizations because there are a lot of people getting business education. So when an organization selects an employee, it’s obvious that it’s a male. They think that a male will be always available in the organization any time and in any situation and can travel independently anywhere when asked by the organization.”

It was little tricky to categorize this problem of timing. On one hand, it definitely is the socio-cultural environment that interdicts women from going out for such long timings and on the other hand it was the distrust of girls in the society itself that made them think so. In practice, an organization is constrained by its requirement and has to recruit employees who best suit its demands. Women fail to meet their challenging requirements and thus are most likely to lag behind men. However, we made a realization that women do foresee this as a barrier to their choice of business education and thus are most likely to renounce business as their university major.

**Glass ceiling.** As we have established earlier that women form a different perspective of a profession; they, unlike men, are charmed by snobbishness in jobs rather than its earning promise. Girls have strong urge to work at top level positions but those are *de facto* domains of men as the actual practices dictate. Our study ascertained that girls are heedful of this bitter truth and thus are not willing to spoil their top-notch efforts for a minute likelihood of winning barely the consolation. An interviewee explained,

“Management is usually in the hands of men who consider that they are much better in management than females. They consider that females have low abilities especially low physical abilities and they are weak in decision making.”

She also affirmed,

“They (men) do not like to work under woman and accept their leadership. They think male serve much better than females and they can cope with the criteria and environment of area.”

We, thus, established that girls are not willing to challenge the established practices in the practical life. They just observe an avoidance behavior (Croson & Gneezy, 2009) and thus have little motivation in considering business as their major subject. So we conclude that women have a discernment as to how they should be dreaming about their career without worrying about its fulfillment. They, thus, see themselves to be better off being away from conflict of interests. It was recognized that girls have some intuitive awareness of what future holds for them in business education and they thus make rational choice of not opting business as their major.

### **Socio cultural Barriers**

*Socio cultural standards.* Amongst the most overwhelming barriers we could highlight was the disposition of socio-cultural imprints that define the role of women in conservative societies and perhaps the root-cause of all other barriers. Though the reality may differ from place to place, Balochistan offers a good platform to study the phenomenon at hand. This is because it is an extreme case where women are exposed to their worst fears and thus it becomes easy to spot the issue at once. Thus, we do not claim that our findings have vast transferability across the globe, we do suggest that this extreme/most deviant case of Balochistan offers great insight into the problem of the philosophical and psychological attitude of female students about business education.

Previous studies verify that culture affects economic outcomes, expectations and preferences (Bornhorst et al., 2005; Fernandez, Fogli, & Olivetti, 2004; Guiso, Sapienza, & Zingales, 2006; Henrich, Joseph, Robert, Sam, Colin, Herbert, Richard & Ernst, 2001). Socio cultural stereotypes shape identities and interests and thus the resulting career choices (Eccles et al. 1983; Ridgeway & Correll 2004; Ridgeway 2011). These stereotypes are formed right from childhood and get reinforced throughout life as if they were realities (Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider, 2001; Ginzberg et al. 1951; Legewie & DiPrete, 2012; Tracey, Terence, Steven, Robbins, & Hofsess, 2005).

In the orthodox culture of Balochistan, women are deemed to be more suitable for household works than for physical and mental fatigue outside. They have a limited world outside their homes (Abbasi & Saeed, 2012) and it is their homes where they are meant to contribute their best. Saeed (1990) and Latif (2007) discovered that in rural Pakistan, in general, girls as young as five to six years old are taught to do domestic work. Whereas, Khalid (2002) found that parents were more concerned about the marriage of their daughters than their careers and education. This is because they value their culture and '*baradri*' (kinship) over all else. Consequently, society denies women of their primary right to education (Maqsood, Maqsood & Raza, 2012) and of course any rudimentary importance in the society. Confirming this one of the interviewees protested,

“...their family thinks that female education is just wastage of money and time.”

Besides, our study also confirmed the findings of Khan (2007) as one of our interviewees tendered,

“We find that the mindset of our parents (is) that the girl should get married. Now it's the time, later she will not have good proposal. She is getting old. This is the first barrier then we go to next step; the society (and the) environment will not accept us as individuals without the support of man. As I told you before that, we are living in male dominant society, where the support of men really matters in higher education as well.”

Though the sociocultural barriers affect women education at large, our research-focused on business education only-was also not alienated from similar proclamations. One of the girls asserted sociocultural challenges as barriers to business education; she commented,

“The cultural values of Balochistan are very strong. And yes cultural challenges are also faced by females. It restricts females from travelling alone or interacting with males.”

Another interviewee said,

“Here I want to point out specially those neighboring aunties who deliberately and routinely ask my mother about my study. Sometimes I get frustrated and ask my mother not to listen to them and avoid them. But one cannot avoid the people living around you.’

We, consequently, established that it was the value-system within the socio-cultural walls which defined that women should not opt business because they are not made for it. So, careers leading to business world have demands higher than what socio-cultural norms might permit. Hence business education is not compatible with the sociocultural yardsticks. Therefore, girls feel dispirited to study business particularly those with families celebrating stern submission to communal norms.

One of our interviewees summarized our viewpoint as follows,

“Regrettably, Business woman does not have a very positive image in our society as they are not much appreciated as compared to western business women. Families do not prefer business for their daughters because they do not have any role model females in business society. They thought that female’s work in organization is not valuable and ethical.”

Girls have a tendency to see negative outcomes more than the positive ones (Flynn, Slovic, & Mertz, 1994; Silverman & Kumka, 1987; Spigner, Hawkins, & Loren 1993). They have a natural tendency to anticipate work-life conflict even before they actually choose an occupation (Cinamon, 2006; Zafar, 2006). Whereas, they don’t want to gamble with their careers and avoid high payoffs (DiTomaso, 1989; Eckel & Grossman, 2002). Thus, girls develop a submissive attitude towards cultural norms and traditions which compel them not to choose business education. We sum up this section with what an interviewee said,

“...people talk a lot, “Look at her! (Now) she will work with men? She wants to make other girls think and go against our culture.”

*Societal distrust in women.* The manifestation of societal distrust is not peculiar to Balochistan only. Correll (2001), Eccles and Jacobs (1986), and Eccles, Jacobs, and Harold (1990) have found that girls are assumed to be less qualified than boys by parents and teachers. Such stereotypes are then internalized by girls too (Correll, 2001). Though there was a general acknowledgment on part of our interviewees that religion does not impose any barrier on their education; society, nonetheless, treats women inferior to men and this is how society wants them to stay. One of the interviewees protested,

“Religion gives motivation to females because females make society literate. Our religion says (that) education is must for male and female and it also says that both gender are equal.” Also

“...in Balochistan people do not pay attention to female education. So it’s very rare; how they can support females for getting business education. They think that women are more suitable for home tasks. People of the Balochistan are religious and strict so they don’t allow females for getting coeducation as in business education females have to take help of males...”

Similarly another girls reported,

“...her husband was so nice to her but the society made her to decide to quit her job and (stop) work(ing) shoulder to shoulder with males.”

Though to some extent this is the case in rural areas of Pakistan, we believe that this view is too strict about the society at large. As we discussed earlier, society has different mindset about women than it has about men: primarily because of differently defined roles of women and their inherent physical weakness (Maqsood, Maqsood, & Raza, 2012; Sathar, Lloyd, & Haque, 2000; Abbasi & Saeed, 2012). Nonetheless, it is true that conservative societies like ours honor women’s modesty more than men. This exaggerated care for women frustrates women and cultivates a sense of societal distrust which women, in fact, do comprehend. We record this as a barrier as such and claim that one of the reasons why women do not chose business education is the societal distrust in them. This is because in professional engagements women will have to work with men, where they might miscarry the venerated tenets of righteousness. Two of our interviewees styled the very façade of this societal inhibition,

“Pathan and Baloch are very conservative people. So they do not let their females to go out and work with males. Females cannot go alone anywhere, while the male can go anywhere freely.”

“... In Balochistan people are very poor they do not afford food so how can they afford the expenses of computer and internet. (A) minority of females are using internet because Balochistan is backward area because of illiteracy. People think that internet is a bad thing for female, their female will become independent and modern.”

It can be confirmed that society at large does not consider women worth assuming economic endeavor. It, consequently, tends to assign role to women that merely revolve around uncompetitive tasks or professions containing low level of hardships (Astin, 1993; Kanter, 1993). When internalized and coupled with risk-aversion behavior this affects girls' choice of business education as a desirable university major.

## **Conclusion**

The difference in the choice of university major between girls and boys is already documented in the academic literature but there is no stand-alone study on why girls are less inclined to opt business education than boys. This study, therefore, explored the same in a rich qualitative study using semi-structured interviews of girls who have recently made or were about to make the choice of university major. A focused group discussion resulted in five major areas to develop our interview protocol for interviews from 20 girls from five universities of Balochistan by a team of female interviewees.

There surfaced several logical categories through the analysis of the interviews which give meaningful generalization as to why girls are less inclined towards business education than boys. The very first category that emerged was the personal ideological impediments that expel girls from business education. We realized that girls are rather esteem-seeker than are income-oriented in their choices of careers. We found that girls do not view business as respectable a profession as medicine and teaching. They, consequently, do not get fascinated by business studies. This, in turn, makes them perceive it as a difficult field and they think that it is not for girls.

The second category related to psychological barriers. Girls seem to have learnt from the experiences in male-dominated societies that they are weak enough to meet the arduous challenges of business world. Thus, they foresee insecurity in such open and exposed occupation where they often have to meet strange people and tackle unseen situations. In exact, they form a sort-of avoidance behavior towards business education which in fact is quite logical when one has understood the harsh realities of the society as well as the profession one could choose.



'Professional Barriers' was our third category that explained why girls are less charmed by business education. Girls were found to have made inferences about the future of their years-long toils in business education. They had very rightly realized that there were very few opportunities for them in business organizations especially at the top levels. They had cleverly recognized the glass-ceiling in this career and their inability to rupture it. Thus, they did not feel comfortable with the idea of losing all their hardships at low-level jobs that already carry little significance for them by the way. In fact, it was all about realizations about the world around them and their position in it.

The mother of all realizations was the socio-cultural hurdles that formed our fourth category. The role that women play in a society as backward as Balochistan is extremely trivial. Girls do observe boys being favored more and get taught directly or indirectly to respect and follow societal customs. The case may be different in advanced societies but some level of like-wise reflection always subsists in every case. Thus, we believe that girls somehow seem to fathom that they do better in their domestic positions rather in jobs. Their demand at home is as high as it is on their office desks. They develop feeling of societal distrust in them and thus make very cautious decisions.

Our study yielded interesting findings which manifested that girls have in fact developed ingenious insights about what business education holds for them in future. We believe that girls make very intelligent decisions by not opting business education. This is primarily because they understand the society in which they live, make sensible conclusion about their ability to challenge the existing disposition of male dominance in business world, select better alternatives that fascinate them more and so on. We thus conclude that girls make deliberate yet prudent choices by not opting business as their university major.

### **Recommendations**

This study has some limitations that guide about future directions for research on the area under study. Firstly, our study was conducted in Balochistan-a very extreme case- the findings cannot be generalized in total though some reflection may exist in every culture and society. Secondly, our study focused girls only as our interviewees; data from society, experts, teachers, parents and other family members may add to future explorations of the area. Nonetheless, the study fills the vacuum and paves path for future improvements on the study.

## References

- Abbasi, G. P., & Saeed, A. (2012). Critical analysis of the factors influencing female education in rural Sindh as viewed by primary school teachers. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Contemporary Research in Business*, 4(6), 334-338.
- Altonji, J. (1993). The demand for and return to education when education outcomes are uncertain. *Journal of Labor Economics*, 11, 48-83.
- Astin, A. W. (1993). *What matters in college: Four critical years revisited*. Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.
- Bertrand, M., (2010). New perspectives on gender. In Ashenfelter & D. Card (Eds). *Handbook of Labor Economics 4b*. New York: Elsevier. 1545-1592.
- Beutel, A. M., & Marini, M. M. (1995). Gender and values. *American Sociological Review*, 60, 436-448.
- Bornhorst, F., Ichino, A. K., & Eyal, S. W. (2005). *Trust and trustworthiness among Europeans: South – North comparison*. European Institute Working paper.
- Brown, C., & Corcoran, M., (July, 1997). Sex-based differences in school content and the male-female wage gap. *Journal of Labor Economics*, 15(3), 431-465.
- Cinamon, R. G. (2006). Anticipated work-family conflict: Effects of gender, Self-efficacy, and family background. *The Career Development Quarterly* 54, 202–215.
- Colley, A., Comber, C., & Hargreaves, D. (1994). School subject preferences of pupils in single-sex and co-educational secondary schools. *Educational Studies*, 20(3), 379-385.
- Correll, S. J. (2001). Gender and the career choice process: The Role of biased self-assessments. *American Journal of Sociology*, 106(6), 1691-1730.
- Correll, S. J., (2004). Constraints into preferences: Gender, status, and emerging career aspirations. *American Sociological Review*, 69(1), 93-113.
- Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

- Crosen, R., & Gneezy, U. (2009). Gender differences in preferences. *Journal of Economic Literature* 47(2).1-27.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M., & Schneider, B. (2001). *Becoming adult: How teenagers prepare for the world of work*. Basic Books.
- Currie, J. (1997). Gender gaps in benefits coverage. In D., Lewin, D.Mitchell, and M. Zaidi, (Eds).*The Handbook of Human Resource Management*, Greenwich CT: JAI Press. 175-198.
- Dickson, L. M. (2009). Race and gender differences in college major choice. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 627, 108-124.
- DiTomaso, N. (1989). Sexuality in the workplace: Discrimination and harassment. In J., Hearn,D. L., Sheppard, P. Tancred-Sheriff, and G., Burrell. (1989). *The Sexuality of Organization*. US: Sage Publications. 71-90.
- Eccles, J. S., & Jacobs, J. E., (1986). Social forces shape math attitudes and performance. *signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 11(2), 367-380.
- Eccles, J. S., Jacobs, J. E., & Harold, R. D. (1990). Gender role stereotypes, expectancy effects, and parents' socialization of gender differences. *Journal of Social Issues* 46(2), 183-201.
- Eccles, J. S., Adler, T. F., Futterman, R. Goff, S. B., Kaczala, C. M., Meece, J. L., & Midgley, C., (1983). Expectancies, values, and academic behaviors. In J. T. Spence (Eds). *Achievement and Achievement Motivation*, 75–146.
- Eckel, C. C., & Grossman, P. J. (2008). Men, women and risk aversion: Experimental evidence. In C. Plott and V. Smith. *Handbook of Experimental Economics Results 1*.New York: Elsevier, 1061-1073.
- Ecklund, E. H., Lincoln, A. E., & Tansey, C. (2012). Gender segregation in elite academic science. *Gender & Society* 26, 693-717.
- Fernandez, R., Fogli, A., & Olivetti, C. (2004). Mothers and sons: Preference formation and female labor force dynamics. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 119(4), 249-299.
- Fiorito, J., & Dauffenbach, R. (1982). Market and nonmarket ináuences in curriculum choice by college students. *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, 36(1), 88-101.

- Flynn, J., Slovic, P., & Mertz, C. K. (1994). Gender, race, and perception of environmental health risks. *Risk Analysis* 14(6), 1101-1108.
- GCE. (2012). *Gender discrimination in education: The violation of rights for women and girls. A report submitted to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)*. Global Campaign for Education (GCE).
- Ginzberg, E., Ginsburg, S. W., Axelrad, S., & Henna, J. L. (1951). *Occupational choice*. New York. Columbia University Press.
- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago: Aldine.
- Gneezy, U., Niederle, M., & Rustichini, A. (2003). Performance in competitive environments: Gender differences. *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 118.1049-1074.
- Guiso, L. P., Sapienza, & Zingales, L. (2006). Does culture affect economic outcomes? *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 20(2), 23-48.
- Hagedorn, L. S., Nora, A., & Pascarella, E. T. (1996). Preoccupational Segregation among first-year college students: An application of the Duncan dissimilarity index. *Journal of College Student Development*, 37(4), 425-437.
- Hakim, C. (1991). Grateful slaves and self-made women: Fact and fantasy in women's work orientations. *European Sociological Review* 7, 101-121.
- Heilman, M. E., Wallen, A. S., Fuchs, D., & Tamkins, M. M. (2004). Penalties for success: Reactions to women who succeed at male tasks. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 89, 416-427.
- Henrich, Joseph, Robert, B., Sam, B., Colin, C., Herbert, G., Richard, M. & Ernst, F. (2001). In search of homo economicus: Experiments in 15 small-scale societies. *American Economic Review*, 91(2), 73-79.
- Jacobs, J. A. (1986). The Sex-segregation of fields of study: Trends during the college years. *Journal of Higher Education*, 57(2), 134-154. Lackland, 2001.
- Joy, L. (2000). Do colleges shortchange women? Gender differences in the transition from college to work. *The American Economic Review*, 90(2), 471-475.

- Kanter, R. M. (1993). *Men and women of the corporation* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed). Basic Books, New York.
- Khalid, H. S., & Mukhtar, E. M. (2002). *The future of girl's education in Pakistan: A study on policy measures and other factors determining girls' education*. Report, UNESCO, Islamabad.
- Khan, A. S. (2007). Gender issues in higher education in Pakistan. *The Bulletin No. 162*.
- Latif, A. (2007). *Alarming situation of education in Pakistan*. World Education Forum, News and Views, Grassroots Stories Pakistan.
- Legewie, J., & DiPrete, T. A. (2012). High school environments, STEM orientations, and the gender gap in science and engineering degrees. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2008733>.
- Leslie, L. L., & Oaxaca, R. L. (1998). Women and minorities in higher education. In: J. C. Smart (Eds). *Higher Education Handbook on Theory and Research, 13* Agathon, New York, 304–352.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E.G.(1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Machin, S., & McNally, S. (2005). Gender and student achievement in English schools. *Oxford Review of Economic Policy, 21*(3).
- Maqsood, F., Maqsood S., & Raza, H. (2012). Getting higher education. Is it really a challenge for females in Pakistan? *Academic Research International, 2*(1), 352-360.
- Mays, N., & Pope, C. (2000). Qualitative research in health care: Assessing quality in qualitative research. *BMJ. 320*(7226), 50-52.
- Montmarquette, C., Cannings, K., & Mahseredjian, S. (2002). How do young people choose college majors? *Economics of Education Review 21*(6), 543-556.
- Murphy, P., & Whitelegg, E. (2006). *Girls in the physics classroom: A review of the research on the participation of girls in physics*. Institute of Physics.
- Niederle, M., & Vesterlund, L. (2007). Do women shy away from competition? Do men compete too much? *Quarterly Journal of Economics 122*(3), 1067-1101.

- Patton, M. Q. (1999). Enhancing the quality and credibility of qualitative analysis. *Health Services Research*, 34(5), 1189-1208.
- Patton, M. Q. (2001). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (2nd Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Porter, S. R., & Umbach, P. D., (2006). College major choice: An analysis of person-environment fit. *Research in Higher Education*, 47(4). DOI: 10.1007/s11162-005-9002-3
- Ridgeway, C. L., & Correll, S. J. (2004). Unpacking the gender system: A theoretical perspective on gender beliefs and social relations. *Gender and Society* 18, 510–531.
- Ridgeway, C. L. (2011). *Framed by gender: How gender inequality persists in the modern world*. New York: Oxford University Press
- Saeed, A. (1990). *Structural issues in women development in Pakistan*. UNICEF; Islamabad, 1990. 27-35.
- Sathar, Z. A. C. B. Lloyd, & Ul Haque, M. (2000). *Investments in children's education and family building behavior in Pakistan: Findings from rural NWFP and Punjab*. Islamabad: Population Council.
- Silverman, J. M., & Kumka, D. S. (1987). Gender differences in attitudes toward nuclear war and disarmament. *Sex Roles* 16, 189-203
- Smithers, A., & Robinson, P. (2006). *The paradox of single-Sex and co-educational schooling*. University of Buckingham.
- Solnick, S. (1995). Changes in women's majors from entrance to graduation at women's and coeducational colleges. *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 48(3), 505–514.
- Spielhofer, T., O'Donnell, L., Benton, T., Schagen, S., & Schagen, I. (2002). *The impact of school size and single-sex education on performance*. LGA Research Report 33, Slough: NFER.
- Spigner, C., Hawkins, W. E., & Loren, W. (1993). Gender differences in perception of risk associated with alcohol and drug use among college students. *Women and Health*, 20(1), 87-97.

- Stables, A. (1990). Differences between pupils from mixed and single-sex schools in their enjoyment of school subjects and their attitudes to science and to school. *Educational Review*, 42(3), 221-230.
- Steele, C. M., & Aronson, J. (1995). Stereotype threat and the intellectual test performance of African Americans. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 69, 797-811.
- Steele, C. M. (1997). A threat in the air: How stereotypes shape intellectual identity and performance. *The American Psychologist*. 52, 613-629.
- Tracey, Terence J. G., Steven, B., Robbins, & Hofsess, C. D. (2005). Stability and change in interests: A longitudinal study of adolescents from grades 8 through 12. *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 66, 1-25.
- Ulku-Steiner, B., Kurtz-Costes, B., & Kinlaw, C. R. (2000). Doctoral student experiences in gender-balanced and male-dominated graduate programs. *Journal of Educational Psychology*. 92, 296-307.
- UNICEF. (2010). *Balochistan: Province of Pakistan*. United Nations Children's Fund. Retrieved from [http://www.unicef.org/pakistan/Approved\\_MICS\\_Balochistan\\_Final\\_Report\\_23\\_November\\_2011\(2\).pdf](http://www.unicef.org/pakistan/Approved_MICS_Balochistan_Final_Report_23_November_2011(2).pdf)
- Vision21. (2009). *Balochistan: Problems and solutions*. Retrieved from file:///C:/Users/Mohammad%20Abdullah/Downloads/7449Balochistan\_Problems\_Solutions.pdf
- Zafar, B. (2009). *College major choice and the gender gap*. staff report No.364. Federal Reserve Bank of New York. Retrieved from [http://www.newyorkfed.org/research/staff\\_reports/sr364.pdf](http://www.newyorkfed.org/research/staff_reports/sr364.pdf)