



**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Barriers to Female Literacy in Tribal Areas Of Pakistan: Qualitative  
Cum Quantitative Analysis**

**<sup>1</sup>Dr. Muhammad Arshad Javaid\*<sup>2</sup>Mehvish Zahrah<sup>3</sup>Sumaira Khaliq**

1. Associate Professor, Department of Education, University of Education Lahore, DG Khan Campus, Punjab, Pakistan
2. M. Phil, Department of Education, University of Education Lahore, DG Khan Campus, Punjab, Pakistan
3. M. Phil, Department of Education, University of Education Lahore, DG Khan Campus, Punjab, Pakistan

**\*Corresponding Author** arshad.javaidd@ue.edu.pk

**ABSTRACT**

The main objective of the study was to find out the causes of low literacy rate in the tribal areas of Dera Ghazi Khan. The study was delimited to the three Union Councils of Tribal areas. All the female elementary school teachers and the mothers of the children studying in the girls elementary schools situated in these three Union Councils served as the target population of the study. One questionnaire and a structured interview were used as research tools in this study. A scale regarding the causes of low literacy (SCLL) was administered to the teachers and the interview was taken from the mothers of the elementary school children about the causes of low literacy in tribal areas. The collected data was analyzed by using descriptive statistics. The results of the study showed that ignorance, poverty, conservative thinking of the people, feudal mind set of the chief of the tribes and the perception of the tribal people that “girls are only for house service”, were the main causes of low literacy. Monetary support and literacy awareness campaign were recommended for the people of tribal areas.

**Keywords:** Barriers, Causes and Conservative Thinking, Literacy Awareness, Literacy

**Introduction**

Every civilization on the planet has two genders male and female and individuals must contribute to society despite the fact that their occupations are not universal. Strength-demanding occupations, which appear to be a male trait, are not exclusively reserved for men in the developing world. Females are more likely than males to work in weight-bearing and water-carrying jobs (Bradley, 2012). Literacy has been expanded to include the ability to comprehend what has been said or written, to communicate effectively, either orally or in writing, and to connect with useful knowledge.

Literacy also teaches us how to communicate using basic cultural systems like sign language, numbers, pictures, computers, and other basic tools. (UNESCO, 2013) According to the experts, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is becoming more aware of the concept of literacy, the skills required to acquire information through technology and the ability to analyze complex situations (UNESCO, 2015). It is impossible to read and write in the host country's language while travelling or living in a foreign country, and the people may regard you as illiterate.

Almost all human civilizations exhibit gender prejudice. The bulk of individuals have very different expectations of men and women. Men have traditionally been expected to provide for the family financially, leaving women to do almost all of the childcare and household duties. In underdeveloped nations like Pakistan, women are seen as second-class citizens. As a result, they are denied their legal rights. They take a back seat to men in activities. Women's position differs significantly among classes, regions, and between urban and rural areas as a result of the unsteady socioeconomic development of the nation. Islam,

tribalism, feudalism, society, and societal structures all harm women's life. In Pakistan, men predominate and are unfriendly to women. The World Bank in 2022 claimed that Pakistan has the lowest status for women worldwide.

### **Review of Literature**

The gender gap in Pakistan has remained an unresolved problem for many years. The Pakistani government has agreed to be responsible for fulfilling the Millennium Development Goals, with a focus on literacy, particularly for girls, and has signed an agreement about gender inequality. The Institute of Educational Planning and Management published a report on it in 2008. A 2008 PSLM study found that the nation's rates of female enrolment and literacy are incredibly low. In the meantime, Qureshi (2003) found that Pakistan's rural and tribal areas had high rates of girls dropping out of school. Data from 2006-2007, the Government of Pakistan, Turkey Online Qualitative Survey showed that girls had a Net Enrollment Rate (NER) of 0.63 and a Gender Parity Index (GPI) of 0.63 at all levels of education in Pakistan.

Education for women is important for our society because it increases social and professional responsibilities. Promoting occupation projection through literacy aids in the fight against poverty. The enhancement of female social well-being by female professional and social responsibilities boosts labor force productivity. Female employees must therefore possess the same skills and expertise as their male counterparts. Feminist economists therefore contend that increased public funding for female literacy will enhance society's economic health as a whole. According to Khan in 2007, harsh constraints imposed by male authority were particularly evident in rural and tribal societies and were evaluated as tight rules and laws for females that were wholly biased by masculine power.

According to Ahmad in 2014, women, on the other hand, must possess domestic skills in order to be a respectable wife and mother. The community's workforce is not distributed equally, and gender disparity is another issue. Society puts barriers in the way of females' human development to deter them from getting an education. According to Chaudhary in 2009, the fundamental reasons for gender inequality in the nation explain why female education has not yet been valued. A well-known Pakistani newspaper, the Express Tribune, reported that Pakistan was rated 146th out of 187 countries, with 0.537 points on the Human Development Index, moving poor development down by 0.002 points from the previous year's points of 0.535.

With scores of 0.563 on the index and a contrast of 0.567, Pakistan dropped four spots to 127th place from 123rd the year before. It is not encouraging to see Pakistan's lackluster progress in maximizing human potential and addressing gender inequality. It is unexpected that the score of 0.563 indicates a downward trend rather than an upward trend. Pakistani females had a 30% literacy rate in 2011, according to a Human Development report, placing them in a low socioeconomic status. The advancement of society depends on the education of women.

Female modesty is more prevalent in tribal areas of Pakistan, particularly in areas that are remote from settled areas and have a longer distance between home and school. The parents are concerned about the safety of their female children. They cannot allow their female students to attend a coeducational school because of the school's long distance from home, the risk of sexual harassment increases. (Zulfiqar, 2019)

In 1998 census, the total literacy rate of Pakistan was 45 per cent and the female literacy rate climbed from 0.8 million in 1961 to 11.4 million in during this census. During this period of time, the male literacy rate continued increasing with the pace as per rate of 5.1 percent every year. It should be worth mentioning here that Pakistan's general literacy rate was found completely lower than that of other nations in this region of south Asia. The reason behind this phenomenon might be the result of so many factors; the prime factor out

of which could be the country's restricted number of educational institutions and their accessibility to general masses. This situation was found significantly worse in the rural areas of Pakistan where the massive size of the population lives.

In 2006, the Federal Bureau of Statistics of the Education Ministry reported that the literacy rate was 28.3% in rural areas and 58.3% in urban areas. Most of the 12% was focused on women. It's fascinating that it was high at the elementary level and that this continued gradually in the secondary and higher levels. According to Pakistani education statistics from 2005–2006, less than 3% of women between the ages of 17 and 23 were enrolled at high levels of education. This educational gap suggests that a variety of socio-economic and socio cultural norms are equally responsible for female enrollment

Pakistan has the lowest rate of literacy in the world, according to UNESCO, at 55%. When compared to other nations, it comes in at 160. Below is a detailed description of its current state. It remained at 16.40 percent through 1950, with an estimate of 16.30 percent in 1961. The progress rate for both sectors in 1972 was 21.70 percent. In 1981, metropolitan areas therefore received 47.10 percent of the vote, while rural areas only garnered 17.30 percent. In 1998, the combined rate for the two was 43.90 percent, with urban areas accounting for 63.08 percent of the total and rural areas for 33.64 percent. For both categories, the calculation was 54 percent in 2004 and 57 percent in 2009. In 2012, 62 percent of the other calculation was maintained, and in 2013 and 2022, 63 percent was. When compared to neighboring countries, Pakistan has a low literacy rate: 80% in China, 74% in India, and 85% in Iran. Pakistan currently has a literacy rate of 58%. Because of patriarchal culture and difficult circumstances for women, female illiteracy is worse than male illiteracy. (Khan, 2019)

Compared to other provinces, Punjab has the highest population density in the nation, with the same percentage in 2012 and 2014. With 57 percent of the national population, Punjab will be the most populous province by 2022. Punjab will have 56% of the population and the most significant cities in 2022, making it the most populous province in the nation. In contrast to other provinces, Punjab will have 56% of the population and the most significant cities. It demonstrates that the majority of people in the 15–19 age bracket lack literacy. The situation of female literacy, particularly in the tribal areas of Pakistan, is found to be the most alarming and declining. So, this study was conducted keeping in mind the situation of female literacy rate.

## **Material and Methods**

The study's research method was descriptive, with the goal of gaining an understanding of the barriers and the factors influencing female literacy. It could be useful in determining the level of female education in specific areas. This aided in obtaining the desired statistical result while not interfering with the respondent's day-to-day activities. The responses provided by the respondents were recorded accurately. This work will also be beneficial to new researchers. The findings are used to forecast the current state of the problems in achieving female literacy in the study's target locations. A mixed method approach was used to design the study, which included both qualitative and quantitative data.

The target population consisted of female students in the Primary and Elementary schools situated in the three rural Union Councils of Tehsil DG Khan. Dera Ghazi Khan District is divided into four Tehsils, which are Taunsa Shareef, Dera Ghazi Khan, Koh-e-Suleman Tribal Area and Kot Chuttah. Dera Ghazi Khan District has 89 rural UCs. The study was delimited to three Union Councils and the researcher selected all primary and elementary schools situated in these three rural union councils. In the three union councils, there are 17 girls' schools, including primary and elementary schools. The target population consisted of the mothers as well as female teachers of students studying in these schools. Most of the mothers of the students were illiterate, that was why only 35 mothers of the

students and 105 teachers from different schools were selected through purposive random sampling technique.

A five point Likert Scale was used to take the opinion from the primary and elementary school teachers about the causes of low female literacy rate in this area. The mean score was counted against the Questionnaire and on the basis of it, the literacy rate was determined keeping in view the table given below:

## Results and Discussion

**Table 1**  
**Barriers of Literacy Rate Determination Table**

Mean score	Barriers Interpretation
1.00-1.79	Very Low or No impact
1.80-2.59	
2.60-3.39	Medium
3.40-4.19	High
4.20-5.00	Very High

**Table 2**  
**Analysis of the Questionnaire of the Teachers on the basis of Mean Score**

Sr. No.	Statements	Mean Score
	People from all castes usually discourage female education.	2.89
	To cover a long distance for girls' schools may also become a major cause of low female literacy.	4.23
	Most of the Girls' schools lack basic facilities in the tribal areas which may become a cause for low literacy.	3.56
	Poor economic condition of the people of tribal areas may affect the female literacy.	3.70
	Perhaps Co-education in the rural female primary schools situated in tribal areas may be the cause of low literacy.	4.12
	Different Baloch castes are residing in the strip of Koh-e-Suleman Tribal areas of Dera Ghazi Khan	3.80
	Girls are kept involved in the activities like agriculture handicraft by their Parents to promote their economic status.	4.23
	Girls are kept involved by the Parents in domestic activities than to focus on their education.	4.14
	Female literacy rate may be improved by changing the attitude of family heads.	2.89
	One of the main causes of low literacy rate might be the decrees on internal disputes by the family heads.	4.23
	Feudal tribes mostly discourage female education.	3.78
	Female literacy rate might be affected by the limited approach of parents towards education	4.25
	Early marriages are usually considered the common exercise of the tribal people; so this factor may also become the cause of low literacy.	4.23
	<b>Mean Combine</b>	<b>3.81</b>
	Showing High level of problems	

The mothers of the students of sampled schools residents of the sampled Union Councils were interviewed in order to find out the causes of low literacy in female students. The following questions were asked from the mothers and the collected data were analyzed against each question along with the emerging themes of the related factors which are given as under:

**Table 3**  
**Kinds of rituals/traditional customs affect female education**

Emerging Themes	Participants	Percentage
Job consent	7	17%
Love Affairs	5	13%
Family delight	5	13%

Less partiality	5	13%
Gender Biasness	4	10%
Stay at Home	4	10%
Previous Practice	4	10%
home Work	3	07%
Pre mature or Early Marriage	3	07%

**Table 4**  
**The attitude of the native people towards female education**

<b>Emerging themes</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Islamic ethics	10	25%
Significance of education	8	20%
Trend	7	17%
Ill Mannered	6	15%
Female Education	5	13%
Miscellaneous Skills	4	10%

**Table 5**  
**The family elders and the education of females**

<b>Emerging Themes</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Transforming Mentality	6	14%
Fundamental Education	6	14%
Scarcity of Resources	5	13%
Orthodoxy	5	13%
Spiritual Education	5	13%
Sense of Equity of Rights	5	13%
Success of Family	4	10%
Overseas Education	4	10%

**Table 6**  
**Education levels of parents influence the female literacy?**

<b>Emerging Themes</b>	<b>Participant</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Necessitation	10	25%
Benefits of Education	6	14%
Least Interest	5	12%
Decision Making	5	12%
Limited Approach	4	10%
Skills and handiwork	4	10%
Illiterate Parents	4	10%
Educated Parents	3	07%

**Table 7**  
**Conflict among the locals affect female literacy**

<b>Emerging Themes</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Clashes	4	10%
Blight Future	4	10%
Exhaustive work	8	20%
Female Victimization	8	20%
Prime Cause	8	20%
Hazardous	4	10%
Alternate Education	4	10%

**Table 8**

**Religious leaders influence female literacy in rural areas**

<b>Emerging Themes</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Submissiveness	6	15%
General Education	6	15%
Religiosity	8	20%
disrespect	4	10%
Madras's vs. Schools	6	15%
Religious Scholars	6	15%
Stay Home	4	10%

Each question was answered under the emerging themes by the sampled mothers (n=40), and the qualitative data was quantified in the form of simple percentage (descriptive statistics).

**Conclusion**

The primary goal of the research study was to determine what was causing women's low literacy rate in Dera Ghazi Khan's Tribal areas. Family chiefs or even family members, whether male or female and irrespective of caste, disregard female education. The findings are also consistent with a previous study, which found that male members; whether sons or husbands were held accountable for household earnings because they could easily work outside the home. According to Malik and Courtney's 2011 paper "women's empowerment and Higher education in Pakistan," education has traditionally been focused on males due to a widespread belief in society that men should complete their education in order to work in the public sector and earn money.

The results of the study are in line with the study conducted by Raza, Shah, & Haq, 2022, "Role of birth order, gender, and region in educational attainment in Pakistan" the poor families that are worried about their daily life expenses are unable to educate their females. In their 2014 paper, "Barriers to Coeducation in Pakistan and its Implications on Girls Education: Critical Review of Literature," Ahmad, Hussain, and Khan 2014, argued that female should be educated with skills related to household obligations in order to be a good wife and mother.

The traditional role of a female, according to Ahmad, Hussain, and Khan in 2014, also includes rejecting female education. Previously, it was determined in a study that female should be equipped with skills related to household responsibilities in order to be a good wife and mother. Furthermore, According to Mansoor (2012), a female's life in Pakistan is traditionally thought in three ways: first, as a transitory daughter who is gratified by serving her father, second, as a permanent daughter who is gratified by serving her father, and third, as a permanent daughter who is gratified by serving her husband. Second, as an overburdened wife,' she has been and is supposed to be bound within the confines of her home, where her only responsibility is to perform domestic duties for her husband and children in a calm manner. Finally, as an elderly matron,' the woman is commonly described as a widow, destitute, and reliant on her children, not wanting to exclude the joy of family.

Females in some parts of Pakistan only complete the first two years of schooling due to the tremendous strain of family responsibilities and other religious rites. Females, on the other hand, are discouraged from pursuing other forms of higher education or learning. Noreen and Awanin reported in 2011 on "Women's Education in Pakistan. According to Qamar (2017) that factors that limits the opportunities to get quality education for female are low income and poverty. Rehman (2018) concluded that gender inequality is causing poverty in developing countries. Hence poverty is the key factor of female low literacy rate in Pakistan.

According to Purewal and Hashmi (2014), 52 percent of male household heads support primary level education, while 1.7 percent support elementary level education for female.

The vast majority of the rural population is impoverished or ultra-poor, and to a lesser extent, mediocre; their primary concern is always their livelihood. The issue stems from their proclivity for household tasks and their parents' limited approach due to illiteracy. Previously, educated parents gave their daughters equal educational opportunities. Educated parents, on the other hand, find it difficult to be concerned about their children. According to a Bilal study titled "Mothers, Daughters, and Education: Exploring the Role and Relationship between Culture and Socio-Economic Factors" published in 2013, this may hinder children's learning. Internal family conflicts, feudal tribes, elder relatives, poverty, early child marriages, and gender inequality are more prominent and significant socioeconomic factors in target areas' frenetic pace of female education.

Other studies include Sharif Imran's 2009 study "The Impact of Gender Inequality in Education on Rural Poverty in Pakistan" and Saba Naeem's 2013 study "Causes of Low Literacy Rate in Pakistan." Both elaborated or concluded that due to communal consensus, education has traditionally been primarily for males, with no regard for girls, according to Malik and Courtney (2011). Female educators and mothers' responses revealed widespread misconceptions about religion in the community, indicating that there was a misunderstanding of religion because religious leaders influence female education and are opposed to current schooling.

A study previously discovered the religious components that push the educational environment in Pakistan make obvious religious scholars. "Daughters, Mothers and Education: Exploring the Role and Relationship between Socio-Economic Factors and Culture" by Ahmad and Neman that was published in 2013; Bradley and Saigol published "Religious Beliefs and Values and Education for female in Pakistan" in 2012 and in their 2011 paper on "Daughters' Education and the Parents' Attitude in far flung Tribal Areas of D. G. Khan,". "Malik's book "Madrasas in South Asia: Teaching Terror?" was reprinted in 2008. According to him, people believed Tajweed and Fiqah were required for females. So, most of the inhabitants have had their tendency only towards religious education as compare to school education.

### **Recommendations**

1. Government organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) both should sacrifice their optimal time and toil to eliminate/minimize gender discrimination and launch literacy awareness campaign about female education in tribal areas.
2. A sufficient monetary support should be provided for female students in primary schools in order to increase their enrollment at elementary level education.
3. The Government should take in to confidence the tribal chiefs, Imam Masjids, family heads and political figures in order to motivate the general community about the importance of education; particularly for female education.
4. Religious, motivational and Legal channels should be used to eliminate self-fabricated so called societal social norms for female such as "Female are fixed to serve the family," "early child marriages," and conservative thinking of Feudal clans regarding commitment towards female literacy.
5. Through electronic or print media, campaigns should be launched to raise public awareness about female education in order to change parental attitudes and religious misconceptions.

## References

- Academy of Educational Planning and Management (2008) *Pakistan education statistics:2006-07*. Islamabad: Ministry of Education.
- Ahmad, Iqbal, Said, Hamdan, Hussain, Altaf& Khan, (2014). Barriers to Coeducation in Pakistan and its implications on girls education: Critical Review of Literature. *Sci. International* 26(1), 339 -345
- Ahmad, S. M. & Neman, M. (2013) *Mothers, Daughters and Education: Exploring the Role and Relationship between Culture and Socio-Economic Factors*. *PUTAJ – Humanities and Social Sciences*, 20, 201-220.
- Ahmad, S. M. Saqib, & Saqib, M., (2014). *Root Causes of Low Female Literacy in FATA Pakistan: (A Case Study of Jalozai Camp)*. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 4(3), 457
- Ali, A & Buzdar, M. A. (2011) Parents' Attitude toward Daughters' Education in Tribal areas of Dera Ghazi Khan (Pakistan). *Turkish Online Journal of Qualitative Research*. 12, 237-246.
- Bilal and Ayesha (2013) Right to Education: *The Impact of Parents' Literacy on Children's Education Access and Learning*, Annual Status of Education Report ASER
- Bradley, T. & Saigol, R. (2012) *Religious values and beliefs and education for women in Pakistan, Development in Practice*, 22(5-6), 675-88  
DOI:10.1080/09614524.2012.685863
- Chaudhary, A. R., Asim, I. & Gillani, S. Y. M. (2009) *The nexus between higher education and economic growth: An empirical investigation for Pakistan*. *Pakistan Journal of Commerce and Social Sciences*, 3(2), 547-556.
- Chaudhry I.S., Rahman S. (2009). The impact of gender inequality in education on rural poverty in Pakistan: an empirical analysis. *Eur. J. Econ. Financ. Adm. Sci.*, 5(2), 234-243.
- Dr. Noureen, G. & Dr. Awan, R. (2011) "*Women's Education in Pakistan: Hidden Fences on Open Frontiers*". *Asian Social Science*, 7(2), 121-131.
- Government of Pakistan (2008) *Pakistan social and living standards measurement survey:district Islamabad*: Federal Bureau of Statistics.
- Hashmi, Purewal, Navtej& Naimatullah (2014) *Between returns and respectability: parental attitudes towards girls' education in rural Punjab, Pakistan*. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, Volume 2(1)*, DOI: 10.1080/01425692.2014.883274
- Imran Sharif Chaudhry, Saeed-ur-Rahman (2009), *The Impact of Gender Inequality in Education on Rural Poverty in Pakistan: An empirical Analysis*, *European Journal of Economic, Finance and Administrative Sciences*, 8(4), 22-33.
- Khan, S (2007) "*Gender Issues in higher education in Pakistan*" *Bulletin*, 7(2), 121-131
- Malik, J. (2008). *Madrasas in South Asia: Teaching terror?* New York: Rutledge.
- Malik, Mansoor, (2014) *Study questions teachers' recruitment method*. Dawn.com. (, 2014)



- Malik, Samina & Courtney, Kathy (2011) *Higher education and women's empowerment in Pakistan, Gender and Education*, 23(1), 29-45.
- Malik. 2008. *Promotion of Quality Education for All: Evidence Based Planning, Whole School Development and Public-Private Partnerships*, Papers presented at *National 37 Conference on Embedding Quality Education for All*, District Initiatives across Pakistan: Evidence Based Planning, Whole School Development and Partnerships
- Mansoor, Sabiha. (2012, May 7). *VIEW: Women in higher education*. *Daily Times*
- Mukhtar, E.M. (2006). *Gender-Aware Policy Appraisal Education Sector*, report prepared for the Gender Responsive Budget Initiative (GRBI) Project, Islamabad: Ministry of Finance, GoP
- Noureen, Ghazala & Awan, Riffat-Un-Nisa (2011) *Women's Education in Pakistan: Hidden Fences on Open Frontiers*, *Asian Social Science*, 7, (2) 79- 87
- Bradley, Tamsin & Saigol, Rubina (2012) *Religious values and beliefs and education for Women in Pakistan, Development in Practice*, 22(5-6), 675-688, DOI:10.1080/09614524.2012.685863
- Noureen, Ghazala & Awan, Riffat-Un-Nisa (2011) *Women's Education in Pakistan: Hidden Fences on Open Frontiers*, *Asian Social Science*, 7(2), 79-87
- UNESCO. August (2015). *Adult literacy rate, population 15+ years (both sexes, female and Male)* UIS Data Centre
- World Bank (1999) *Report of Country Gender Profile of Pakistan*, [http://www.worldbank.org/data/country\\_data/aag/pak\\_aag.pdf](http://www.worldbank.org/data/country_data/aag/pak_aag.pdf)