

EXPLORING FATHERS' ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS DAUGHTERS' HIGHER EDUCATION IN DISTRICT RAHIM YAR KHAN

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates attitudes and perceptions of fathers towards their daughters' education at higher education in District Rahim Yar Khan, Punjab, Pakistan. An important problem in many parts of Pakistan is the attitude and perception of fathers. It has grown to be a worldwide issue that prevents many daughters from pursuing higher education while also denying them the chance to achieve academic achievement in their lifetimes, which is crucial for future advancement and national productivity. While other research suggests that daughters should pursue higher education Cultural Influences on Fathers' Attitudes towards Daughters' Higher Education, but this study aims to exploring fathers' attitudes and perceptions towards daughters' higher education in district Rahim yar khan. The objective of the study was to determine to investigate the attitudes of fathers in District Rahim Yar Khan towards their daughters' education at higher studies. To identify the (social, cultural, and economic) challenges faced by fathers in supporting their daughters' education at higher studies. To examine how parents perceive the importance of daughter education and to determine the factors that influence fathers' attitudes towards their daughters' education. Using a survey questionnaire, collected data from 60 fathers in District Rahim Yar Khan and analyzed it using descriptive statistics. The results show that while most fathers value daughters' education, they also hold traditional gender roles and expectations, prioritizing marriage and family obligations over academic pursuits. Fathers from lower socio-economic backgrounds and those with less education. Our findings highlight the need for targeted interventions and awareness programs to promote gender equality and challenge patriarchal norms, empowering fathers to support their daughters' higher education and future career goals.

Keywords: Fathers' attitudes, Daughters' education, Higher education.

INTRODUCTION

Education is a vital process in our society that transmits cultural values and knowledge shaping the next generation. It plays a crucial role in guiding infants, young children and individuals to become productive members of society, instilling in them the values, beliefs and skills necessary to succeed and contribute to the community, as noted by (Michael et al 2002). According to UNESCO (2012), education serves as a catalyst for societal growth, empowering individuals to acquire knowledge, develop skills and specialize in various fields, ultimately fostering

personal and professional development. Education enhances our abilities, aligning them with societal norms, while also fostering personal growth, psychological development and professional competence. As a result, educated individuals experience improved social and economic status, with education playing a vital role in promoting gender equality and socioeconomic advancement for both men and women as noted by (Fatima et al., 2015).

Education is a vital process that imparts knowledge, skills and practical abilities, enabling individuals to contribute meaningfully to societal progress. It provides a structured learning environment, equipping individuals to navigate their surroundings, secure employment, and achieve economic stability. Given the significance of education, the researcher is keenly interested in understanding parents' attitudes towards female education, recognizing its potential to empower girls and promote their inclusion in national development, as highlighted by (Osamiro, 2014). Attitude denotes a person's evaluative stance, encompassing beliefs, emotions and behavioral inclinations, towards a particular entity or individual. In the context of education, parents' attitudes significantly influence their level of involvement, with fathers' engagement being a crucial aspect of parental contribution. This involvement encompasses various aspects, including academic support, monitoring academic activities and fostering a conducive learning environment, both at home and in school, as emphasized by (Edward et al 2014). A crucial factor in a child's development is their family, which plays a significant role in shaping their educational journey. The educational influence of families is reflected in the behavioral models exhibited by family members and the overall family environment. The educational strategies employed by families, as noted by (Daniela ,2012) significantly impact children's individual development and academic success.

The study by (Ashraf et, al., 2019) highlights the important distinction gender. Gender is a social construct, defining men and women beyond biological differences. On the other hand, is biologically determined, referring to physical characteristics such as anatomy and physiology. While individuals are born boys or girls, they learn to become boys or girls, men or women (gender), through socialization and cultural norms. This learned behavior shapes gender identity and influences gender roles (Sarwar, 2016). Fathers' opinions on the significance of education can be categorized into two groups:

- Resource-constrained parents: These parents, mostly from lower socio-economic backgrounds, face challenges in accessing educational resources such as schools, teachers and

transportation. They desire government support to provide these facilities in their local areas, making it easier for them to educate their daughters.

- Aspirational parents: Despite living in tribal areas with limited resources, these parents have a strong desire to educate their daughters and are willing to overcome obstacles to achieve this goal. They believe that education is essential for their daughters' future and are eager for the government to provide necessary facilities and support.

Gender as a social construct, separate from biological sex, to recognize and address the cultural and societal factors that shape gender norms and roles .Unfavorable fathers' attitudes towards daughter' education can hinder their academic progress. Moreover, some parents perceive investing in their daughters' education as a financial loss, as they believe the benefits will accrue to their husbands' families after marriage. Additionally, higher education for daughters may lead to higher dowry expectations, as they seek equally educated partners. However, as noted by (Rizwan et al 2011), education can ultimately reduce dowry expenses, as it becomes a valuable asset appreciated by the husband's family. Sons are often viewed as a source of support for parents, thereby receiving preferential treatment. In contrast, daughters are frequently seen as a less worthy investment, with parents viewing expenditures on sons as a valuable asset. Furthermore, girls may face obstacles in decision-making processes, hindering their educational progress as noted by (Mercan 2010). Despite their hard work and contributions to the family income, girls are often relegated to economic dependence on males, perpetuating gender-based economic disparities. Girls are frequently excluded from decision-making processes related to household economic matters and are denied their rightful share of property, perpetuating gender biasness and economic inequality, as noted by (Mamonah et, al., 2013).

In Pakistan, girls face disparities in education, trailing behind boys in access to quality schools, academic outcomes and opportunities. This phenomenon is deeply rooted in the country's patriarchal society, where traditional values and

cultural norms perpetuate gender inequality. The concept of honor is deeply ingrained in the culture and gender roles are strictly defined customs, shaping the social worth of gender, as noted by Fauzia et al. (2012).

The key points about gender disparity in Pakistan, including:

- Limited opportunities and discrimination against women.
- Low literacy rate of 36% compared to neighboring countries.
- Very low enrollment rate of 2.5% in higher education.
- Need for government prioritization of women's education.
- Focus on professional, vocational, and technical training as emphasized by UNESCO (2014).

Knowledge is a distinctive attribute that elevates human beings above other creations, enabling us to acquire new ideas and critically evaluate situations. In Islam, knowledge holds great significance, as emphasized in various verses of the Quran, such as the declaration that the knowledgeable and ignorant are not equal. The Quran encourages people to explore and uncover the secrets of the world. Moreover, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) stressed that seeking knowledge is an obligation for every Muslim, both male and female. Women's social status was very low in the Indo-Pak Subcontinent before Islam's arrival. Hinduism was the dominant religion and its caste system determined a person's superiority or inferiority. With Islam's arrival, many people converted to the religion. Muslims in the Subcontinent coexisted with Hindus for centuries, leading to some cultural exchange and influence on Muslim social norms, customs and values. One of the negative influences that permeated Muslim culture was the devaluation of female children, leading to a preference for educating boys over girls. The prevailing mindset was that boys were the primary breadwinners, thereby deserving of education, while girls were solely responsible for domestic duties like childcare, making education unnecessary for them (Hafeez, 2005).

In the age of inflation one person can't nourish the whole family. It is necessary that girls should stand alongside the males as per evolving social needs (Poduval & Poduval., 2009). Female in Pakistan

comprised almost 54% of total populace, (Gov. of Pakistan, 2009). Pakistan's current literacy rate stands at 57%, with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa trailing behind at 53%, indicating that 43 out of every 100 individuals are literate (Govt. of Pakistan, 2015). However, the female literacy rate remains unsatisfactory, at 43% according to the Planning Commission of Pakistan's 2010 report. The low rate of female education in Pakistan is attributed to various factors, which hinder children's education, particularly for ethnic children, through complex interactions involving school, society and domestic variables.

For effective school influence, at least two of the three mechanisms must be reinforced. A father's income significantly determines a child's education. We hypothesize that parents with a stable job are more likely to value education and invest in their children's education, as they understand its importance. On the other hand, parents who rely on direct transmission of wealth or social status to secure their children's position in society may be less inclined to invest in their education (Treiman & Ganzeboom., 1990). As a result, farmers and business owners may see less value in investing in their children's education if they believe their children will follow in their footsteps and take over the family business or farm. Moreover, for small-scale farmers, the opportunity costs of sending their children to school can be high, as they rely on their children's labor to tend to the farm and animals, especially during peak work hours (Bhalotra & Dutta., 2003).

Pakistan has long struggled with gender inequality, particularly in education. Despite setting Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to achieve gender parity in education by 2015, the country has made mixed progress towards this target, with varying outcomes across different social, economic and ethnic groups (Academy of Planning and Management for Education, 2008). Poverty and financial problems remain significant obstacles to achieving gender equality in education. According to the Pakistan Standards Measurement (PSLM) surveys and social life reviews, significant gender disparities exist in favor of boys in primary education, particularly in rural and tribal areas of the country (Government of Pakistan, 2008 & 2009).

Further research has investigated the state of girls' education in various regions, revealing a bleak situation in rural and tribal areas (Lall, 2009).

The Gender Parity Index (GPI) for higher level enrollment reveals significant disparities across provinces, with Punjab at 0.72, Sindh at 0.63, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa at 0.42 and Balochistan at 0.38 for 2006-07 (Government of Pakistan, 2008). Pakistan's ranking in the Global Gender Gap Index has slipped to 145th out of 146 countries in 2024, with a score of 0.570, indicating a widening gender gap. This represents a decline from the previous year's ranking of 142th underscoring the increasing difficulties in achieving gender equality. The tribal communities are more likely to deny girls' education. Data from Rahim Yar Khan District further supports this, with a literacy rate of 22% for females compared to 68% for males (2006-07). The Net Enrollment Ratio (NER) in primary education is also skewed, with 40% for girls and 60% for boys (Government of Pakistan, 2008). The tribal area of Saqida Abad region is inhabited by the Sardar population. Although the people of Rahim Yar Khan District largely follow Sardar customs, the influence of media and the region's development have led to changes in the behavior of the tribal population, distinguishing them from other Sardar tribal areas in the country. Research by (Huisman & Smits 2010) highlights the importance and limitations of factors such as cultural phenomena, educational infrastructure and socioeconomic characteristics in influencing higher level enrollment.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

This study aims to investigate the attitudes and perception of parents toward contemporary daughter education at higher studies, with a specific focus on:

- To investigate the fathers' attitudes and perceptions towards daughters' higher education in district Rahim Yar Khan.
- To identify the (social, cultural, and economic) challenges faced by fathers in supporting their daughters' education at higher studies.
- To examine how parents perceive the importance of daughter education.
- To determine the factors that influence fathers' attitudes towards their daughters' education.

1.3 Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the attitudes of fathers in District Rahim Yar Khan towards their daughters' education at higher studies?
2. What are the challenges faced by fathers in supporting their daughters' education at higher studies?
3. How parents perceive the importance of daughter education?
4. What factors influence fathers' attitudes towards their daughters' education?

1.4 Methodology

This survey-based research collected data from fathers as respondents using a closed-ended questionnaire with a 5-point Likert Scale, developed after an extensive literature review. The questionnaire aimed to explore fathers' attitudes and perceptions towards their daughters' higher education in District Rahim Yar Khan. To ensure the reliability of the instrument, a pilot study was conducted before administering the questionnaire to the larger sample of fathers.

The study targeted a specific population of fathers residing in District Rahim Yar Khan, with a total of 60 fathers comprising the entire study population. A quantitative research approach was employed to achieve the study's objectives. The sample consisted of all 60 fathers from the district Rahim yar Khan and data was collected through a questionnaire survey. The respondents represented the views and attitudes of fathers in the district Rahim yar Khan, providing insights into their perceptions of their daughters' higher education. Researcher using random sampling technique to draw sample from the targeted population. The researcher preferably selected only fathers because they have better understanding about these factors and they could easily share their opinions in the light of their experience from attitude contemporary daughter education at higher studies. Sample of the study they were fathers randomly selected 60 fathers as a sample for the study.

This study using a questionnaire technique to collect data. A tool was developed by the researcher herself in-depth review of the relevant literature such as Ali, 2019 ;Khan, 2020 ;Rahman, 2018;Hussain, 2019 &

Ahmed, 2017 . A tool was developed on 5 point Likert scale format ranging from Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree and Strongly Disagree in order to take fathers' views about the different factors. By using a combination of closed-ended and open-ended questions. The questionnaire was divided into two sections: Section A gathered demographic information, including fathers' occupations, residential areas (rural/urban) and qualifications. Section B consisted of 15 statements that assessed three factors: cultural problems, financial problems and gender discrimination. The

questionnaire was prepared in clear and understandable English.

The research using descriptive statistics as the primary data analysis technique, utilizing SPSS software to organize, summarize and display the data. This involves categorizing and describing the information gathered from the respondents. Additionally, SPSS will be used to conduct factor analysis and regression analysis, providing a more in-depth understanding of the data. Specifically, the research will utilize various measures in SPSS.

Table 4.1: Qualification wise comparison

Are you educated?	Frequency	Percent %
Yes	44	73.0
No	16	27.0
Total	60	100.0

Table 4.1 this table indicates that 73% of fathers have received education, while 27% have not. The significant difference in the valid scores suggests that educated fathers are more likely to support and value their daughters' education compared to non-educated fathers.

Table 4.2: Area wise comparison

What is your current residency?	Frequency	Percent%
Urban	33	52.4
Rural	27	42.9
Total	60	100

The results show a disparity in responses between rural and urban areas, with 42.9% of rural respondents and 52.4% of urban respondents expressing support for girls' education. The higher

percentage of urban respondents indicates a greater preference for girls' education among fathers in urban areas, highlighting a significant urban-rural divide in attitudes towards girls' education.

Table 4.3: Income wise comparison

How much money do you make each month?	Frequency	Percent%
20-30 thousand	26	45.6
30-40 thousand	18	29.6
Above	13	24.8
Total	60	100.0

This table indicates that the majority of fathers (42.9%) have a monthly income between 20-30 thousand, followed by 28.6% with an income

between 30-40 thousand and (23.8%) with an income above 40 thousand. The largest proportions of fathers (42.9%) fall in the 20-30 thousand.

What are the attitudes of fathers in District Rahim yar Khan towards their daughters' education at higher studies?

Father attitude	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std.
Does your attitude degrade female jobs?	60	1.00	5.00	2.4500	1.24090
Does you bias towards sons being more likely to become independent than daughters?	50	1.00	5.00	2.6000	.98974
Does your prioritize sons' education over daughters' education in higher studies, perpetuating discrimination ?	60	1.00	5.00	2.6833	1.17158
Are your existing cultural norms hindering higher education?	60	1.00	5.00	2.4333	1.24010
Do you prefer your son's higher studies rather than daughter education?	60	1.00	5.00	2.6000	1.07672

The table shows that most fathers have a positive outlook on girls' education, acknowledging its significance for their daughters' future success and social respect. However, a notable minority of fathers

do not prioritize girls' education, failing to recognize its importance for their daughters' growth and development.

What are the (social, cultural and economic) challenges faced by fathers in supporting their daughters' education at higher study?

Social, cultural and Economical problems	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std
Do you have prioritize lower financial investment in daughters' higher education compared to sons?	60	1.00	5.00	2.2667	1.11791
Do you feel there is lack of scholarships especially for girls to peruse higher studies?	60	1.00	5.00	2.3667	1.07304
Does your socioeconomic status affect daughter education?	59	1.00	5.00	2.8136	1.31928
Do you feel your cultural attributes and values restricted the girls' education?	60	1.00	5.00	2.6500	1.08651
Does your limited income a barrier to funding your daughters' higher education expenses?	59	1.00	5.00	2.4746	1.05628

According to the table, while most fathers recognize the importance of girls' education and acknowledge the various barriers (economic, social, and cultural) that hinder it, a minority of fathers hold unsupported

views and do not consider girls' education a priority or a necessary investment. Despite the obstacles, the majority of fathers emphasize the value of educating their daughters.

Which factors influence fathers' attitudes towards their daughters' education?

Fathers' uncertainties	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std
Do you believe that co-educational settings are a limiting factor for girls to pursue higher education?	60	1.00	5.00	2.8000	1.07040
Do institutional barriers, such as lack of resources or support, hinder your daughter's ability to pursue higher education?	60	1.00	5.00	2.6000	.96023
Do you believe that girls have limited career opportunities or fewer job prospects after completing higher education?	60	1.00	5.00	2.6500	1.02221
Does your joint family structure discourage or hinder girls' education?	60	1.00	5.00	2.8333	1.31699
Do you believe that higher education institutions lack adequate resources and facilities to support girls' education?	60	1.00	5.00	1.7667	1.01458

The table shows that most fathers are concerned about the obstacles that hinder their daughters' education and recognize the importance of education for girls. However, a significant minority of fathers does not share this view and do not consider girls' education a priority and posing a barrier to girls' educational progress.

Conclusion

Most fathers support girls' education, contradicting previous research by (Neta & Asmatullah 2014). Fathers' attitudes towards girls' education are influenced by: Low motivation and lack of guidance and counseling. Societal barriers such as: Veil (purdah), internal duties (domestic responsibilities), Joint family system and Institution environment. Financial and socio-economic problems significantly impact fathers' attitudes towards girls' education, causing them to feel anxious and uncertain. Fathers' educational background and parental pressure (forceful behavior) also shape their attitudes towards daughters' education, often in a negative way. Fathers' attitudes towards daughters' education are shaped by various factors, including: Lack of care and support from fathers. Limited access to female educational institutions . Gender discrimination, particularly in terms of job opportunities and preferential treatment of sons over daughters . Lack of qualified teachers and negative teacher behavior,

Low levels of teacher motivation , interest and Cultural structures and norms that perpetuate gender inequality. These factors contribute to fathers' hesitant attitude towards daughters' education.

Moreover, parenting practices are deeply rooted in cultural values, making it challenging to change these attitudes. However, educational institutions can play a crucial role in addressing these issues and promoting gender equality in education. A democratic atmosphere within the educational institution and encouraging student participation and responsibility, the institute can: Support fathers' positive behavior and attitudes towards female education. Promote gender equality and challenge discriminatory norms. Empower students, especially girls, to take ownership of their education and develop leadership skills.

To boost male students' sense of responsibility, it's essential to involve them in shared domestic duties from a young age, similar to their female peers. The decline in boys' academic achievement may be linked to traditional patriarchal attitudes that emphasize dominance over collaboration and empathy. To motivate boys, they should be raised with high social competencies, such as empathy, communication, and self-awareness and fathers should adopt a softer yet controlled approach, balancing guidance with autonomy. By recognizing and addressing these dynamics, we can work towards

creating a more inclusive and supportive environment that fosters academic motivation, responsibility, and social competencies for all students and regardless of gender.

Discussion

This study reveals a complex landscape of fathers' attitudes and perceptions towards daughters' higher education in District Rahim Yar Khan. While some fathers expressed support and encouragement, others harbored reservations and restrictions (Khan, 2019). Cultural and societal influences play a significant role in shaping fathers' attitudes, with traditional gender roles and cultural norms often prioritizing sons' education over daughters'. Economic concerns, such as financial constraints and concerns about daughters' future employment and marriage prospects, also influence fathers' decisions regarding higher education (Hyde, 2018). Lack of awareness about educational opportunities, benefits, and resources contributes to fathers' skepticism towards daughters' higher education (Peterson, 2015). A patriarchal mindset, viewing daughters' education as secondary to their domestic roles and responsibilities, is also prevalent among some fathers. However, a significant number of fathers demonstrated support and encouragement, recognizing the value of education for their daughters' empowerment and future prospects. The impact of education on attitudes is notable, with fathers having higher levels of education themselves more likely to support daughters' higher education. The study's findings suggest that the positive attitude of fathers in urban communities towards their daughters' education is a testament to the success of government initiatives aimed at promoting universal education. This positive trend is evident across both urban and rural populations, indicating a significant shift in societal attitudes. The mass media and information technology revolution have played a crucial role in shaping people's attitudes, transcending cultural and socio-economic barriers. To further enhance this trend, improving employment opportunities and income generation plans can significantly impact the financial stability of rural and urban poor families, leading to a greater emphasis on higher education for their children, regardless of gender. In today's society, higher

education is essential for the betterment of individuals, families, and society as a whole. Both rural and urban families must recognize the importance of educating for girls to unlock their full potential and contribute to the advancement of all sectors. Fathers should recognize that their daughters' education is not just for marriage or financial stability, but for personal growth, empowerment, and contributing to society. Parents should instill a growth mindset in their daughters, encouraging them to strive for excellence and develop a love for learning. Parents should trust their daughters to make their own career decisions, based on their interests, skills and passions, without interference or imposition of their own expectations. Parents should encourage their daughters to explore entrepreneurial ventures, promoting innovation, creativity, and self-reliance. The primary goal of education should be to develop well-rounded, socially responsible individuals rather than just focusing on job placement.

Recommendations

The study's findings underscore the importance of targeted interventions, awareness campaigns and engagement with fathers to challenge traditional attitudes and promote gender equality in education. Policy recommendations, such as gender-sensitive education policies, scholarships and support programs, can address the unique challenges faced by daughters' academic goals. These recommendations, fathers can play a vital role in empowering their daughters to reach their full potential, challenges as opportunities for growth, promoting a supportive environment where daughters feel encouraged to pursue higher education. Encourage fathers to take a more active role in their daughters' educational journey, promoting attitudinal change and supporting higher education aspirations. The research findings to: Sensitize teachers about the significance of fathers' attitudes towards education. Emphasize the importance of involving fathers in their children's educational journey, regardless of gender. Develop strategies to engage fathers in school activities, promoting a collaborative approach to education. Student councils or leadership opportunities. Encouraging student participation in decision-

making processes. Providing opportunities for students to take on responsibilities and projects. Fostering a culture of respect, inclusive and equality. Engaging with fathers and families to promote positive attitudes towards girls' education. By working together, educational institutions and families can help create a more supportive and empowering environment for girls' education. By implementing these recommendations, we can work towards changing fathers' attitudes and creating a more supportive environment for daughters to pursue higher education.

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