

## **Socioeconomic Status of Women in Mastung & Muslim Bagh Districts of Balochistan with special reference to education**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The Socio-economic status of women play an important role in identifying the factors affecting their involvement in economic activities. The information on the important indicators was collected in order to ascertain the relationship between their socioeconomic characteristics and type of economic activities women are involved in. Regarding the age group, 80% of the respondent were falling under the age limit of 21-60. Among them 67% were married. 59% of the total was living in a joint family system where the average size of the households was 10 persons per household.*

*The education level of the women was reported to be very poor where a big majority (82%) of respondents was found to be totally illiterate. This indicates that most of the women lack the level of education required for getting government jobs. The educational level of their husbands was also not adequate, more than half of the husbands were found totally illiterate, indicating that most of them are not having the required level of education for availing jobs in public sector. In both the sample areas, husbands were mostly involved in daily wage labourers; self-employed; private employees and government employees with majority employed in the first category.*

*The income from their occupations was very low in both the sample areas and cannot fulfil even the basic needs of the family. Faced with the*

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*situation, women in rural areas are forced to participate in economic activities in order to share the financial burden with their husbands, besides performing household responsibilities.*

**Key Words:** Women, Socio-economic Status, Education, Balochistan

**Introduction:**

The parameters such as education, income, and occupation are mainly included in the measurement of socioeconomic status. The disparities in socioeconomic status, including differences in the distribution of wealth, income, and resources as well as access to education and health affects everyone; however, women are the one effected by these disparities the most because of the incidence of poverty among them viz a viz their male counterpart. The socioeconomic standing of women got a direct correlation with the well-being of future generations. The more the women is stable socioeconomically the brighter would be the future of the generation to come and vice versa. Research indicates that socioeconomic status is a key factor in determining the quality of life of women, with resulting effects on the lives of children and families. Inequities in wealth and quality of life for women are long standing and exist both locally and globally. Low socioeconomic status among women and its correlates, such as poverty, lower education and poor health for children and families, ultimately affect the society as a whole. The social scientists through their research studies have been successful in chalking out strategies that could pave the way in alleviating these disparities not only at individual level but also at societal levels.

Keeping in view the above background, a research study was conducted in two districts of Balochistan namely Mastung & Muslim Bagh. The districts are selected one each from Baloch and Pashtoon belt in order to give equal representation to both ethnic groups of the province. A representative sample comprising about 50 respondents from each District was drawn and interviewed. For this purpose 50 households from each District were selected through random sampling technique and from each household one female member was interviewed. The data was collected

through a questionnaire-developed in line with the objectives of the research.

### **Socio-economic Status of Respondents**

The information regarding the socioeconomic status of women was collected with the objective to be analyzed in identifying the factors responsible for their involvement in economic activities. In this regard, information on age distribution, sex, marital status, family system, educational level, occupational status and income levels etc. was gathered. This background information will help us control the variance of the study and will facilitate data analysis.

### **Age Groups:**

Without knowing the age status of the respondents it is difficult to know whether the given population has the potential to work as labour force. For this purpose the women respondents were asked to provide information regarding their age status. The respondents were divided in six age groups. The first age group was between the age of 10-20 years and the last group of respondents was between the ages of 61-70 years. In both the Districts, Mastung and Muslim Bagh the following was the arrangement.

**Table 1: Age of the Respondents**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Mastung</b>	<b>Muslim Bagh</b>	<b>Total</b>
1	10-20	13	5	18
2	21-30	16	9	25
3	31-40	12	15	27
4	41-50	5	10	15
5	51-60	4	10	14
6	61-70	0	1	1
<b>Total:</b>		<b>50</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

The above comparisons show that excluding the first and last age group the rest four groups falls under the age limit of 21-60, the potential population emerging as labour force. They are 81% of the total respondents.

### Family Status:

Responding the question regarding the type of the family in which the respondent was living, 59% of the total was living in a joint family system. Out of them 39% of such women respondents belonged to Mastung and 61% from Muslim Bagh. Women living in nuclear family came out as 41% of the total respondents in both districts.

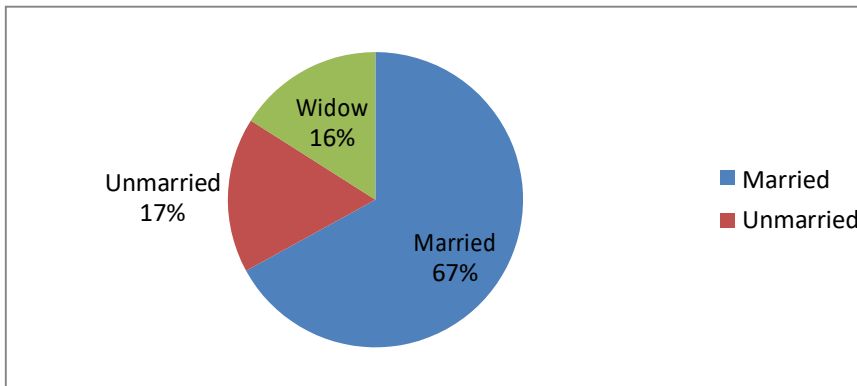
**Table 2: Family Status of the Respondents**

No.	Type	Mastung	Muslim Bagh	Total
1	Joint	23	36	59
2	Nuclear	27	14	41
<b>Total:</b>		<b>50</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

### Marital Status:

The women respondents were asked about their marital status. A big majority 67% of the total respondents were married. While 17% of the responding woman were reported as unmarried. 16% of the respondent women were widows. Out of the 67 married respondents 52% were from Mastung and the rest from Muslim Bagh.

**Graph 1: Marital Status of the Respondents**



### Household Size:

The respondents were asked about the number of persons living in their household. The information provided by the women reveals that the

average size of the households for both the sample areas was 10 persons per household. 44% of them were living in a household comprising between 9-12 persons. The next high number was 26% representing the household size of 5-8 family members. 14% were living in household ranging between 13-16 people. An equal percentage (8%) of the respondents was living in a household that contained between 17-22 people and less than 4 persons.

**Table 3: Household Size of the Respondents**

No.	Group	Mastung	Muslim Bagh	Total
1	2-4	8	0	8
2	5-8	17	9	26
3	9-12	20	24	44
4	13-16	5	9	14
5	17-22	0	8	8
<b>Total:</b>		<b>50</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

**Educational Level of Respondents:**

The educational level of the respondents in both the sample areas of Mastung and Muslim Bagh indicates that the situation is not that good. The highest percentage (82) of respondents was found to be totally illiterate. 7% of the women had studied up to primary level only. 5% of them had the qualification of 8<sup>th</sup> class. 5% of the respondents were reported to be holding metric degrees. While only 1% of the respondents had studied up to the level of Intermediate. A big majority 89 women out of 100 were either uneducated or with primary level of education which included very basic education in their local languages. It shows that about 90% respondents were uneducated or with very low level of education. This indicates that most of the women lack the level of

**Table 4: Educational Level of the Respondents**

No.	Education	Mastung	Muslim Bagh	Total
1	Illiterate	40	42	82

2	Primary	4	3	7
3	Middle	3	2	5
4	Metric	3	2	5
5	FA/F.Sc.	0	1	1
<b>Total:</b>		<b>50</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

education required for playing active role in the economic field. It shows that based on their educational level, one should not expect too much from them in their role as active economic agent. Keeping in view their low literacy rate and absence of required educational level, there seems to be high chances for the majority of the women in both the sample areas of Mastung and Muslim Bagh to be involved in small scale home based business activities rather than engaged in government jobs which mostly require at least Middle or Metric level education.

In comparison to the Piecework Labourl in Lahore city the research study conducted by Farida Shaheed and Khawar Mumtaz by taking a sample of 300 households, which yielded 204 women, the researchers found that 62% women were illiterate and among them 92% were the sole breadwinners for their families. Despite low wages the home-working women interviewed for this survey reported positive feelings about their work and wanted their daughters to learn some trade to support themselves and their families. In our case too, the women respondents were found to be concerned about the education of their children specially daughters. They were found to be quite conscious about the education facilities for girls in their areas.

### **Educational Level of the Husbands:**

More or less the same trend is reported in case of the educational level of the husbands in both the sample areas of Mustung and Muslim Bagh. More than half (52%) of the husbands were found totally illiterate. However, in Muslim Bagh district the condition was not that bad compare to Mastung where out of the total illiterate 70% were from there. In case of all the levels of education the husbands belonging to district Muslim Bagh had an edge over their counterpart from Mastung district. The highest percentage (82) of respondents was found to be totally illiterate.

**Table 5: Educational Level of the Husbands**

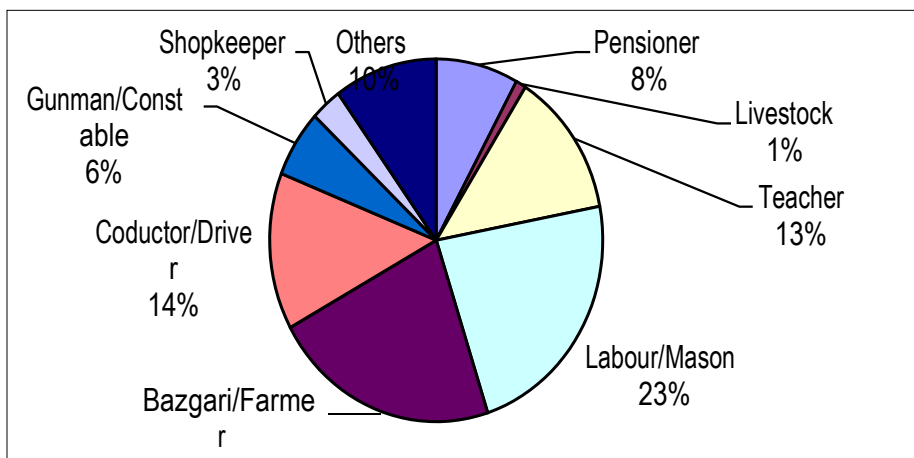
No.	Status	Mastung	Muslim Bagh	Total
1	Illiterate	37	15	52
2	Primary	6	17	23
3	Middle	2	3	5
4	Metric	4	10	14
5	FA/F.Sc.	1	5	6
<b>Total:</b>		<b>50</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

75% husbands out of the total were registered either uneducated or with primary level of education. It shows that each three out of four husbands were found to be uneducated or with very low level of education. This indicates that majority of the husbands lack the level of education needed for getting jobs. So the remaining 25% having education level of middle and above are the ones who would be expected to have the potential to apply for jobs in the public sector.

**Occupation of the Husbands:**

When the women were questioned about the occupation of their husbands, the answers that came were of a large variety. The highest number (23%) was engaged in daily wages work as labour or mason.

**Graph 2: Occupation of the Husbands**





The next category represented by 14% of the husbands was drivers and conductors. 13% of husbands were working as teachers. 10% were engaged in other miscellaneous occupations. Those who had retired and were living as pensioners were 8%. Gunman and constables were 6%. While those who were working as shopkeepers came out as 3%.

### **Income of the Husbands:**

In the tribal society like in the case of Balochistan, women are mostly dependant on father and brothers before marriage. After marriage the dependency continues with the difference that now husband has to shoulder the financial responsibility and earn money for daily expenditures of the family. In this connection the respondents were questioned about the range of earnings of their husbands:

**Table 6: Income Level of the Husbands**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Money Earned</b>	<b>Mastung</b>	<b>Muslim Bagh</b>	<b>Total</b>
1	3000-6000	19	3	22
2	6001-9000	8	17	25
3	9001-12000	19	22	41
4	12001-15000	3	6	9
5	No Income	1	2	3
<b>Total:</b>		<b>50</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

The information reveals that 22% of the husbands brought an income of about Rs. 3000 - 6000 per month. Those who were earning between Rs. 6001 to 9000 came to be one fourth (25%) of the total. There were 41% husbands who were earnings an amount of Rs. 90001 to 12000. While 9% were receiving an amount of Rs. 12001to 15000 from the profession they are involved in. A small number (3%) of them had no source of income and were not earning anything.

The economic situation of the people in both the sample areas does not show any remarkable improvement when we look at the income levels. The majority (47) were reported to be earning less than 9000 rupees per month. Only 9% were receiving income up to 15000 rupees per month.

The poor income levels of the husbands emerges the main cause behind the women involvement in economic activities. The income level being very low cannot fulfill even the basic needs of the family. Faced with the situation, women, besides performing household chores are mostly compelled to come forward and participate in economic activities in order to share the financial burden with their husbands.

### **Conclusions:**

As the Socio-economic characteristics of respondents play an important role in identifying the factors affecting their involvement in economic activities, the information on the important indicators was collected in order to facilitate the data analysis. Regarding the age status the comparisons reflected that more than 80% of the respondent falling under the age limit of 21-60, emerged as the potential population for labour force. Out of the total, a big majority 67% of the respondents were married. Regarding the type of the family in which the respondent was living, some 59% of the total was living in a joint family system. While respondents women living in nuclear family were 41% of the total in both districts. In both the sample areas, the average size of the households was 10 persons per household. The information regarding the education level of the respondents present bleak picture in both the sample areas but the conditions were a little better in Muslim Bagh compare to district Mustang. A big majority (82) of respondents was found to be totally illiterate. This indicates that most of the women lack the level of education required for getting government jobs. Keeping in view their low literacy rate and absence of required educational level, there seems to be high chances for the majority of the women in both the sample areas of Mastung and Muslim Bagh to be involved in small scale home based business activities rather than engaged in government jobs which mostly require education levels of at least Middle or Metric. Similarly, the same trend is reported in case of the educational level of the husbands in both the sample areas of Mustang and Muslim Bagh where more than half of the husbands were found totally illiterate. However, the education levels of husbands in Muslim Bagh district was slightly better compare to Mastung where they had an edge over their counterparts. Only 18% respondents reported their husbands as literate the rest of respondents were

found to be totally illiterate, indicating that most of them were not having the required level of education for availing jobs in public sector. In both the sample areas, husbands were mostly involved in four broad categories: daily wage labourers; self-employed; private employees and government employees with majority employed in the first category. The income from their occupations was very low in both the sample areas. Almost one half were reported to be earning less than 9000 rupees per month. The poor income levels of the husbands emerges the main cause behind the women participation in economic activities. The income level being very low cannot fulfil even the basic needs of the family. Faced with the situation, women in rural areas are forced to come forward and participate in economic activities in order to share the financial burden with their husbands, besides performing household responsibilities.

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