

Role of Earning Rural Women in Decision-making in Important Family Affairs

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Abstract

The role of women in the development process of a country is vital. Keeping in view its importance, it is enormously accentuated by the development practitioners in Balochistan. Serious attention is being paid to streamline her role in the development activities of the province. This is reflected by the interest of the researchers' in carrying out women related research studies in order to generate information regarding the important aspects of women life in the province. In this connection a study was conducted to analyse various types of work done by women and nature and extent of women's participation in rural economy of Balochistan, the extent to which they have control over the incomes earned from their occupations and whether their say in decision-making in the family affairs has improved as a result of their earnings.

The information collected from the field shows that women are mostly occupied in trades that can be carried on at a home-based level. They are engaged in embroidery work, cutting and sewing, rearing poultry and selling eggs, ornament making, rug making, sheep and goat rearing and wool spinning. A few women were also involved in other formal types of jobs like teaching, practicing as TBA and midwives etc. Most of these working

women are living in extended or joint family. The earning of women is mostly spent on the basic needs of the family and in some cases it is spent on specific needs of the women e.g. on their marriages. The study reflected that women who were capable of earning and contributing to the family needs had a better status in the family and enjoyed the privilege of having a say in important family affairs. The women in Mastung District claimed that they had comparatively more control over their incomes and household expenditure and their status of decision making in family affairs was much better than their counterpart from Muslim Bagh.

INTRODUCTION

Women in Development

The paper is a sequel to the previous paper “Socioeconomic status of women in Mastung & Muslim Bagh districts of Balochistan with special reference to education” appearing in Journal of Education & Humanities Research Institute of Education and Research (IER), UOB, Quetta V01.4.No.2, 2017, where the socioeconomic characteristics of women of the two districts were presented in detail. The present paper gives an account of the role of earning women in decision-making in various family affairs in these two districts.

The subject of ‘women in development’ has not received due attention in development research on Pakistan. The women development has been one of the least prioritized areas in the country. It is reflected by her low socio-economic profile both at national and provincial levels. Their involvement in almost all socio-economic activities is insignificant in rural areas. In order to enhance her role in the society, serious efforts need to be made not only by government but also by civil society and nongovernmental organizations. Although at national level in Pakistan some steps have been taken in this direction but at provincial levels especially in the case of backward provinces like Balochistan the same has yet to be materialize. The positive gender policy response of both government and donor agencies at the national as well as provincial levels is an encouraging step in this direction. The shift in the developmental perspective has necessitated undertaking research activities to bring to light the important areas of women life. Therefore, in order to collect reliable information, the women related research studies are sponsored by government and donor agencies not only at national level but also at provincial level.

Women Development in Balochistan

Balochistan is basically a rural society, where, about 70% of the population resides in the rural areas. Although a wide gender gap exists in all spheres of life, higher difference can be seen in education, health, and economic sectors. These differences are mainly due to their low social status, disproportionate poverty, low literacy rate and low involvement in economic activities.

A large number of rural women are not only poor but also caught between two different worlds—one determined by culture and tradition that confines their activities inside the house and the other shaped by increasing poverty that forces them to come outside the house into wage employment for economic survival.

Methodology

This study is based mainly on primary data. The universe of the proposed study consists of female population of two Districts. 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.

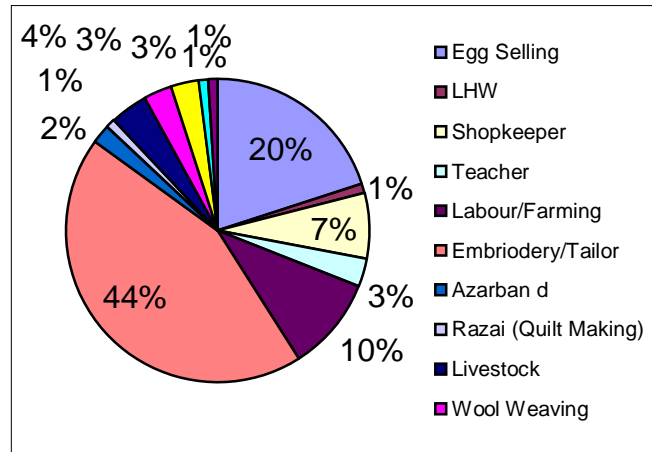
The study is descriptive in nature by employing simple description, narration, and mostly simple statistical tools. The field data are presented mostly in tabular form. Single column tables, multi-column tables, and cross-tabulation methods are used. Charts and diagrams are used at appropriate places for analytical convenience as well as for improving the presentation and for readability of the information. Mostly Pie charts are used for the presentation of data

Economic Activities of Women

In rural areas of Balochistan, women are mostly restricted to their houses and engaged in household chores. They are involved in few home based economic activities that too within their own household. Majority of them are engaged in small scale business activities, which brings them minimum earnings. Their trades are of ordinary nature carried on at a very small scale. They had limited options and almost no alternative but to resort

to such type of activities. When asked about the activities they are involved in, the following was the response of the women.

Graph 1: Economic Activities of the Respondents



The women respondents were asked about the kind of work, which they adopted as their economic activity. Out of the total, 44% were engaged in embroidery/ tailoring activity. This was the highest percentage of work performed by the women in both the sample areas. The second activity in which women were engaged came out as selling of eggs, where 20% women were involved. 10% were engaged as labourers on farmlands. About 7% respondents were working as shopkeepers. 3% of the respondents were working as teachers. 1% worked as the Lady Health Visitors. The rest were working as professional quilt makers, TBAs, engaged in weaving Azarband (a device for holding the trousers together), engaged in livestock activity, busy in wool weaving working as artificial jewellery makers and dealing in the business of making and selling butter and ghee.

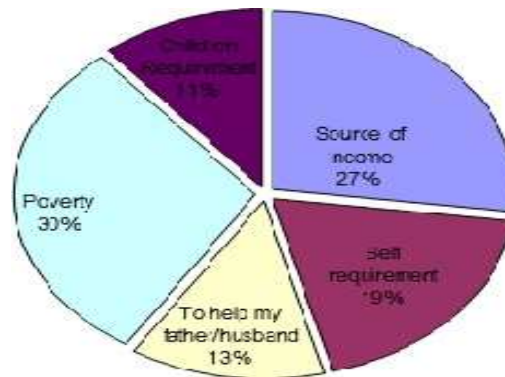
The studies show that women in rural areas too have to contribute their share in economic activities with their male family members besides performing their household chores in order to fight poverty which has taken the alarming position in the country. A study conducted by Nasreen Aslam Shah of women's life in a small village in Thatta district of Sindh, Pakistan, found that almost all the women of the village were engaged in agricultural work in one way or the other. All the 55 adult women of the village were skilled in embroidery and stitching and wanted work using their skills. But, there were not significant opportunities. Even so some 60% did manage to earn a little extra for their families from non-agricultural home-based work.

Similarly, the study conducted by Nasreen Aslam Shah found that in fishing villages near Karachi 48% of the women of fishermen's families were home-based working women. They were engaged in several income-generating activities to supplement the house hold income because incomes of the husbands from fishing were inadequate and irregular.

Reasons for Involvement in Economic Activities

The question before the respondent women was about the reasons of being involved in economic activity. Out of the total 30% of the respondents reported that they were involved in economic activity due to poverty. 27% reported that they considered it as an added source of income. 19% were of the view that it was the need and requirement of their family to have economic activity.

Graph 2. Reasons for Involvement in Economic Activities



Those who had adopted the economic activity to help their father/husband emerged to be 13%. In order to have better means to meet the needs of their children 11% were involved in business activities.

In the case of women of Musa Colony, a slum of Karachi according to Nasreen Aslam Shah who studied 100 poorest of the poor households of this locality, some women from these families worked for wages due to their poverty. Others could not do so for lack of skills and knowledge about work opportunities. However, even in case of families in which woman did some work, they were so poor that they could not send their children to school and afford proper medical care in case of sickness.

Money earned from Economic Activities

The amount of money that the respondent women earned out of her activity varied between Rs. 1000 to 10000. Among the women involved in economic activities 25% of

Table 1: Money earned from Economic Activities

No.	Monthly Rs	Mastung	Muslim Bagh	Total
1	0000-1000	16	9	25
2	1001-2000	16	20	36
3	2001-3000	2	10	12
4	3001-4000	10	1	11
5	4001-5000	2	1	3
6	5001-6000	3	1	4
7	6001-10000	1	8	9
Total:		50	50	100

them received money income ranging from Rs. 500 to 1000. Those who received an earning of Rs. 1001 to 2000 were reported to be 36%. 12% of them receive an earning between Rs. 2001 and 3000. The percentage of women who earned between Rs. 3001 to 4000 came out as 11. While the respondents having income level between Rs. 6001 to 10000 emerged as 9%.

The findings of the present study if compared with the study conducted by Nasreen Ayub who found that the self-employed women of katchi abadis of Karachi were earning 1000 per month only from their home-based business activities. Ayub developed a typology of work done by the self-employed women in her sample. All the work that they did, for example making of boxes, bags decorative items, articles of daily use, toys and artificial jewelry etc., consisted of mostly manual work and low level technologies. What made these self-employed women in Ayub's sample more like piece-rate workers was that they (73.6%) purchased the raw material from the very contractors who bought their products.

Control of Money earned from Economic Activities

The question put to the respondent was about the control of the money that was earned by them. 85% the women responded that the money earned through their economic activity is controlled by them. 7% reported that the money was controlled by their husbands. There were 4% respondents

who replied that their mother had control over the money. 3% said that their father

Table 2: Control of Money earned from Economic Activities

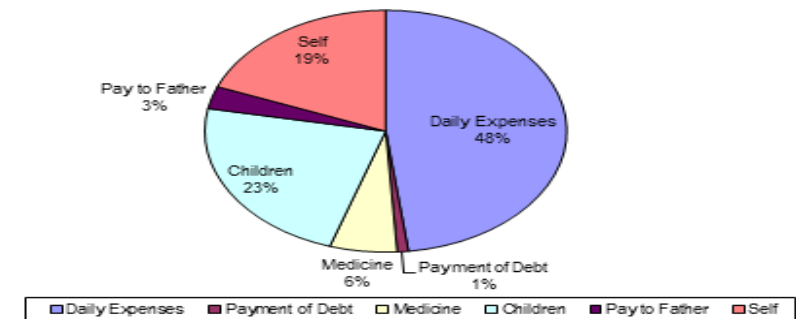
No.	Controlled By	Mastung	Muslim Bagh	Total
1	Husband	4	3	7
2	Self	42	43	85
3	Mother	3	1	4
4	Son	0	1	1
5	Father	1	2	3
Total:		50	50	100

controlled their money. While, 1% were found saying that the money was controlled by their sons.

Money Spent on

The question put to the respondents was about how and where they spent their money. There was a variety of answers, which included the daily expenses of the household, payment of debts, medical treatment and medicines of the children and as an assisting gesture the money was paid to the father also.

Graph 3: Money Spent on by the Respondents



Almost half of the women (48%) were reported to spend the money earned from economic activities on daily expenses of the household. 23% said that the money was spent on their children needs. There were 19% women who said that they spent it on themselves. 6% spent on medical

treatment and medicine of the family. Those who give it to their fathers came out as 3% of the total respondents. While, 1% said that their money was used on the payment of family debts.

Differences were observed in the case of women who live in rural areas in comparison to their counterpart in cities. A big majority of the respondents in Ayub's sample (90.2%) claimed they spent their earnings on the family.

Control over household expenditure

Responding the question regarding control over household expenditure, 73% of the women reported that their control over their household expenditure had increased due to their earning ability. While around one forth (27%) of the respondents said that their control over the household expenditure remained unaffected.

Table 3: Control over household expenditure

No.	Remarks	Mastung	Muslim Bagh	Total
1	Yes	47	26	73
2	No	3	24	27
Total:		50	50	100

Status of decision making in important family matters

The respondents were questioned whether their earning had affected their status of decision making in terms of important family matters. Out of the total, more than half (51%) women responded in agreement that their earning did cast an effect upon their status of decision-making. They said that their say in the important family matters had increased due to their earning.

Table 4: Status of decision making in family matters

No.	Remarks	Mastung	Muslim Bagh	Total
1	Yes	36	15	51
2	No	14	35	49
Total:		50	50	100

49% said that their earning did not have any impact on their status of decision-making and, therefore, they did not have any increased impact of having the say in the important family matters.

Perveen Ahmad reached more or less the same conclusions in her study of Bhadun, a village seventeen miles north of Dhaka, Bangladesh. In this community about 80% women work in their own homesteads for cash earnings. Although work outside the home was still frowned upon and domestic service was positively disliked, women have the support and respect of their men in their decision to make some money besides fulfilling their household duties. Most important of all, the status of an earning woman was enhanced in the family and community.

Conclusions

The study results shows that women in these two districts are mostly engaged in home based small scale economic activities like embroidery work, cutting and sewing, rearing poultry and selling eggs, ornament making, rug making, sheep and goat rearing and wool spinning. A small number of them were reported to be doing jobs like teaching, practicing as TBA and midwives etc. As joint family system was mostly common in these two districts, women were also sharing the house hold expenses by their involvement in economic activities. They mostly quoted the reasons for their involvement in economic activities as poverty, the added source of income, the need and requirement of the family and the poor income levels of the family members specially husbands. The uncertain nature of the jobs of their husbands' and the insufficient level of income from the job, the basic needs of the family are not fulfilled. In order to supplement the family expenses and provide financial assistance to their family members/husbands, women in most of the cases are left with no option other than to come forward and participate in economic activities besides performing household chores. The money received from their economic activities are mostly utilized for the basic needs of the family, however some respondents were reported collecting money to buy stuff for their marriages.

Regarding the control over their incomes, household expenditure and say in the family affairs, women from both the districts were reported to be having liberty to spend their income independently and their role in decision making in most of the family affairs was also remarkable. Their financial contribution was reported to be a source of enabling them to have say in the

important affairs of the family and was also considered to be valuable members of the community. The majority of the respondents expressed their feelings of satisfaction, happiness and pride for being useful to their families. Though at some places, some respondents said that they were fed up of constant hard work with little returns.

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