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Feminization of Poverty in Rural Pakistan: A case study of Peasant women using MPI (Multidimensional Poverty Index) in District Sarghoda Punjab

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Abstract

The present study aims at to analyze the feminization poverty in Sarghoda District of Punjab, Pakistan. The term “feminization of poverty” was coined by Diana Pearce in 1978 who claimed that women heads of households were the poorest of the poor (Pearce, 1978). This concept became very popular in the 1990s after the fourth United Nations Conference on Women. Yet, after a decade of research on the feminization of poverty, Sylvia Chant and many other researchers criticized the narrowness of the concept and highlighted the need of including the gender dimensions of poverty within the definition of feminization of poverty (Chant 2003; Moghadam 2005; Staveren & Odebode, 2007). Variables that are negatively and significantly correlated with probability of being poor are: Age of house hold head, education and employment. The study recommends policy interventions necessary to reduce poverty particularly focusing female-headed households including direct transfer of cash to such families and access to free education to their children.

1. Introduction

The United Nations announced the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 which asked for the “inclusion of people living in extreme poverty” and promised to “leave no one behind” while mentioning women as the majority of the

world's poor (UNGA, 2014). There was also a separate goal on “gender equality and empowerment of women and girls” (UN, 2015).

For more than two decades, researchers sought reasons for why women headed households were poorer compared to the male-headed households. For example, they explored the links between the feminization of poverty and household headship, noting that women-headed households experience greater extremes of poverty than male-headed units. Another element, commonly referred to as the “inter generational transmission of disadvantage,” is that the hardship of the women heads of households is passed on to their children (Chant, 1999), because, allegedly, women heads cannot “properly support their families or ensure their well-being” (Mehra et al., 2000).

In developing countries, main issue is the status of women, less access to research and capacity building activities in agriculture and to enhance the worth of women farmers. In Pakistan, rural area's women are half of total population and an important labor force. Most of the women labor force is working in agriculture field but unfortunately there is no documentation in this regards and they have no social status. In Pakistan, women have significant role in agriculture and they take part in all farming process like sowing, transplanting, weeding and harvesting, threshing etc. and care of livestock also. Women also take part in all household activities. Share of women in rural economy is almost 25 to 45%. Pakistani women contribute 68.90% in agriculture and alike activities but men have 38%. Almost 36 to 38% women work in their family farms. Women participation in labor force is increasing which was 9.9% in 2001-2002 and 13.5% in 2005-2006. Rate of women labor force is increasing which was 26% to 30.2% in 2005-2006. Women have to spend long time in working laundry, cooking food and working in farms (ESCAP, 1997).

In Pakistani society, females are not only to do the household tasks but also concerned in farming activities (Habib, 2000). They also seen in doing the farm duties of transplanting vegetables and crops, inter cultivating vegetables, weeds removing, picking cotton small fruits, vegetables, berries of all types, spraying herbicides and pesticides, harvesting wheat, rice and other crops (Panhwar, 1998). But this fact is also associated with the phenomenon that women are still in the web of poverty in Pakistan. Till now feminization of poverty among peasant women has not been

researched in Pakistan on public or private sector to describe the social conditions of rural women. This present research aims to investigate the above said phenomenon especially regarding peasant women in district Sargodha.

City Sargodha is situated in Punjab province of Pakistan. It is situated in north-east Pakistan, by the lower Jehlum canal and the north-west of Lahore. Sargodha is an agricultural city. With citrus (especially oranges), rice, wheat and Sugar cane being its main crops. Sargodha district is administratively divided into seven Tehsils namely Sargodha itself, Bhulwal, Shahpur, Sahiwal, Sillanwali, Kotmomin and Bhera. Among all the seven Tehsils the one with largest population is Sargodha having population density 835.28 per square kilometer. Rural population of all Tehsils has agricultural occupation. The peasant women of district Sargodha working in agricultural fields are contributing much in socioeconomic affairs of the family but we do not prefer their opinion in decision making process of the family, due to this reason the researcher has selected this topic for her study.

2. Literature Review

The correlates of poverty using “Qualitative response variable technique” using data from Nigerian national consumer survey of 2003-04. The paper took male household and female household age, household size, and education, being single or Muslim as independent variable. The finding of paper suggested that age of household head, quadratic of household size, residence in urban area, post-secondary education attainment, being a Christian and residence in south-south, south .east, south west, and north east zone of country are negatively and significantly correlated with probability of being poor (Anyanwu, 2012).

In Pakistani society, men are privileged in every sphere, whether it is public or private. The gender differences in intrahousehold resource distribution are due to a perception that young men will be the future earners, and hence, spending more on their education, health, and survival as compared to girls. Moreover, young women are considered a burden on the household budget as the marriage dowry has to be paid by the father and brothers. These economic calculations, along with gendered

concepts regarding the importance of marriage for women, have led to an under investment in young women compared to young men (Muzaffar et al., 2018). The present research, therefore, focuses more on context-specific gender issues, and how the traditional gender norms and stereotypes contribute towards the feminization of poverty.

Among the social welfare schemes, the Benazir Income Support Program was selected to analyze the perceptions of the officials of social welfare schemes focused on feminization of poverty. We chose BISP for analysis for several reasons. It is the largest social welfare scheme with a huge outreach across Pakistan; it launched in 2008, and expanded its coverage in the following years; it continued despite changing political governments as the quantified outputs of this program began to be used by multilateral institutions and IMF programs as indicators linked to disbursement; and BISP took the households as the unit of analysis, but targeted women below the poverty line for funds disbursement (Cheema et al., 2016).

Another strand of the literature stresses the interrelation between social exclusion, social capital and the occurrence of poverty and recognizes the importance of the structural characteristics of society and the situation of certain groups. Social exclusion and social capital theories are, among all the reviewed approaches, arguably the ones that focus most on understanding the intrinsic processes that allow deprivation to arise and persist. Nevertheless, the wide definition of poverty considered under these theories comes at the cost of being less precisely defined and more challenging to quantify and address by policy. (David.2005).

3. Methodology

This section serves the methodology employed by this study. Population, sampling technique and econometric method are discussed in this section.

3.1 Population

The current study is conducted to analyze the feminization of poverty in Sarghoda District, Punjab Pakistan.

3.2 Sampling

Keep in vision the nature of study, multistage sampling method was used. A Sargodha is a district comprising of seven Tehsils and 161 union councils including urban and rural. At first stage, out of 121 rural union councils one third (40) has been selected by using systematic random sampling technique and each third union council was chosen. At second stage, out of forty union councils, five union councils were selected from two Tehsils and six union councils were taken from five Tehsils by using simple random sampling. At third stage, one village was selected randomly through lottery method from each union council. At the final stage, seven women were approached in each village by using accidental sampling technique that made total of target population 200 peasant women.

3.3 Data Analysis

The researcher himself coded and put all the data on the computer using SPSS v.21, Chi-square and Correlation. The careful feeding of the questionnaire consumed adequate instant but it also minimize the arduous work of data cleaning on all stages till data analysis and at the end in report writing.

4. Results and Discussions

Table No.4.1: Distribution of Respondents with respect to their Age

| Sr. No | | Frequency | Percent |
|--------------|-------|------------|--------------|
| 1 | <30 | 42 | 21.0 |
| 2 | 31-35 | 37 | 18.5 |
| 3 | 36-40 | 46 | 23.0 |
| 4 | 40> | 75 | 37.5 |
| Total | | 200 | 100.0 |

This table represents the total age distribution of respondents. It shows that 37.5% (75) were above 40> years, 23.0% (46) were 36-40 years old, 21.0% (42) were under age of < 30 and 18.5% (37) were 31-35 years old. It shows that the majority of respondents were above the 40 years old.

Table No.4.2: Education Level of the Respondents

| Sr. No | Education | Frequency | Percent |
|--------------|------------|------------|--------------|
| 1 | Illiterate | 92 | 46.0 |
| 2 | Primary | 50 | 25.0 |
| 3 | Middle | 36 | 18.0 |
| 4 | Metric | 22 | 11.0 |
| Total | | 200 | 100.0 |

This table shows the education level of respondents. It depicts that 46.0% (92) were Illiterate, 25% (50) were Primary pass, 18.0% (36) were Middle pass and only 11.0% (22) were Metric pass. This shows that a large numbers of respondents were Illiterate.

Table No.4.3: Marital Status of the Respondents

| Sr. No | | Frequency | Percent |
|--------------|---------------------|------------|--------------|
| 1 | Married | 141 | 70.5 |
| 2 | Widow | 36 | 18.0 |
| 3 | Divorce | 20 | 10.0 |
| 4 | Any other (Specify) | 3 | 1.5 |
| Total | | 200 | 100.0 |

The above table reflects the respondents as per their marital status. According to this table 70.5% (141) were married, 18.0% (36) were widows, 10.0% (20) were Divorced and 1.5% (3) answered any other (Specify).

Table No.4.4: Occupation of the Heads of the House

| Sr. No | | Frequency | Percent |
|--------|---------------|-----------|---------|
| 1 | Agriculture | 108 | 54.0 |
| 2 | Govt. servant | 30 | 15.0 |
| 3 | Laborer | 56 | 28.0 |

| | | | |
|--------------|---------------------|------------|--------------|
| 4 | Any other (Specify) | 6 | 3.0 |
| Total | | 200 | 100.0 |

This table reflects the information about respondent’s family head’s occupation. From the occupational point of view, the majority of family head’s 54.0% (108) had Agriculture as occupation, 28.0% (56) family heads were Laborer.15.0% (30) were Government Servants, and only 3.0% (6) had any other (specify) occupation.

Table 4.5: Living Standard among Peasant Women.

| Living Standard among Peasant Women | Pearson Chi-Square | | Spearman Correlation | |
|--|---------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|------------------|
| | Estimated Value | Sig-Value | Estimated Value | Sig-Value |
| What is quality of commodities you use at home? | 30.290 | 0.000 | 0.291 | 0.000 |
| What is the way of cooking food? | 33.428 | 0.000 | 0.391 | 0.000 |
| Are you satisfied with the quality of food? | 9.412 | 0.024 | 0.205 | 0.004 |
| What is source of water for drinking or other use? | 32.789 | 0.000 | 0.342 | 0.000 |
| Are you satisfied about your water source? | 9.250 | 0.026 | 0.207 | 0.003 |
| Which type of sanitation system available in your area? | 40.530 | 0.000 | 0.086 | 0.224 |
| Are you satisfied with your standard of sanitation system? | 10.892 | 0.012 | 0.232 | 0.001 |
| Is electricity available in your area? | 12.859 | 0.005 | 0.132 | 0.063 |
| If available than what type of electrical appliances are used by family? | 27.331 | 0.001 | -0.021 | 0.771 |
| Do you have owner ship of any assets? | 12.216 | 0.057 | 0.021 | 0.768 |
| What is your status in family? | 17.115 | 0.047 | 0.219 | 0.002 |
| How much time of a day you spend at home? | 15.880 | 0.014 | -0.038 | 0.592 |
| From where you get the treatment? | 14.531 | 0.002 | 0.206 | 0.003 |

| | | | | |
|---|--------|-------|-------|-------|
| How do you arrange money for the treatment? | 25.450 | 0.000 | 0.187 | 0.008 |
|---|--------|-------|-------|-------|

From the results (p-value=0.024 is less than significant value) we can conclude that they were not satisfied with the quality of food. But the coefficient of correlation (value=0.205) shows that there is a very weak positive correlation between the satisfaction level with the quality of food and Living Standard among Peasant Women. From the results (p-value=0.012 is less than significant value) we can conclude that they were not satisfied about your water source. But the coefficient of correlation (value=0.207) shows that there is a very weak positive correlation between the satisfaction level about their water source and Living Standard among Peasant Women. Results also indicate that (p-value=0.026 is less than significant value) we can conclude that they were not satisfied with your standard of sanitation system. But the coefficient of correlation (value=0.232) shows that there is a very weak positive correlation between the satisfaction level about standard of sanitation system and Living Standard among Peasant Women. In our rural areas most of people use wood as a source of energy; they take water from hand pumps, eat fresh food but the sanitation system is not satisfactory in rural areas. They have electricity in their areas and they also utilized it for different purposes, load shading is the factor that disturbs their daily routine work. If someone becomes ill in their areas they go to government hospitals for treatment, they can't go to any private hospital because they can't afford the treatment from private hospitals.

Table 4.6 : Pearson Chi-Square

| | Estimated Value | D.f | Sig-Value |
|--|------------------------|------------|------------------|
| What is your age? | 71.913 | 9 | 0.000 |
| Do you own agricultural land? | 15.912 | 9 | .001 |
| If "yes" then what major crops do you or your family grows? | 34.468 | 9 | .000 |
| What type of animals do you have, please mention? | 43.473 | 9 | .000 |
| Do you have access to health services unit in the case of emergency? | 30.948 | 9 | .000 |

| | | | |
|---|---------|---|------|
| Do you get proper medical treatment and health services? | 36.742 | 9 | .000 |
| Are you consulted about child birth issues? | 20.779 | 9 | .002 |
| How much involvement do you have in determining the size of the family pertaining health? | 22.719 | 9 | .001 |
| If yes than what type of problem do you face? | 22.702 | 9 | .030 |
| Are you face the problem related child mortality? | 13.052 | 9 | .005 |
| Do you get proper education? | 98.625 | 9 | .000 |
| From where you got education? | 51.587 | 9 | .000 |
| From which class did you leave the school? | 55.916 | 9 | .000 |
| Years of schooling? | 64.042 | 9 | .000 |
| Education school due to finical problems? | 23.260 | 9 | .001 |
| Did you leave the school due to lack of interest in study? | 18.479 | 9 | .005 |
| Did you leave the school due to domestic problems? | 14.602 | 9 | .002 |
| Do you think that culture is the hurdle in your education? | 56.584 | 9 | .000 |
| Did you get religious education? | 85.374 | 9 | .000 |
| What is your family attitude about girl's education? | 130.017 | 9 | .000 |
| What is your status in family? | 19.273 | 9 | .023 |

This research study “Feminization of Poverty in Rural Pakistan: A Case Study of Peasant Women using MPI (Multidimensional Poverty Index) in District Sargodha Punjab, was designed to explore the role of peasant women in Multidimensional Poverty Index. The study resulted that the majority of respondents were above the 40 years old. The education level of respondents was such that 46.0% (92) were Illiterate. This shows that a large numbers of respondents were Illiterate.

5. Conclusion

Eliminating poverty is a worldwide goal among the developed as well as developing countries. However, there is no universally accepted definition of poverty. Poverty has always been defined in terms of financial or socioeconomic deprivation. Although there are lots of factors influencing the conceptualization of poverty including, social, cultural, economic and gender, Pakistan follows the traditional methodology based on nutritional norm. Based on this study, it is understood that Pakistan has always had trouble with the ways and means of defining poverty and identifying the poor.

The study reveals financial difficulties on the part of rural peasant women in Sargodha (Pakistan). The dearth of resources leads them to less calories and consequent bad health, which in turn leads the school-going household members to lack of education. Women from rural areas have lower strata class and being oppressed. Their part in increasing National income is not being appreciated though they are playing vital role especially women from rural areas. Household and agriculture labor like they are playing role in agriculture production as unpaid labor for the family. They also engage in free collection of fuel, water, fodder essential for family consumption or income earning activities but still they are not being impoverished. We should take example from country like Bangladesh their NGO

“ADAB” conducts workshop on grass-root level for the development of women and income generating activities are being provided to peasant women for alleviating poverty. Pakistan should introduce plan and programs for the well-being of women in society. The substantive elimination of gender gaps through appropriate policy design still remains a key challenge. Policies need to tackle gendered poverty in a

multifaceted and holistic approach in synergy with the promotion of women's greater labor market participation. The dual approach with a consequent application of gender mainstreaming in parallel with specific actions is essential. Micro credit loan schemes would also play vital role to make these peasant women independent because majority of them are suffering from poverty so there is dire need to develop such structures and institutions on government and on private level to empower peasant women.

6. Recommendations

- Multidimensional poverty index should be considered to allocate the resources to reduce poverty.
- The government should improve the quality of education in public sector schools so that parents should feel them at ease to send their kids to public sector schools.
- Awareness seminars should be conducted by government periodically regarding nutritional intake and dietary requirements.

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