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## Nexus between Gender inequality and livelihood diversification: Special reference educational inequalities in Southern Punjab, Pakistan

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### ABSTRACT

Gender inequality is prevailing over the globe, particularly within developing countries like Pakistan. Livelihood diversification strategies have gained significant attention, demonstrating positive effects on livelihoods, particularly in rural contexts. However, feminist studies have consistently highlighted gender inequality as a hindrance to livelihood diversification among rural households. Women's involvement in rural household livelihood diversification is influenced by these gendered dynamics. Therefore, the primary objective of this study is to examine the relationship between gender inequality in education and livelihood diversification within the context of southern Punjab, Pakistan. In present study quantitative data is obtained from a sample of 416 respondents drawn randomly. Quantitative data were collected with the help of an interview schedule and analyzed by using SPSS. The findings of the study reveal that the majority of the respondents showed a great extent of response towards the lack of access to education that contributes to gender inequality. Empowering women through access to education and active participation in the economy is crucial for achieving gender equality. Creating specialized job opportunities for women, government interventions and gender equality awareness campaigns are essential to ensure effective policies in addressing gender inequality. Together, these efforts can lead to a significant transformation in gender equality in southern Punjab of Pakistan specifically and across the globe generally.

**Keywords:** Gender inequality, education, livelihood, diversification, Pakistan

### Introduction

Every single individual is biologically classified as either male, female, or intersex at birth. However, gender is a social construct that is often based on the expectations placed on

individuals predicated mostly on their sex (Quisumbing *et al.*, 2015).

The strategic deployment of gender as a factor to be taken into account. Gender is not only a theoretical concept and a methodology, but also a practical approach that recognizes the inherent biases in development interventions, including policies, programmes, projects, and activities. Such initiatives can potentially widen the gaps between different individuals and groups. Irrespective of the discipline or field of intervention, every project has diverse impacts and consequences on individuals belonging to different age groups, genders, and residing in rural or urban areas. A gender strategy, also known as gender integration or gender mainstreaming, entails identifying, analysing, and correcting gender inequities and disparities at every step of a development endeavor, from identification through assessment (Luqman *et al.*, 2013).

Numerous researches have come to the conclusion that roles for men and women are different and not equal. As a result, the idea of "gender" was required to define how men and women are classified by society into various groups based on what they should do, how they should act, etc. The term "gender" was originally introduced in the 1940s by John Money in a discourse intended to justify sex change. It was not until the late 1960s that it was used in the social sciences, and since that time, the issue of gender has been essential to debates of social life (Nusrat, 2021).

The study of gender is a multidisciplinary area that can be approached from various academic disciplines. While primarily associated with feminist theories, the concept may also be elucidated and defined by various other fields, including but not limited to biology, sociology, psychology, language, literature, anthropology, and political science. The methodologies and rationales employed by these disciplines in their examination of gender exhibit variability. Several hypotheses have been proposed to investigate the acquisition of gender and its impact on linguistic behaviour within a community. Sociological theories focus on the socio-structural factors that contribute to the formation of gender roles and functioning, physiologically oriented theories, for instance, attribute gender disparities to the various biological roles that men and women perform. In other words, these theories place a lot of emphasis on how gender roles are socially constructed at the institutional level, whereas psychological methods put a lot of emphasis on how these roles are constructed at the individual level (Mudege and Ezech, 2009).

Gender inequality is primarily the consequence of human behavior that denies individual their human rights. Societies have set standards of gender to look at man and woman. In general women are not included in decision making process. They are kept away from economic activities and livelihood diversification both in household and in communities. These cultural and social restrictions hinder woman's ability to diversify their livelihood. All these restrictions when added with gender specific suppression leads to circumstances which worsen their condition in gender inequality and poverty. Male and female in societies face different and unequal roles and responsibilities in rural livelihood and all these things decide their access to resources and assets. Although woman work in house and farms along with males still this diversification is not acknowledged and articulate but in recent years these responsibilities and gender specific roles and duties are getting a bit change (Mudege and Ezeh, 2009).

Culture and custom strengthen the degree of disparity in the general public and families. The social standards about livelihoods in the social relations and families are viewed as facilitator and producer of gender inequality. It has been studied that culture and customs are the hindrance for improvement. Compared to men of the same race and class, the lives of rural women include less status, power, authority, and access to resources. It has been noted that inequality has a negative impact on women's ability to contribute effectively to the success of livelihood diversification. Women are viewed as the planners and managers of the family's means of subsistence, and their efforts to diversify their sources of income are thwarted by the mountains of social and cultural norms, values, standards, and convictions (Alam, 2011).

Only agriculture is unable to fulfill their food and money need. As a result, those families focus more on food as compare to cash. The deficiency of cash leads to old farming practices. This means low quality things to offer in market and subsequently less flow of cash toward farmer. This less flow of cash will lead farmer to again use the old farming practices which he already has and again the cycle of cash lag behind. This might prompt deficient farming practices that may not permit a farmer to offer the items to achieve cash on the grounds that for an adequate farming to happen it requires an enormous space of land so there can be more items that are created by the homestead. Typically, the unfortunate families are unable to provide for family utilizations. Because of less access to land, the families are not able to diversify their livelihoods (Carr, 2008).

Regional differences in Pakistan are a major factor in the country's worsening economic situation. In 1999 and thereafter, there was a clear societal devaluation of women compared to men. Luqman *et al.* (2013), in their research stated that throughout their lives, women in Pakistan face a dearth of opportunities resulting in adverse effects of poverty. The literacy rate for females in Pakistan stands at 29%, which is significantly lower than the male literacy rate of 55% (Mirza *et al.*, 2015).

In the realm of rural households, there exists a concept known as livelihood diversification, which has been beautifully defined by Ellis (2000). This concept encapsulates a profound process wherein these households diligently cultivate and establish a myriad of both on-farm and non-farm activities and strategies. The ultimate aim of this endeavour is to broaden their horizons, enhance their quality of life, and elevate their standards of living to unprecedented heights. In the realm of developing nations, there exists a glimmer of hope, a belief that the cultivation of diverse livelihoods may hold the key to alleviating the burdens of poverty and ushering in an era of enhanced economic prosperity (Frelat *et al.*, 2016).

Livelihoods are a significant piece of country individuals' approach to everyday life. Additionally, it should be understood and perceived that livelihoods are implanted in individuals' narratives, societies, customs, connections and the climate, all of which change after some time (Israr and Khan 2010). The very first sustainable livelihood asset is human capital, it consists of expertise, knowledge, skills, labor, condition of health of that particular person to perform livelihood strategies. Second asset of sustainable livelihood is social capital and this comprises of networking, links with other groups and member of those groups, trust relations, approach and contact with large number of institutions of the society in chase of better livelihood. Third sustainable livelihood asset is physical capital and it is consisting of basic infrastructure which includes, modes of transportation, water access, land, energy, mode and methods of communications, the equipment used for production, shelter for sustaining their livelihood. The fourth sustainable livelihood asset is financial and it comprises of capital, income, savings, credits, cash, pensions which help than improve their livelihood (Mokgokong, 2010).

Women practice the majority of rural household livelihoods as a survival strategy, but those specific livelihoods are not considered as fulfilling. The primary reason might be because women do not have the same assets as males, such as access to usable assets and resources

such as land, capital, credit, labour, and training (Khan, 2008).

The education of women has been shown to have a positive impact on various aspects of society, including economic efficiency, profits, labor market participation, and overall well-being and prosperity. According to the study conducted by Tembon and Fort in 2008, it was found that social class is now embedded in the economy. That is, one may achieve and retain status in the class structure through familial position. In the economy, one's ethnic and racial status might have an impact on one's position. Gender as it is defined in society helps to apportion place and worth by the society. Gender disparities are prevalent in our culture. Males discriminate against women in our culture because males have authority. In our country, the attributed and accomplished role of men is different. At the moment, there is significant gender difference in rights, roles, and tasks (Wald, 2011).

Most Asians prefer a baby male over a baby girl because they believe that a baby boy would boost their household income more than a baby girl. They believe that women cannot provide them with profit. Women are seen as less important for labour in China (Xie, 2014). Gender disparity is also prominent in the education sector in China, because they believed that one day a girl will marry and carry children while undertaking home duties. Gender disparity exists in a culture when people have strong emotions about gender roles. This way of thinking has an impact on gender inequality and women's rights (Hannum *et al.*, 2009).

In the tribal and rural regions of Pakistan, there is a significant lack of educational opportunities specifically for women. At the household level, individuals often face challenges and constraints. In this context, males are typically assigned the responsibility of residing within the house and engaging in labor activities to support the family (Noureen and Awan, 2011).

## **Review of literature**

Studies have shown that women make considerable participation at agriculture farms and household. In farm they contribute indirectly by actively participating in farming activities and in household by performing household chores especially in those houses where men migrate to increase their income according to Kleinbooi and Lahiff (2007) woman's part is always a traditional one in farm life but that part is not ever considered or titled as employment. The entire efforts women make in their livelihood are considered as duties of them as being

woman and they are considered as contribution to address local needs, diversifying the services within a community (Kebede *et al.*, 2014).

The importance of education cannot be overstated in anyone's life. Since it fosters an environment with reduced or no poverty in later years, delays in marriage, and ensures access to the labor market, high-quality early childhood education is an essential part of childhood. However, discriminatory social norms like early marriage and domestic employment result in observable gender discrepancy in schooling beyond national boundaries. Girls marry early in families where educational ideals are less valued. When compared to unmarried girls of the same age, married girls who had dropped out of school before the age of 18 were counted at 16%, while unmarried females were counted at 36% secondary education disparities in 2012: 84 and 93 girls for every 100 boys in South and West Asia, respectively (UNICEF, 2021).

Verick, (2018) in his research stated that girls in underprivileged communities rarely enroll in school, as seen by gender and other discrepancies. Almost 70% of disadvantaged females had never attended school, just like in Niger and Guinea in 2000. Financial success and education level are significantly correlated. Structured norms at the macro- and micro-levels restrict girls' access to education. On a larger scale, the availability of jobs affects women's participation in the labour force and calls for educating women and girls (Verick, 2018).

Montenegro and Patrinos, (2014) find out that in Pakistan in particular, there are a number of micro-level barriers to girls' education, including a dearth of female teachers, political indifference, religion, accessibility issues, and the reinforcement of traditional gender roles (cultural norms). The likelihood that girls will pursue an education can be significantly impacted by external shocks and economic crises. Later in life, these challenges have a negative impact on their empowerment. Because women in low-income nations make more money each year from attending school than men do, there are significant opportunity costs.

In Pakistani families, men are favored (Kanwal *et al.*, 2016) and females are seen as a financial obligation, while having sons is a matter of values. Girls register in fewer classes the closer they are to a school that accepts them by 500 meters, and this "distance penalty" is what accounts for 60% of the gender enrolment disparity. In every caste, class, and location, girls are expected to marry and return home to their husbands, thus families do not place a

high importance on funding their education. Education for girls is seen as a financial loss. So, sons are much more likely than daughters to get an education from their parents.

In order to examine the effects of gender-based disparities in educational access on poverty levels, the current study used logistic regression analysis, which was informed by data from a thorough field survey done in the Multan region by Rahman et al. (2018). The results of the empirical research indicate a clear correlation between the phenomenon of gender inequality in the educational sphere and the persistent problem of household poverty. A definite reduction in the likelihood of household poverty is seen when female enrolment in elementary, secondary, and postsecondary education exceeds that of male enrollment. The rise in the female to male literacy ratio concurrently prevents the eradication of low-income households.

Sasaquat and Sheikh in (2011) conducted research on the association between educational attainment and poverty rates in Pakistan. According to the findings of this study, higher levels of education are connected with lower levels of poverty. Higher education increases a person's potential to earn more money, hence people with higher levels of education have a better chance of escaping poverty. In relation to the "feminization of poverty," the study discovered that men have a lower chance of becoming impoverished than women. The study's findings indicate that immediate action is required to promote a welcoming workplace environment for women, equal educational and training opportunities, and resources aimed at the education sector, particularly higher education, to help eradicate poverty and improve societal well-being.

Chaudhry (2009) stated that the male members of the family were the ones who made the decisions. As a consequence of unequal distribution of resources, women faced a greater risk of falling into poverty. Education for women is a key factor in reducing poverty, which is ironic given that gender inequality is a barrier to the reduction of poverty. It has been suggested that promoting gender equality and reducing levels of poverty by affording men and women the same social rights, educational opportunities, and opportunities to expand their skill sets could be advantageous to the growth of each gender and the reduction of poverty.

## **Objectives**

- To study the socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of the respondents and To investigate the gender inequality in education and its relationship with the livelihood diversification in Southern Punjab, Pakistan
- To suggest a way forward for redressing gender inequality and improving the chances for livelihoods diversification

## Methodology

In this study, a multi-phase sampling approach was used because it is a good sample strategy when the target population is big and the researcher has limited time and resources. The sample selection process is divided into two or more parts in multiphase sampling. The nature of the sampling technique changes from step to stage, and the final phase provides the researchers with the necessary sample or unit of analysis. Punjab province's first sampling included two districts: Dera Ghazi Khan and Rajanpur.

At the first stage Dera Ghazi Khan was selected. The study was conducted in district D.G. Khan and Rajanpur. In the third stage, 8 union councils were selected from Rajanpur and from Dera Ghazi Khan District 8 union councils were also selected. At the fourth stage, 2 villages from each Union Council will be selected randomly. At 5th stage, 13 respondents from each village will be selected through random sampling.

At final stage a sample of 416 respondent was selected randomly with the help of online sample size calculator that is counter verified by using Fitz Gibbon Table. The number of households in each UC, each village and each household were randomly selected. In accordance with the requirement for multi-stage random sampling technology, sampling units were randomly selected at all stages (GOP, 2018).

## Results and Discussions

**Table 1: Distribution of respondents by their age**

Age	Frequency	%
18-24	15	3.6
25-30	70	16.8



31-35	109	26.2
36-40	100	24.0
40+	122	29.3
<b>Total</b>	416	100.0

The table represents the frequency and percentage distribution of the age of respondents in a sample of 416 individuals. The respondents are categorized into five age groups: 18-24, 25-30, 31-35, 36-40, and 40+.

The 18-24 age group has 15 respondents, which represents 3.6% of the total sample. This means that out of the 416 respondents, only 15 are between the ages of 18-24. The 25-30 age group has 70 respondents, which represents 16.8% of the total sample. This means that out of the 416 respondents, 70 are between the ages of 25-30. The 31-35 age group has 109 respondents, which represents 26.2% of the total sample. This means that out of the 416 respondents, 109 are between the ages of 31-35. The 36-40 age group has 100 respondents, which represents 24.0% of the total sample. This means that out of the 416 respondents, 100 are between the ages of 36-40. The 40+ age group has 122 respondents, which represents 29.3% of the total sample. This means that out of the 416 respondents, 122 are 40 years of age or older.

The study by Oyowe and Berno (2020) examines the relationship between the age of respondents and livelihood diversification. The study found that older respondents were more likely to diversify their livelihoods than younger respondents. This is likely because older respondents have more experience and knowledge of different livelihood options, and they may be more willing to take risks. The study also found that older respondents were more likely to be engaged in non-farm activities, such as trading and petty business. This is likely because non-farm activities can provide a more stable source of income, and they can be less physically demanding than farming.

**Table 2: Distribution of respondents by education**

Education	Frequency	%
Illiterate	155	37.3
Primary	102	24.5
Middle	62	14.9

Metric	41	9.9
Inter	33	7.9
Graduate and above	23	5.5
<b>Total</b>	416	100.0

The table shows the frequency and percentage distribution of the education level of a sample of 416 individuals. The respondents are categorized into six education levels: illiterate, primary, middle, metric, intermediate, and graduate and above.

The illiterate group has 155 respondents, which represents 37.3% of the total sample. This means that out of the 416 respondents, 155 are illiterate. The primary group has 102 respondents, which represents 24.5% of the total sample. This means that out of the 416 respondents, 102 have completed primary education. The middle group has 62 respondents, which represents 14.9% of the total sample. This means that out of the 416 respondents, 62 have completed middle education.

The metric group has 41 respondents, which represents 9.9% of the total sample. This means that out of the 416 respondents, 41 have completed metric education. The intermediate group has 33 respondents, which represents 7.9% of the total sample. This means that out of the 416 respondents, 33 have completed intermediate education. The graduate and above group has 23 respondents, which represents 5.5% of the total sample. This means that out of the 416 respondents, 23 have completed graduate education or above.

Studies of Ho and Ha (2017) also explained that it is difficult for a woman to produce better livelihood as compare to males as resources like education is less accessible to women. The study by Gyawali and Malla (2016) stated in their research that education has a positive impact on livelihood diversification. Households with more educated members are more likely to participate in non-farm activities, such as wage labor, business, and petty trade. This is because education provides people with the skills and knowledge, they need to take on new opportunities and to be more productive in their work.

**Table 3: Distribution of respondents by pattern of gender inequality in household**

**N=416**

Pattern of gender inequality in household	To Great Extent		To Some Extent		Not At All	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Gender Inequality exist in community	221	53.1	155	37.3	40	9.6
Gender Inequality in household chores	211	50.7	146	35.1	59	14.1
Gender Inequality in Household	210	50.5	148	35.6	58	13.9
Taking care of Elderly and Sick	204	49	158	38	54	13
Responsible for money making activities	178	42.8	162	83.9	76	18.3
Only female do domestic work, child care sick and elderly	167	40.1	165	39.7	84	20.2
Only males for community voluntary work	182	43.8	143	34.4	91	21.9

This table shows the pattern of gender inequality in the household based on the respondents' perception. The respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement or disagreement with different statements related to gender inequality on a three-point scale: "To Great Extent," "To Some Extent," and "Not At All." The majority of respondents (53.1%) agreed that gender inequality exists in their community to a great extent, while 37.3% agreed to some extent, and 9.6% disagreed. Similarly, 50.7% of respondents agreed that gender inequality exists in household chores to a great extent, while 35.1% agreed to some extent, and 14.1% disagreed.

When it comes to gender inequality in the household in general, 50.5% of respondents agreed that it exists to a great extent, while 35.6% agreed to some extent, and 13.9% disagreed. Taking care of the elderly and sick is also perceived to have some degree of gender inequality, with 49% of respondents agreeing to some extent, while 38% agreed to a great extent, and 13% disagreed. Regarding the responsibility for money-making activities, only 42.8% of respondents agreed that it is done by both genders to some extent, while 83.9% agreed to a great extent, and 18.3% disagreed. The majority of respondents (40.1%) agreed that only females should do domestic work, child care, sick, and elderly care to some extent, while

39.7% agreed to a great extent, and 20.2% disagreed.

Finally, the majority of respondents (43.8%) agreed that only males should do community and voluntary work to some extent, while 34.4% agreed to a great extent, and 21.9% disagreed. Overall, these results suggest that gender inequality is perceived to exist in various aspects of the household, although the degree of inequality varies among the respondents. According to Fallah et al., (2017) study finds that gender inequality has a negative and significant impact on livelihood diversification. Households with higher levels of gender inequality are less likely to diversify their livelihoods by engaging in non- farm activities.

**Table 4: Association between gender inequality in education and livelihood diversification**

Education		Livelihood diversification			
		To great extent	To some extent	Not at all	Total
<b>Illiterate</b>	Count	31	62	62	155
	% within Edu of respondent	20.0%	40.0%	40.0%	100.0%
<b>Primary</b>	Count	10	35	57	102
	% within Edu of respondent	9.8%	34.3%	55.9%	100.0%
<b>Middle</b>	Count	9	22	31	62
	% within Edu of respondent	14.5%	35.5%	50.0%	100.0%
<b>Metric</b>	Count	1	18	23	41
	% within Edu of respondent	3.0%	40.9%	56.1%	100.0%
<b>Inter</b>	Count	1	9	23	33
	% within Edu of respondent	3.0%	27.3%	69.7%	100.0%
<b>Graduate and above</b>	Count	10	12	1	23
	% within Edu of respondent	43.5%	52.0%	4.5%	100.0%
<b>Total</b>	Count	61	159	196	416
	% within Edu of respondent	14.7%	38.2%	47.1%	100.0%

Test	Value	d.f.	significance
$\chi^2$	49.3	10	.000
gamma	0.055	--	.000
Sommer's test	0.081	--	.000

Here is each category of education and its association with the independent variable (livelihood diversification) in more detail: Illiterate: In the Illiterate category, there were 155 respondents in total. Among them, 31 respondents (20.0%) reported engaging in livelihood diversification to a great extent, 62 respondents (40.0%) reported doing so to some extent, and 62 respondents (40.0%) reported not engaging in livelihood diversification at all. The association between being illiterate and livelihood diversification is statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ), according to the Pearson Chi-square test, gamma coefficient, and Sommer's test.

Primary: In the Primary category, there were 102 respondents in total. Among them, 10 respondents (9.8%) reported engaging in livelihood diversification to a great extent, 35 respondents (34.3%) reported doing so to some extent, and 57 respondents (55.9%) reported not engaging in livelihood diversification at all. Middle: In the Middle category, there were 62 respondents in total. Among them, 9 respondents (14.5%) reported engaging in livelihood diversification to a great extent, 22 respondents (35.5%) reported doing so to some extent, and 31 respondents (50.0%) reported not engaging in livelihood diversification at all.

Metric: In the Metric category, there were 41 respondents in total. Among them, 1 respondent (3.0%) reported engaging in livelihood diversification to a great extent, 18 respondents (40.9%) reported doing so to some extent, and 23 respondents (56.1%) reported not engaging in livelihood diversification at all. In the Intermediate category, there were 33 respondents in total. Among them, 1 respondent (3.0%) reported engaging in livelihood diversification to a great extent, 9 respondents (27.3%) reported doing so to some extent, and 23 respondents (69.7%) reported not engaging in livelihood diversification at all. Graduate and above: In the Graduate and above category, there were 23 respondents in total. Among them, 10 respondents (43.5%) reported engaging in livelihood diversification to a great extent, 13 respondents (52%) reported doing so to some extent, and 1 respondent reported not engaging in livelihood diversification at all.

**Pearson Chi-square Test:** The Pearson Chi-square test is used to assess the association between two categorical variables. Since the p-value is less than the chosen significance level (typically 0.05), the result is considered statistically significant. It suggests that there is a significant association between education levels and livelihood diversification. **Gamma:** Gamma is a measure of association used for ordinal variables, which capture the order or rank of categories. In this context, gamma measures the strength and direction of the association between education levels and livelihood diversification. The gamma coefficient (0.055) ranges from -1 to +1, where values closer to -1 or +1 indicate stronger associations. The associated p-value (0.000) suggests that the observed gamma coefficient is statistically significant, indicating a significant association between education levels and livelihood diversification. **Sommer's Test:** Sommer's test is another measure of association for ordinal variables, specifically designed for square tables. It assesses the strength and direction of the association between education levels and livelihood diversification. The test statistic (0.081) measures the degree of association, with values closer to 1 indicating stronger associations. The p-value (0.000) indicates the statistical significance of the observed association. Since the p-value is less than the chosen significance level, it indicates a significant association between education levels and livelihood diversification. In the research of Islam and Khan (2017), it has been stated that higher levels of education contribute to skill acquisition, which, in turn, enables individuals to engage in a wider range of income-generating activities. Education helps individuals develop the necessary skills and knowledge to participate in diverse livelihood options.

## **Conclusion**

Livelihoods diversification is a common practice among individuals and households in rural areas of developing countries as a means of survival and income generation. The significance of the diversity of livelihoods in rural survival is often disregarded by policymakers. The study has found that gender inequality in women's active participation in livelihoods diversification is primarily driven by traditional, cultural, and social factors. These constructions act as limiting factors for women at both the community and household level.

Over all, these findings suggest that socio-economic factors and gender inequality indicators play a role in determining the likelihood of engaging in livelihood diversification. Education and age are important considerations when studying livelihood diversification.

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