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Research

Physical and Geographical Impediments to Female Higher Education in High Mountainous Nagar District, Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan

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Abstract: *This study was aimed to identify and examine the physical and geographical impediments to female higher education in the high mountainous rural Nagar district of Pakistan. District Nagar is one of the ten districts of Gilgit-Baltistan province located in the extreme north of Pakistan. The study adopted a descriptive research design. Both primary and secondary data were used for this study. A sum of 160 sample size comprised of female students, parents and teachers were purposively selected. Primary data was collected through a well-structured questionnaire from the field by interviewing 160 respondents and a five-point Likert scale was used to record the responses. While secondary data were retrieved from the literature review and government reports. The data was coded and analyzed with the help of excel sheet and presented in the form of charts and tables. The findings of the study revealed that lack of infrastructure, lack of transport services, the remoteness of education institutions and isolation from urban cities are the main physical and geographical impediments to female higher education in district Nagar. The researcher suggested that local and provincial governments should take some proactive steps to address the physical and geographical impediments to female higher education in the study area.*

***Keywords**: Physical, Geographical, Impediments, High mountainous, Higher education.*

1. Introduction

Female education has been considered crucial to sustainable development across the globe. Majgaard and Mingat (2012) highlighted that female education is one of the measures to

encourage the better social and economic development of the country. Similarly, Hashmi, Zafar and Ali (2009) cited that female education is vital for the betterment of the social, economic, political and cultural sectors of the society. It is considered an essential factor to empower women in all segments of society. As Barro (1999) mentioned that educated females can take part more efficiently in political matters than the uneducated counterpart. Globally, low female education as compared to a male counterpart is a common phenomenon especially in the developing part of the world (Dancer and Rammohan, 2004). This low level of education is caused by different socio-cultural, economic, physical and geographical impediments.

Pakistan is among the developing countries where there is a significant gender disparity in the education sector, especially in the mountainous rural areas. According to the Human Development Index (2018) ranking, Pakistan has been placed at 150th position out of 189 nations in the world. The UNESCO (2013) report mentioned that Pakistan is among the countries in the world with over 3 million girls out of schools and 62 % of poorest females aged (7-16) have never been to school. According to the government of Pakistan (2016), the female literacy rate is only 45 % as compared to 68 % male literacy rate. This situation is worse and alarming in high mountainous remote rural areas where the literacy rate for females is only 22 % as compared to a male literacy rate of 53 % (Murtaza, 2012).

The gender disparities in the education sector of Pakistan are caused by several socio-cultural, economic, physical and geographical impediments. According to Anzar (1999), the most crucial physical impediments that affect female education in Pakistan are lack of teachers and lack of educational infrastructure. Similarly, Arif, Saqib and Zahid (1999) mentioned that despite having enough potential and motivation most females are unable to get education due to lack of infrastructure and other physical facilities. In Pushtoon culture, female education is affected by accessibility issues, as females are limited to the four walls of households (Daraz, 2012). In the same way, Haq (2000) argued that in Pushtoon society of Pakistan absence of female teachers in educational institutions is one of the most concerning physical impediments. In Pushtoon society, parents feel insecure and they don't like that their daughter's to be taught by male teachers.

The female education in the remote rural areas of Pakistan has also been affected by different geographical impediments along with physical impediments. Latif (2007) mentioned that

accessibility is one of the major hindrances for female education in Pakistan. In remote rural areas, educational institutions are located at a far distance and there is no transport facility, so parents feel insecure to send their daughters to the educational institution due to remoteness (Daraz, 2012). According to Jamal (2016) in northwest Pakistan, educational institutions are located away from villages and girls have to walk to attend the schools and colleges. Due to the fear of harassment parents are reluctant and feel insecure to send their daughters to far distances to get the education. These cultural and geographic impediments have hindered female education in these remote rural areas.

The situation of female education in high mountainous rural areas of Pakistan is quite different from the rest of the country based on its geographical location. According to the Gilgit-Baltistan education strategy (2015), almost 86 % of the population of Gilgit-Baltistan resides in rural areas. This area is sparsely populated and the majority of people live in high mountainous rural villages. The students in these areas are suffering from physical impediments like the poor physical environment in schools and lack of facilities in the schools. Murtaza (2012) found that in high mountainous rural areas of Gilgit-Baltistan the geographical location is the main impediment for female higher education. It is very difficult for the females of these areas to attend the educational institutions through walk for several hours on a daily basis. According to Shafa (2011), the geophysical conditions of Gilgit-Baltistan have affected the female higher education. Most people in these areas live in remote high mountainous rural areas. Under these circumstances, it is quite difficult for female students to attend schools and colleges.

1.1.Research Problem

The government of Pakistan is striving hard to improve the state of female education in the country through several policy pronouncements and institutional changes but there is a significant gap between the literacy rate of males and females living in mountainous rural areas. At the national level, several studies have been conducted on physical and geographical impediments to female education in Pakistan but the mountainous rural areas lack such kind of studies. Therefore, it was imperative to identify the physical and geographical impediments which are hampering the female education in the mountainous rural district Nagar. This study analyzes that to what extent and to what aspects physical and geographical impediments are affecting female education in the study area.

1.2.Objectives of the study

- To identify the physical and geographical impediments to female higher education in high mountainous Nagar district.
- To find out the most influential physical and geographical impediments to female higher education in high mountainous Nagar district.
- To propose appropriate policy recommendations to the policymakers and government authorities to address physical and geographical impediments to female higher education in the Nagar district.

2. Research Methodology

This study was carried out in district Nagar, one of the ten districts of Gilgit-Baltistan province situated in the extreme north of Pakistan. District Nagar is situated at an elevation of 2338 m above sea level. According to TRF Islamabad, (2012) the total population of this area is 68305 with an annual growth rate of 3.1%. This study adopted a survey descriptive research design. Both primary and secondary data were collected for this study. Primary data was collected through a well-structured questionnaire from the field by interviewing 160 respondents and a five-point Likert scale was used to record the responses. While secondary data were retrieved from the literature review and government reports. The respondents of the study were comprised of three strata's female students, parents, and teachers. Initially, these three types of respondents were selected through a stratified sampling technique. Within each stratum, respondents were selected through purposive sampling technique. The sample of 160 respondents was selected and the sample was comprised of 80 female students, 40 parents and 40 teachers. As district Nagar comprised of 20 villages and out of 20 villages 3 villages (Phekar, Gulmet and Chalat) were randomly selected and the sample was selected from these three villages. The target population was comprised of girl's colleges present in these three villages, parents and teachers. Respondents were of three type's female students, parents, and teachers. Female students having 12 years of minimum schooling, or who left education after 12 years of schooling. The household heads (parents) who had one college or university going girl having the age of 15-35. The teachers who were teaching currently in the girl's schools and colleges of the study area. Finally, the data was collected with the help of questionnaires, interview guide, and observation and then data was coded and interpreted on the excel sheet. Then data were analyzed with the help of descriptive statistics and presented through percentage, frequency tables, bar graphs, and

pie charts, etc. At the last stage, the analyzed data were interpreted in the light of the set objectives of the study.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1.Descriptive analysis of demographic data

The demographic data about the respondents was collected from filed through a questionnaire. Then the demographic data was presented in the form of descriptive statistics i.e. average, standard deviation, minimum and maximum as shown in the following table.

Table 3.1: Descriptive analysis of demographic data

Type of respondents	Variables	Avg.	S. Dev	Min	Max
Students	Age in years	20.2	2.6	16	28
	Educational level in years	13.8	1.1	12	16
	No. of household members	9.7	2.5	4	18
	Education of father in years	5.8	6.4	0	16
	Education of mother in years	0.4	1.7	0	10
Parents	Age in years	49.3	13.2	25	70
	HH monthly income in PKR	30212.5	14139.8	9000	70000
	No. of school going boys	2	1.4	0	6
	No. of school going girls	2.4	1.6	0	7
Teachers	The educational level in years	15.4	1.1	12	16
	Teaching experience in years	6.3	4.6	2	25

Key: Avg=Average S.Dev=Standard deviation Min=Minimum Max=Maximum HH=Household

Table 3.1 indicates that the average age of respondents (female students) was 20.2 years. While the standard deviation was 2.6 which depicts that each data set is close to average. Similarly, the average educational level of respondents (female students) was 13.8 years. The standard deviation for the educational level of students was 1.1 which shows the less variability of value from the average class level. The average household size was in the study area was 9.7. The average education level of the student's father was 5.8 while the mother's average educational level was 0.4. The standard deviation of the father education was 6.4 which shows that the data values are dispersed away from the average value. Table 4.2 also shows that the average age of parents was 49.3. The standard deviation was 13.2 which shows the great variability of ages of parents from average age. The average monthly household income was 30212.5 (Pakistani rupee). The standard deviation for the household monthly income was 14139.8 which shows

huge variability in the data set values of parent's income. The average number of school-going boys was 2 while the average number of school-going girls was 2.4. Similarly, the average educational level of teachers in the study area was 15.4 and the average teaching experience was 6.3 years.

3.2. Physical and geographical impediments to female higher education in district Nagar

This study was aimed to identify and analyze the impact of physical and geographical impediments on female higher education in district Nagar. To address this objective, the researcher sought views of female students, parents, and teachers regarding the geographical impediments to female education higher education. The responses of respondents were analyzed and presented in the form of charts and tables as given below.

Figure 3.1: To what extent physical and geographical impediments are affecting female higher education? (The results of responses given by respondent's female students)

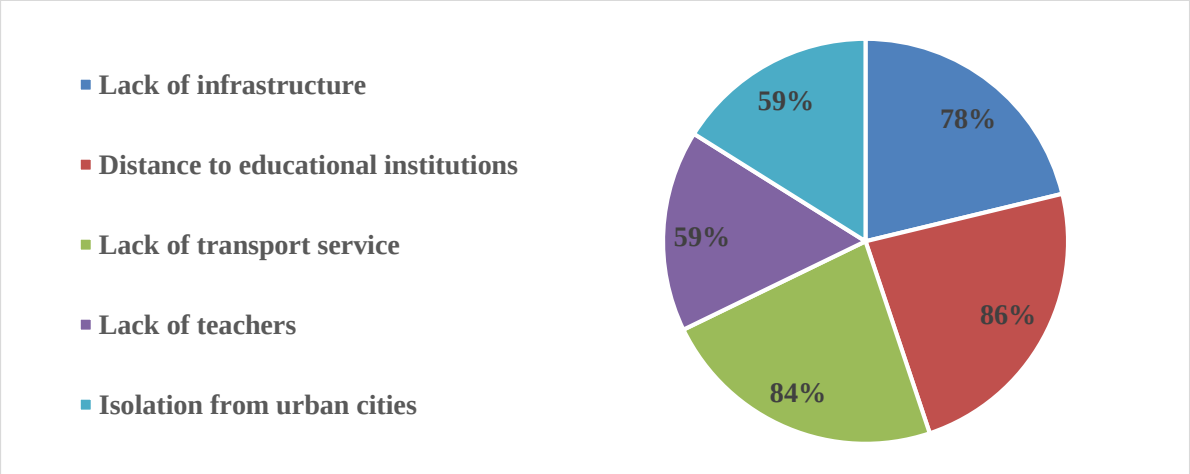

Figure 3.1 presents the responses of female students about the question to what extent different physical and geographical impediments affect female higher education. The results in figure 3.1 show that in the study area the most concerning physical and geographical impediments were the distance to educational institutions, lack of transport services and lack of infrastructure with percentages 86 %, 84 % and 78 % respectively. So according to female students physical and geographical impediments like distance to educational institutions, lack of transport services and lack of infrastructure have the most significant impact on female higher education in the high mountainous rural Nagar district.

3.3. Geographical/Physical impediments to female higher education according to the respondent's female students

Table 3.2: Percentage distribution of female student's responses against physical and geographical impediments to female education in district Nagar

No	Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Average	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	Lack of infrastructure is a hurdle for female higher education.	22.5	43.8	22.5	1.3	10
2	Lack of transport service is a constraint for female higher education.	20	42.5	25	7.5	5
3	Distance to educational institutions is hurdle for female higher education.	31.3	53.8	6.3	6.3	1.3
4	Isolation from urban centers is a constraint for female higher education.	31.3	45	13.8	8.8	1.3
5	Females living in cities have more chances to get higher education.	63.8	28.8	5	2.5	0

Table 3.2 shows that according to the respondents (female students) the most influential geographical impediment was the rural-urban location as 63.8 % strongly agree that the female students living in cities have more chances to get higher education. Similarly, the distance to educational institutions was a second-most concerning impediment as 53.8 % agree to this statement. In the same way, the third most concerning impediment was the isolation from urban centers as 45 % agree to this statement. While the most concerning physical impediments were lack of infrastructure and lack of transport facility as the percentage of agreeing against both statements was 43.8 % and 42.5 % respectively.

Figure 3.2: To what extent physical and geographical impediments are affecting female higher education? (The results of responses given by respondent's female students)

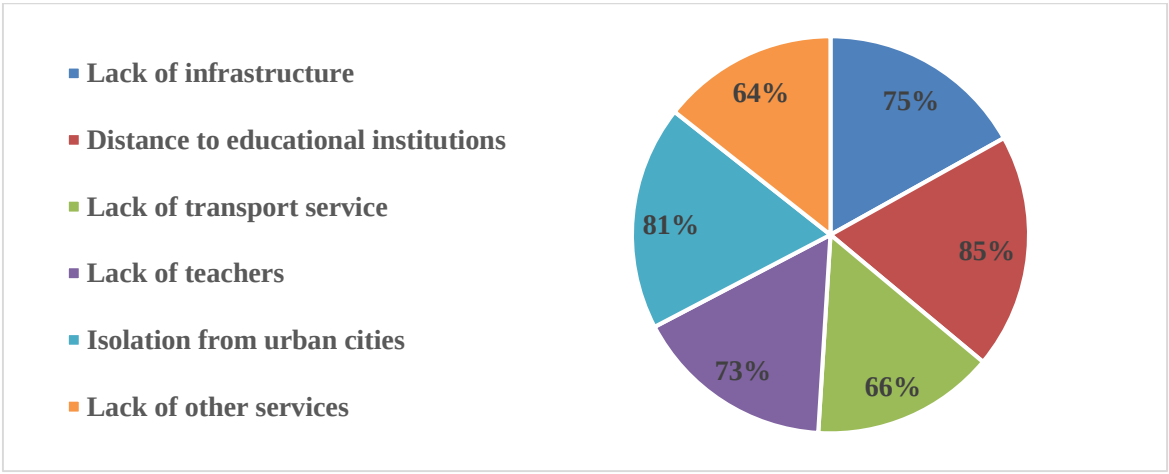

Figure 3.2 shows the percentage distribution of parents and teacher's responses against the question to what extent different physical and geographical impediments are affecting female higher education. The results reveal that according to parents and teachers most appealing physical and geographical impediments were the distance to educational institutions with 85 %, isolation from urban centers with 81 %, and lack of infrastructure with 75 % respectively. So according to parents and teachers physical and geographical impediments like distance to educational institutions, isolation from urban centers and lack of infrastructure have the most significant impact on female higher education in the study area.

3.4. Geographical/Physical impediments to female higher education according to the respondent's parents and teachers

Table 3.3: Percentage distribution of parents and teacher's responses against physical and geographical impediments affecting female education in district Nagar

No	Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Average	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	Lack of infrastructure is a hurdle for female higher education.	31.3	36.3	20	12.5	0
2	Lack of transport service is a constraint for female higher education.	28.8	41.3	20	8.8	1.3
3	Distance to educational institutions is hurdle for female higher education.	35	52.5	6.3	6.3	0
4	Isolation from urban centers is a constraint for female higher education.	35	51.3	8.8	5	0
5	Females living in cities have more chances to get higher education.	63.8	32.5	3.8	0	0

Table 3.3 presents the percentage distribution of parents and teacher's responses against different physical and geographical impediments to female higher education. According to the responses given by parents and teachers, the most significant geographical impediment was the rural-urban location as 63.8 % strongly agree that the female's students living in cities have more chances to get higher education. Similarly, the second most concerning impediment was the distance to educational institutions as 52.5 % agree to this statement. Isolation from urban centers was a third appealing geographical impediment as 51.3 % agree to this statement. On the other hand, the most concerning physical impediments were lack of transport facility as 41.5 % of respondents agree to this statement. The second crucial physical impediment was the lack of infrastructure for this statement percentage of agree was 36.3 %.

Conclusion

This study was aimed to identify and examine the physical and geographical impediments to female higher education in the high mountainous rural Nagar district of Pakistan. The results show that according to respondents (female students) most concerning physical impediments to female education in the study area were lack of infrastructure and lack of transport facility as the percentage of agree against both statements was 43.8 % and 42.5 % respectively. While the most influential geographical impediment was the rural-urban location as 63.8 % strongly agree that the female's students living in cities have more chances to get higher education. The distance to educational institutions was second most concerning geographical impediment as 53.8 % agree to this statement. In the same way, the third most concerning geographical impediment was the isolation from urban centers as 45 % agree to this statement. According to the responses given by parents and teachers the most concerning physical impediment was lack of transport facility as 41.5 % of respondents agree to this statement. The second crucial physical impediment was the lack of infrastructure for this statement percentage of agree was 36.3 %. On the other hand, the most appealing geographical impediment according to parents and teachers was the rural-urban location as 63.8 % strongly agree that female students living in cities have more chances to get higher education. Similarly, the second most concerning geographical impediment was the distance to educational institutions as 52.5 % agree to this statement. Isolation from urban centers was a third appealing geographical impediment as 51.3 % agree to this statement.

Policy Recommendations

1. To address the physical impediments good quality higher educational institutions (colleges) should be constructed in the remote villages of district Nagar i.e. Phekar valley.
2. The government should ensure the provision of physical facilities i.e. qualified teachers, quality sanitation and quality furniture in the educational institution of district Nagar.
3. To address the issue of remoteness and accessibility of higher education the provincial government should establish the University campus like other districts of Gilgit-Baltistan.
4. The elected members of district Nagar should play their role and take some proactive steps to address the physical and geographical impediments to female higher education.
5. Local representatives should also highlight the said issues at the provincial, national and global levels to solve the issues related to female higher education in district Nagar.

6. The researchers should conduct further research studies in district Nagar on the said issue to highlight this issue at the local, national and global levels.

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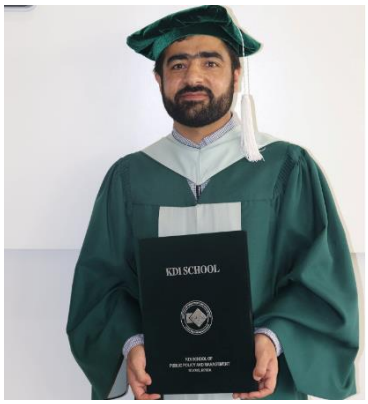

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