

CONTEXTUALIZATION OF WOMEN'S RIGHT TO EDUCATION IN TRIBAL PERSPECTIVE: STUDY OF MASID TRIBE

Nayab Gul

*PMAS-Arid Agriculture University, Rawalpindi, Pakistan
nayab2hon@gmail.com*

Muhammad Muddassar Khan

*Abbottabad University of Science and Technology, Abbottabad, Pakistan
mmk_22@hotmail.com*

Muhammad Uzair

*Assistant Registrar Establishment, University of Peshawar, Peshawar, Pakistan
uzairfata@gmail.com*

Kamran Azam

*Ripah International University, Islamabad, Pakistan
kamranazamkhan@yahoo.com*

Altaf Hussain

*Islamia College Peshawar, Peshawar, Pakistan
altaf@icp.edu.pk*

Abstract

The right to education flows directly from the right to life and is related to the dignity of the individual. This paper attempts to study the contextualization of Women's right to education and also analyzes the impediments in the enforcement of these rights. Standardized self constructed questionnaire was used and 50 Masid tribal women were being interviewed, belonging to South Waziristan, FATA. Convenient sampling techniques were employed for data collection. The overall analysis shows that an average Masid tribal family is supportive of female education and encourages their daughters for further education. They allow their daughters to choose their field of study without any pressure but they preferred to be involved in decision making; implying that women can't make academic decisions independently. Results further shows that there are some barriers in the way endorsement of right to education. Foremost among those is financial constraint, whereas mobility and discrimination were also considered to be contributing factors.

Keywords: Education, Women Rights, Feminism, Masid, South Waziristan (FATA), Contextualization, Patriarchal Society.

1. Introduction

The term women's rights refer to entitlements and freedoms of women. Local customs and behavior of particular society may or may not institutionalize these rights but the concept of human rights demands that all social institutions be designed in such a way that all human beings have equal opportunities to avail human rights, ignored or suppressed by law, local custom, and behavior in a particular society (Hosken, 1981; Pogge, 2002).

The right to education flows directly from the right to life and is related to the dignity of the individual. Supreme Court of India, Unnikrishnan J.P. v. State of Andhra Pradesh¹ (Juneja, 2003). It is now globally understood that there is a link between education and women's empowerment, and there is a common assumption that education leads to autonomy (Mason, 1986; Al Riyami et al 2004, UNPFI,1994). The World Bank promote women's education because it is an input into human capital. Women's right to education is a fundamental aspect of human development and is underpinning all forms of human rights (UNGEI, 2008).

But unfortunately women's right to education is at risk because of historical failures to recognize them and of women's inherent difficulties in ensuring them themselves (Gul, 2016). Universal claims about human rights, such as education, are often criticized as western (Smith and Light, 2001). It is said that these claims generally ignores the 'patriarchal bargain' undertaken by women in an effort to survive and flourish in a particular society. Communitarians assert that cultural context must be considered before applying human rights to any society. They further assert that the indigenous culture of a particular community should be preferred over international Human rights for policy making and practice (Unterhalte, 2005).

Based on this notion this paper stresses the importance of understanding the cultural context of Masid society for the successful enforcement of Women's Right to Education. Because this community is supportive of cultural practices and favors indigenous culture over everything (Akbar, 2010). A recent survey conducted by Shinwari (2008) revealed that majority of people of FATA believes that women should be allowed to get an education and have access to better healthcare. But they are against the idea of women working or increasing their power. The Masid tribal culture is Patriarchal in nature and Patriarchy is defined here as a kinship-ordered social structure with strictly defined sex roles in which women are subordinated to men (Valentine M. Moghadam, 1992). Patriarchy persists where there is limited industrialisation, urbanisation and proletarianisation, and may be legislated by the state. At the same time, the collision of tradition and modernity; unwanted changes, particularly in the status of women, may result in a preoccupation with cultural identity on the part of some social groups. In such a context, measures taken to restore women to their 'proper place'. One of study conducted by Valentine, m1992, shows that in Iran and Pakistan the states foster patriarchal ideology and practices.

In such setups family support is very crucial for a woman if she wants to avail resources and opportunities of getting education. A tribal woman tends to comply with the cultural norms and, is given acceptance support and recognition in the return (Gul, 2016). The present study focused on women's rights to Education, operationalized as, women's right to have access to opportunities and resources of getting education, right to determine academic choices and have power to control their academic life.; right to freedom in making academic decisions (UN Women, 2016). Cultural understanding of the concept of women's right to Education is crucial for endorsement of this right. This paper attempts to bridge gap between local and global concepts of women's right to education by taping the perceptions of local Masid women. This paper attempts to study the contextualization of Women's right to education and also analyzes the impediments in the enforcement of these rights.

As mentioned this paper focuses on the barriers/ impediments in the way of enforcement of Women's right to Education. The ones studied here are gender discrimination, mobility and financial restraints. Gender equality in Education has been part of Millennium Development Goal (MDG) in 2005 (Unterhalter, 2005). The objective was to discourage gender inequality and promote women empowerment (UNESCO, 2003). The final report of The Education for All assessments revealed striking gender inequalities even in countries with high rates of enrolment, like South Africa (Gardiner, 1999; Chowdhury et al., 1999; UNESCO,2003). A 'strong educational base' is desperately required to extend awareness about importance of women education so that these barriers can be controlled (Alvi-Aziz 2003).

2. Review of Literature

The present study is derived from intersection of three main theoretical domains namely feminism, women rights and tribal culture studies. Eagleton (2003) describe that **Feminism** "is above all a political and personal ideology

as well as a theoretical position within the academy...” Second-wave feminists strongly contest the association of the notion of home and domesticity with women. According to Walby (1990) and McDowell (1991), the ‘home is place of relations dominated by men’ and multiple activities. Pratt’s (1997) through her experiences, of living in two different communities, ‘shows fluid and transitory of the concept of home and ultimately femininity’.

Paradoxically concept of women is esteemed whereas women, ‘as a citizen are excluded from social life through myths and taboos of patriarchal societies’ (McDowell, 1983). These Feminist historians ‘played significant part in feminist activism’. Women’s ‘experience’ and subjectivity became the subject matter of feminism (Neely, 1988) Radical feminism instated a liberated female subjectivity; undistorted through patriarchal practices’. (Daly 1979, Griffin 1984) They valued essential femaleness inherent in women’s motherhood and in women’s experience dominated by unjust patriarchal practices. Whereas, Lacanian (1977) calls the ‘maternal feminine’, a brand of feminism that allowed women to positively understand their differences from men.

The second wave of feminism brought the need for equal rights. But this concept of ‘equal’ rights entailed problems. The concepts of contextualization, cultural relativism remerged in the meanwhile. Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2000) insists that white, middle-class Australian feminists need to move over, to listen to indigenous women. According to Eagleton (2003), in the realm of cultural production this means an end to discrimination against women.

The United Nations has a long history of addressing women’s human rights particularly their right to education and much progress has been made in securing women’s rights across the world in recent decades. However, important gaps remain and women’s realities are constantly changing (UN, 2014). Its initial goal (1945) was “to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, [and] in the equal rights of men and women”. (Morsink, 1991) Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) along with number of conventions ensure the equal entitlements of women and men to the human rights followed by conventions protecting civil, political, social and cultural rights of women. The universality of human rights and their validity in a given local context have often been contested through relativist discourses that brand them as foreign ideas incompatible with local culture. (UN, 2014)

According to Article 25 of the Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1973 (hereinafter referred to as “The Constitution”) all citizens are equal in the eyes of law and there must not be any discrimination on the basis of sex. The Constitution has guaranteed fundamental rights which are, “Rights of life and liberty, Right to education, Rights to Equality (irrespective of gender, race, religion, caste, and residence), Rights to Freedom, Rights to Property, and Rights to Culture and Social Rights. Pakistan is also member of United Nations and state party to a number of women rights conventions” (Vercelli, 2013).

Women in provincial Pakistan are notably deprived. As gender stereotypes are embedded in patriarchal societies, changes can only happen gradually as a ‘result of educating the population about gender equality and reforming local legislation for which nongovernmental organizations work is essential’. (Vercelli, 2013) Governments of patriarchal societies explain the ‘deprivation of women’s rights as a consequence of respecting their countries’ cultural beliefs and reject the interference from other states by claiming that human rights are a matter of state sovereignty (Mullally, 2006) The work of nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) is essential to educate the population about how women can contribute to the economic, social and political development of the country, as well as to pressure governments for law reforms to reflect gender equality. By bringing local culture and state sovereignty into play, governments put ‘a veil of protection over their decisions and laws’. Holtmaat and Naber (2011) argues that in Muslim countries state only comply with the provisions of articles which provided that they do not interfere with local laws.

Noor (2004) observes that state of Pakistan, due to ‘many socio-cultural and economic reasons, couldn’t successfully protect women rights. The endorsement of women’s right to empowerment has been considered as contrary to the ‘cultural norms and general Islamic teachings in Pakistani society’ (Anita, 2004). More specifically some of the cultural norms in Pakistani society are considered to be impediment in the way of women empowerment.

In one of the study Naaz, Reman and Alam (2011) showed how 'socio-cultural aspects of Pakhtoon culture are hindering the way of women empowerment and even violating their basic women rights'.

In the light of above discussion the present study understand the importance of culture in endorsement of women rights and tries to bridge gap between contemporary women's right to education and indigenous practices.

3. Methodology

The research was exploratory in nature and quantitative research approach was used for both collection, and analysis of the data. Standardized self constructed questionnaire was used as a research tool to tap the perceptions about Right to Education among Tribal Masid Women. The calculated reliability coefficient level of the tool was 0.7, which indicated satisfactory level of reliability. The data was collected from district Peshawar and Dera Ismail Khan of Khyber Pakhtoon Khwa. Sample consisted of women from Masid tribe belonging to FATA. Convenient sampling techniques were employed for data collection and 50 women, with age range from 19 to 34 were being interviewed. The study doesn't provide the overall perceptions of entire Masid tribal women as only educated available women were being interviewed. One of the reasons of limitation is the ongoing war in the area and spread of Masid families all over Pakistan as a result of displacement which made it difficult to access desired population.

4. Results

4.1 Descriptive

The sample consisted of Masid females with minimum education of matriculation. The results indicate that 27% of the females have done graduation, 25% are undergraduates, 23% are posts graduates and 23 % are Mphil or doing Phd. Sample consisted of 53% of on job females among those 55% were married.

Among others 70% reported that their family is supporting them in getting further education. 80% of the females reported that the field they are trying to pursue is matching with their personal interests, whereas only 63% reported that they have chosen the field of their education without any pressure.

When asked about the barriers, hindering the provision of right to education, gender discrimination, mobility and financial constraints were highlighted. 40% reported that they are not given fair chance to avail equal opportunities of getting education as compared to men. Among others 40% reported that they are not allowed to avail opportunities of getting education in the city away from their home whereas 42% believed that financial constraints are limiting their progress in education as a women.

When asked about the control, independence in making educational decisions and extra-curricular activities, only six percent reported that they can independently make decisions about their school or subject change and participate in extracurricular activities. Whereas among remaining respondents 22% reported that they can make independent decisions about educational matters whereas 17% reported they are allowed to take part in extra-curricular activities.

4.2 Correlation

Table 1: Correlation between Family Support, and freedom to make Choices; Personal choices and Influences or external pressures

	1	2	3
FS		.392**	.478**
C:PI			.421**
C: I			1

Note: Note: FS= Family Support, C:PI= Choices: Personal Interests & C:I= Choices: Influences, B:M= Barrier: Mobility and Con= control, **P<0.01

Table2: Correlation between Family Support, Barriers faced by women and Control that women have in availing Right to Education

	1	2	3	4	5
B:FR		.431**	.474**	.782**	-.121
B:D			.222	.382**	-.208
FS				.601**	-.166
B:M					.006
Con					1

Note: Note: B:FR= Barriers: Financial Restraints, B:D= Barrier: Gender Discrimination, FS= Family Support and B:M= Barrier: Mobility and Con= control, **P<0.01

Table 1 and 2 shows an inter relationship b/w seven variables i.e. Barriers: Financial Restraints, Barrier: Gender Discrimination, Family Support, Choices: Personal Interests, Choices: Influences, Barrier: Mobility and control. The results indicate that variable Family Support is positively correlated with variables, external influences while making career choices, personal interest and Barriers; such as mobility and financial restraints. Whereas, it is inversely correlated with variable control. It further shows that variable control is inversely correlated with barriers such as financial restraints and discrimination. Further analysis indicates that variable discrimination is positively correlated with Financial Restraints and mobility. It further indicates that variable financial restraints are positively correlated with mobility as a barrier.

5. Discussion

An average Masid tribal family is supportive of female education. Results indicate equal distribution of women across different levels of education implying that women are encouraged to get education and develop career (Gul,2016).

Descriptive results show that an average Masid family encourages their daughters for further education and allow their daughters to choose their field of study without any pressure. They can make choices but they prefer to involve their family members before making decision and majority believes that their field of study is matching with their interests.

Though the overall culture is supportive of female education but there are some barriers in the way of endorsement of right to education. Foremost among those is financial constraint, whereas mobility and discrimination were also thought to play important role. According to one of the report the main impediments to female education is related to security and safety. Which limit the women's mobility to move to places away from home for perusing her education (Alvi-Aziz,2008).

The capabilities approach of Amartya enforces that education enhances women's capabilities, and enables her to have expanded choices (Arends-Kuenning, and Sajeda ,2001). But on the contrary our study shows that even

educated women have very little control and choices. Decision making and getting control over ones academic sphere is still to be improved. A Masid female can't independently decide to switch discipline or school as per the need and she has to get family's consent before taking part in extra-curricular activities.

The correlation table shows the relationship between different variables. A tribal female needs support of her family for further education and making choices about education. She can't peruse her personal interests in academics if her family isn't supportive. Role of external influences/pressures in making choices is also dependent on family's attitude. If a family environment is such that it respects individual freedom and allows the members to make choices without any pressure only then a Masid girl can enjoy personal freedom. On the contrary if the family chose to interfere a Masid girl is handicapped and has to confirm to family pressures in making academic choices. Family support in perusing education also plays important role in overcoming the hurdles in the way of getting education. If family is supportive the barrier of mobility could be controlled. With the support of family an average Masid female can avail opportunities of education in the other city away from home. Furthermore if a tribal family is unsupportive, financial constraints can become a potential threat for ending the academic pursuits of a Masid woman. Another very interesting aspect is the relationship between control and family support. On average a Masid female has to compromise her control over academic decision making to get support of her family. If she chose to be independent in educational decision making she will ultimately lose the support of her family, and this can endanger her career development in Masid patriarchal culture. As a matter of fact she has to trade off her power of decision making with family support, and show compliance with cultural norms in order to avail the right to education (Valentine M, 1992).

The patriarchal and integrated family structure of tribal household can facilitate or hinder barriers in the way of women's right to education. The results show that gender discrimination, mobility and financial restraints are highly correlated. In a tribal culture, if a family is faced with financial constraint, it will prefer the male to avail opportunities to getting education as compared to female. In a patriarchal culture men dominate women in an earning role; it's the duty of man to earn so he is preferred to follow academic pursuit and expected to reciprocate by getting good job and support his family (Gul, 2016). Although female's earning role of a female is accepted but her passive and domestic role is culturally preferred (Gul, 2016). Similarly men can go to cities away from home for perusing education whereas a large majority of females can't; and needs support of their family in making such decisions (Saleem & Bobak, 2005).

The results further indicate the inverse correlations between control over educational decision making and barriers; such as gender discrimination financial restraints. With low gender discrimination and financial restraints a tribal women can get control over educational decision making. On the contrary these two barriers can hinder the women's right to exert control over her educational decision making (Gul, 2016).

6. Conclusion

In an effort to bring culture inclusive gender reforms the indigenous culture has to be considered as crucial as international standards of human rights. Cultural friendly radicalism can bring change in general attitude of Masid Tribal community towards women, and ultimately counter the impediment in the enforcement of Women's right to Education in Tribal perspective.

References

- Akbar. (2010). Women Rights in FATA Pakistan: A Critical Review of NGOs' Communication Strategies for Projects' Implementation. unpublished. (Dissertation, Master in Human Rights Practice, Department of Social Anthropology, University of Tromso).
- Al Riyami, A., Afifi, M., & Mabry, R. M. (2004). Women's autonomy, education and employment in Oman and their influence on contraceptive use. *Reproductive Health Matters*, 12(23).

- Alvi-Aziz, H. (2008). A progress report on women's education in post-Taliban Afghanistan. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 27(2), 169-178.
- Alvi-Aziz, H. (2003). Reconstruction in post-Taliban Afghanistan: women and education. *Resources for Feminist Research*, 30(3/4), 13–33.
- Anita, M. W. (2004). Islamic Influences on Socio-legal Conditions Of Pakistani Women. *Islam in south Asia*, 23 (84), pp. 307-328.
- Arends-Kuenning., Mary., & S, Amin. (2001). Women's Capabilities and the Right to Education in Bangladesh. *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society*, 15(1).
- Chowdhury, M., Choudhury, R., & Nath, S. (1999). Hope Not Complacency. State of Primary Education in Bangladesh. The University Press, Dhaka.
- Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan. (1973).
- Daly, M. 1979. Gyn/Ecology. London: The Women's Press.
- Eagleton, M. (2003). A Concise Companion to Feminist Theory. Blackwell Publishing Ltd, Berlin, Germany. p 10-111
- Gardiner, M. (1999). Education and innovation: rethinking the familiar. *Quarterly Review of Education and Training in South Africa*, 6(4).
- Griffin, S. (1984). Woman and Nature: The Roaring inside Her. London: The Women's Press. Guidelines on Women's Empowerment for the UN Resident Coordinator System, principle 4.
- Gul, N. (2016). Women Empowerment: Endorsement Of Right To Career Development Among Tribal Masid Women. *The Explorer Islamabad: Journal of Social Sciences*, 2(2), 53-58.
- Holtmaat, R., & Naber, J. (2011). Women's Human Rights and Culture: From Deadlock to Dialogue. Cambridge: Intersentia.
- Hosken, F. (1981). Towards a Definition of Women's Rights. *Human Rights Quarterly*, 3(2).
- Juneja, N. (2003). Constitutional amendment to make education a fundamental right. *NIEPA Occasional Paper*.
- Lacan, J. (1977). The mirror phase as formative of the function of the I. In *Écrits*, trans. A. Sheridan. London: Tavistock.
- Mason, KO. (1986). The status of women: conceptual and methodological issues in demographic studies. *Sociological Forum* 1(2), 284–300.
- McDowell, L. (1991). Life without father and Ford: the new gender order of postfordism. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 16, 400–19.
- Moreton-Robinson, A. (2000). Talking' Up to the White Woman: Indigenous Women and Feminism. Queensland: University of Queensland Press.
- Morsink, J. (1991). Women's rights in the Universal Declaration. *Human Rights Quarterly*. 13(2).
- Mullally, S. (2006). Gender, Culture and Human Rights: Reclaiming Universalism. Portland: Hart Publishing. pp. 114.
- Naz, A., H. Rehman., & A. Alam. (2011). Gender and Development: Socio- Cultural, Economic, Religious and Political Impediments in Women's Empowerment and Gender Development (A Case Study of Malakand Division KPK, Pakistan). *Peshawar University Teachers Association Journal*, 18(1), 45.
- Neely, C. T. 1988. Constructing the subject: feminist practice and the new Renaissance discourses. *English Literary Renaissance*, 18: 5–18.
- Noor, M. J. 2004. Daughter of Eve: Violence against Women. Massachusetts Institute of Technology. unpublished. Massachusetts Institute of Technology. p 10-51.
- Pogge, T. (2002) World Poverty and Human Rights: Cosmopolitan Responsibilities and Reforms. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Pratt, G. (1997). Stereotypes and ambivalence: the construction of domestic workers in Vancouver. *Gender, Place and Culture*, 4, 159–78.
- Saleem, S., & Bobak, M. (2005). Women's autonomy, education and contraception use in Pakistan: a national study. *Reproductive health*, 2(1), 8.
- Shinwari, N. A. (2008). Understanding FATA, Community Appraisal and Motivation Program, Peshawar.
- Smith, K. E., & Light, M. (Eds.). (2001). Ethics and foreign policy. Cambridge University Press.
- Valentine, M. M. (1992). Patriarchy and the politics of gender in modernising societies: Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan. *International Journal of Sociology*, 7(1), 35-53.

- UNESCO (2003). *Overcoming Exclusion through Inclusive Approaches in Education*; Conceptual Paper.
- UnIceF. UNGEI (2008). *Making education work: The gender dimension of the school to work transitions*.
- United Nations Population Fund. (1994). *International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action*. New York: UN
- UNGEI. (2002). *A New Global Partnership Meets an Old Global Challenge*. UN Girls Education Initiative, Paris.
- United Nations, (2014). *The Millennium Development Goals Report*.
- UnIceF. UNGEI (2008). *Making education work: The gender dimension of the school to work transitions*.
- Unterhalter, E. (2005) Global inequality, capabilities, social justice: The millennium development goal for gender equality in education. *International Journal of Educational Development* 25, 111–122.
- UN Women 2015-2016 annual report <http://annualreport.unwomen.org/en/2016>
- Vercelli, C. (2013). *Women's Rights versus Cultural Rights in Pakistan*, Unpublished. p, 10-20.
- Walby, S. (1990). *Theorizing Patriarchy*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- World Bank. (1993). *The East Asian Miracle*. New York: Oxford University Press.