

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN
INFLUENCING FAMILY STRUCTURES: A CASE STUDY
OF VILLAGE DASUHA, DISTRICT FAISALABAD

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ABSTRACT:

The main focus of this study “Economic Empowerment of Women Influencing Family Structures” was to show that economically empowered women performing both economic and domestic activities are unable to maintain proper balance between their routine works and relationship with their family members, which affects negatively on the family structures. Economically empowered women want relatively more power in their home than the other women. Most of them pay less attention towards the household works and start making or influencing the decisions, which often creates tension between the males of the family. An attempt has been made to find out that how women’s economic independence affects in assembling, strengthening and sharpening her attitudes and behaviour. This study also deals with the women’s role within the family and “economic contribution” in the household economy. The woman in its various roles as mother, wife, daughter, grandmother, daughter-in-law helps in household affairs to boost the economy. This research was conducted in Villag Dasuha District Faisalabad. Qualitative anthropological techniques were used to collect emperical data.

KEY WORDS: economy, empowerment, indirect & direct contribution, residential rules, patriarchal, Patrilocal

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INTRODUCTION

Different philosophers, social scientist, reformers and specialists say that it is indisputable that the problem of the status of women is one of the most critical dimensions of social development and political modernization in the third world. The term status refers to a position of women as an individual in the social structure defined by her designated rights and obligations. The status and equality issues became very popular in developed countries especially in Europe and remained dominant during 1980s and 1990s. After an experience of more than 20 years the ladies have started demanding for equity rather than equality. It is true that women's traditional roles are thought to be confined mainly within the household. Egler argued that a nominal definition of household is:

“A household consists of the people who live in one compound and who from either a simple conjugal family or a joint family. Such a Joint family is considered to be a single household, if the income is pooled and expenditures are made from a common purse”.

(1964)¹

The other important concept used in this paper is "economy ", which is defined by Dalton as:

“A set of institutionalized activities which combine natural resources, human labour and technology to acquire, produce and distribute material goods and specialist services in a structured repetitive fashion”.

(1967)²

But the economy here is used in more general and simple meanings than it is used in the science of economics. Here the economy simply means all those activities which generate income or cause savings, while household economy means all those activities of the members of the household which generate income or cause saving. Here the term production as the activity of residing material items and making them available for human use. In the household economy the production is defined as the different materials and items used by the household members for the

¹Egler, Z. (1964). *A Punjabi Village in Pakistan*, New York: Columbia University Press.

²Dalton, G. (1967). *Economic Development and social change: The modernization of village communities*. Garden: Natural history press.

existence of that group. The household unit which consists of men, women and children may show a considerable division of labour. Normally this concept refers to that rules which govern the assignment of jobs to the people.

The main emphasis of the study has been laid on the women, their role within the family and economic contribution in the household economy. A woman is the companion of a man in all sorts of development including her contribution in the economic activities of household economy. The woman in its various roles as mother, wife, daughter, grandmother, daughter-in-law helps in household affairs to boost the economy. So the household has been taken as the basic unit of analysis for studying women economic contribution. Sharma in this regard says:

"The household is experience as a basic economic unit on which its members depend for economic survival and advancement, that it is the institution through which people seek to satisfy their basic needs, that its resources are human as well as material, that the household deploy its member, female, male, child and elderly, for maximum socio-economic advantages"

(1982)³.

There are many other people who define the household as a basic unit of production and reproduction. According to Benjamin,

"The basic unit of production, reproduction, consumption and of social, ceremonial and political interaction, in short the only early identifiable starting point for any kind of social-economic investigation"

(1977)⁴

Household is the basic unit where production, consumption and distribution of goods and services take place for the subsistence of the members of the society and women play a central role within the household, as her all works are mostly related and confined within the household. Household

³Sharma, U. (1982). *Women, Work and Property in North-West India*. New York: Tavistock publication.

⁴Benjamin, W. (1977). *Rural household studies in Anthropological perspective*. Bogor, Indonesia: Agricultural Development Council.

works are subjected to include everything, which is done to organize and care for a family and a home, including regular domestic, and social work and also economic work, which are conducted while remaining at home. As far as the women's daily works are concerned, they are mostly undefined and thought as obligation rather than a work.

Direct economic activities simply mean all those activities which generate money and by indirect economic activities I mean all those activities which cause saving. So women's economic contribution in household economy means all those activities of the household women which generate income or cause saving. In this way rural women's economic participation in agriculture, other occupations like teaching, selling things etc. and household activities are income generating as well as expenditure saving. A rural woman contributes a lot in the household economy, which is an important part of rural economy. They are the vital human resource in the improvement of the quality of life because earning of these women is crucial for family survival and its improvement.

Keeping peace and good atmosphere in house is considered as female's responsibility. God has granted equal status to both men and women and he has endowed them with different specialization skills with respect to their concerning fields. The woman often remains unable to manage between her activities and her relationships with her family. This inability creates tension and problems not only for her but also for the other members of the family. It can be argued that women play a crucial role in the socio economic development of a country. But both in the industrially developed and less developed countries, a woman's household activities are never treated as equal to economic activities. These situations are worse particularly in the case of rural women and they suffered the phenomenon in its more intense and spiral form.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For the purposes of my research I used natural experimental research design. The different techniques which helped me to collect information for this research were rapport building, un-scheduled, semi-structured and structured interviews, questionnaires, socio-economic survey, key informants, participant observation, case studies, sampling, recording of field data, photography, scheduled and structured interviews, group discussions, sampling, case studies, socio-economic

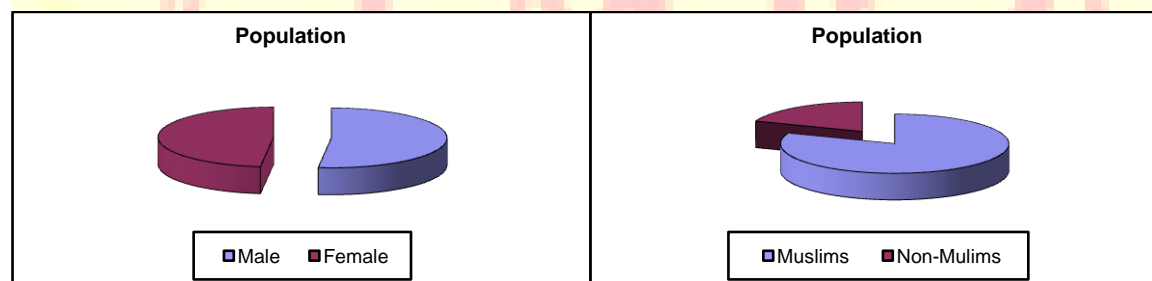
survey, recording of field data, and photography. For the purpose of carrying out this research, a village named Dasuha, in District Faisalabad was chosen. This village was chosen as it fulfilled almost all the requirements of this research for instance, the women in this village are working and joint/extended families are splitting into nuclear families.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study was conducted in Village Dasuha (242-R.B.), District Faisalabad in Punjab, Pakistan. The village is situated at a distance of 15 km from Faisalabad city in South West direction and 2 km from Samundri Road from where a branch road leads to the village. According to 1998 population census report of district Faisalabad the total population of Dasuha is 9,557, which includes 4952 males and 4605 females. This total figure includes 7721 Muslims and 1838 Non-Muslims. Muslims are Sunni by sect. There are 1263 houses in the village and majority of the people live in “*pakka*” houses. The total area of the village is 2293 acres, out of which a large portion is under cultivation.

Table 1: Population of the Village

Total Population	Male	Female	Muslim	Non-Muslim
9557	4952	4605	7721	1838

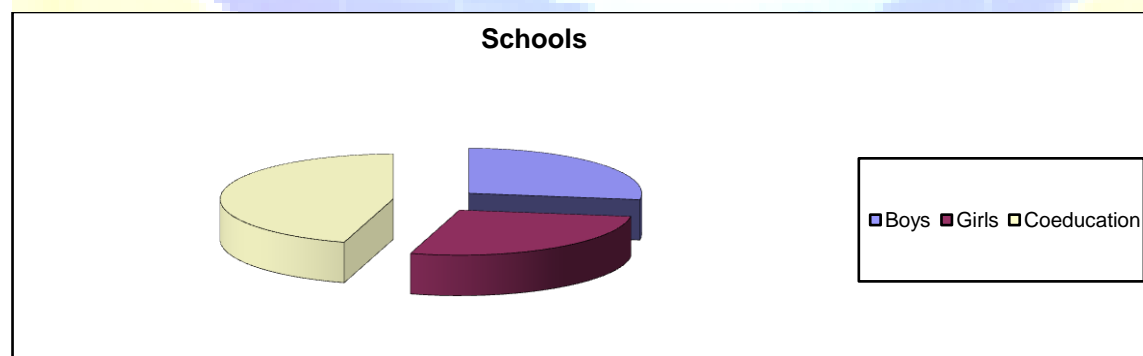


The educational facilities are present in the village both for boys and girls. The total number of schools present in the village is 11. There is one high and two primary schools for boys, one higher secondary and two primary schools for girls provided by the government. There are two middle schools, two primary schools and one nursery school in the private sector where there is coeducation. The schools in private sector are providing both Urdu and English medium

education to the students. The number of male students in English medium sections of the school is more than females. Computer education is also present in Kinder Middle School. For the higher education people send their sons to the colleges and universities in Faisalabad. The literacy rate in the village is 53.30%. Among the males 1020 persons are primary but below metric and 893 are above matric. Among the females 760 persons are primary but below matric and 471 are above matric.

Table 2: Position of the Schools in the Village

Schools	For boys	For girls	Coeducation	Status
Higher secondary School	-	1	-	Government
High School	1	-	-	Government
Middle School	-	-	2	Private
Primary School	2	2	-	Government
Primary School	-	-	2	Private
Nurseries	-	-	1	Private



The facilities like telephone, bank, electricity, post office, and healthcare are available in the village. The shops are also there in the village. The government has provided the water supply, sanitation and outlets for sewerage/drainage. Usually people have wells or hand pumps in their houses. Some households use electric motors to lift water from the well to the overhead tanks.

Different social activities and important aspects of social organization prevailing among the inhabitants of the village Dasuha are discussed here after highlighting the gender wise economic structure, variety of family groups, kinship system, and customary ways of dealing with important events of life. The nuclear families are in majority in the village. *Beraderi* system (a patrilineal descent group where all the men trace their relationship through a common ancestor) prevails in the village and its membership continues only through the males. The exogamy, i.e. marriages outside the *beraderi* are discouraged. The *beraderi* also provides economic aid to its members through the process of *vartanbhanji* (reciprocal gift exchange system). The money or gifts are given on different occasions like birth, marriage, death etc. The "*purdah*" is strictly observed in the village.

Economic organization of Dasuha has undergone quite a few changes. At first the village had an agro-based economic system, but now the farming resources, landholdings have reduced to a low percentage and other non-agricultural activities have been taken up by majority. In order to contribute to the family's income the women have been making home based handicrafts like crochet work, embroidery, stitching etc. besides the household chores. Some of them have started working as teachers in local schools, lecturers in the girls' college, doctors, lady health workers (LHWs), lady health visitors (LHVs) etc.

"*Purdah*" is observed in the village at different levels; as *naqab* (covering the body and face with a big shawl). As a matter of *haya* (shame/shyness), they do not come in front of stranger men and boys; they do not interact with them, and do not go out alone. *Izzat* (honour) is something, which belongs to the men. It is represented by the female and defined in terms of her sexuality. A chaste girl of a good character is supposed to be the one who safeguards her father's, brothers' and in future, her husband's *izzat*.

The division of labour is based on the classic principle of public and private dichotomy. The work inside the house is supposed to be for the female members of the society, whereas the work involving outside mobility is the duty of male members of the society. A male is considered the main source of income, who works in the fields or employed somewhere else to win bread and

butter for the family. Women are also involved in the economic activities but majority of them does not contribute in the household economy.

Majority of the families in the village are nuclear families. Most of the families were initially joint or extended, but they became nuclear just within last couple of years. Nuclear families in the village are the broken parts of the joint/extended families. Mainly there are economic reasons for this change which include women's economic empowerment as a major factor.

The economic levels of the village, which include lower, middle and upper, affect women's work. The changes have been brought about in the women's work, both indoor and outdoor, with the change in the economic level. Different economic levels affect some of the work done by women and some not. It means that the economic class, to which a particular household belongs, affects the women's work. Previously there were some activities which were not affected by changing economic levels i.e. sweeping, cooking, cleaning, washing utensils, washing clothes, knitting, crochet and embroidery. In Dasuha the economic empowerment has brought a major change. There was no concept of keeping a servant for the household activities, even if somebody can afford to do so. But now the position is different. All the working class women keep maids for the above mentioned works. Male servants are still not preferred because the ladies observe *purdah* and the presence of the male servant restricts the movement of women even inside their homes. Only the women belonging to the lower class perform these activities by themselves.

The women of this village belonging to the lower class especially the *kami*(worker, scheduled castes, marginal groups of village) women are working like what we call overworked. They work in the agricultural fields, in houses as maids, in schools as *aayas*(maids) and many other places to earn money. They also have to perform their household chores. As we move upwards in the economic based hierarchy we see the quantity of the household work for women decreases. The women belonging to the upper class hardly have to do any work at home. Maids are doing everything for them. Same is the case with economically empowered working ladies. They don't have to do anything at home even if they belong to the middle class. They also hire maids for household chores.

Undoubtedly a family is an economic unit and everybody either male or a female is contributing into it. Direct contribution is very clear that you earn money and contribute. The indirect contribution does not make sense to many people. They always consider it as a burden over the women but they never realize the importance of this work. Majority of them argues in favour of direct economic contribution and discourage the women to do their household works. The women's contribution in the household economy in the form of household chores and socialization of the children are as important as any other economic activity.

The economically empowered working women are working less than the women involved in the household chores. It is just the importance of the work. Normally we give more importance to the women's direct economic activities because the flow of money is visible whereas in indirect activities it is invisible. The indirect may bring more economical benefits but may be at some other time. The proper socialization and training of their children is always more important than what she earn every month. That would be even economically more beneficial for future. The economic empowerment of women always looks more attractive but it is creating some serious problems also.

Wage earning women have different status from non-wage earning women. These women don't usually surrender their earnings to any other member of their household, but spent the cash as they want. If women are either self-supporter of the household or their husbands have little earning, they can spend their money on domestic requirement for day to day life.

Woman is a real decision maker. She can manipulate and influence any decision any time. She can emotionally blackmail her husband to make a decision of her choice. Male in our society is normally an implementer of the decision which has been taken by a female. The stigma of power which is attached with the male does not allow him to accept the reality. Most of the times the male does not admit this reality in front of himself even. He adopts the decision as of his own which he in the absence of his wife may not have even thought of. So he always pretends being a decision maker. The economically empowered woman is even more powerful. In most of the cases they don't have to create any emotional situation to make or influence the decisions. They

can very easily control their husbands and start making decisions. Their husbands normally do whatever they say.

The residential rules in most parts of the region are patrilocal. From last 20 years a very major change has been observed. The ladies don't want to move with their husbands after their marriage. If the parents can't marry their daughters within the village they try to bring their husbands with them in the village. Mostly they are working ladies and majority of them are teachers and lecturers. This trend of living in the village even after the marriage is getting popular among the nonworking class also. On the day of marriage they move with their husbands as being a tradition but come back very soon. It is easier for the working class to bring their husbands with them because of their jobs which they never want to leave.

Women in the village have some attitudinal problem towards the family members. Her attitude with her parents is different from her in-laws. The mother-in-laws are normally treated like their enemy. In their old age they refuse to take care of them. Men normally treat both the sides equally. Many such cases were observed in the village where working women took their husbands away and made their own separate home. Sometimes it also happens that the working women don't take their husbands away but they push their parents away. This way they don't even have to bother for making a new house. Many of them are able to force their husbands to work for their brothers mostly through emotional blackmailing. Even the age and the status of the husband do not matter.

The girl child becomes the victim of discrimination and differential treatment right from the time of her birth. The birth of the male child is welcomed with a happy heart whereas that of the girl child is met with depression, especially if she is born after two or three sisters. She is considered as a weakness for the family, she is an economic burden, a moral liability that is defenseless against all types of hazards in life. It was observed that it is not the male only who has a discriminating attitude. Female is equally and in some cases more involved.

In the village, many cases were observed in which joint families split-up into nuclear families due to conflict situation among the brothers' wives. The brothers live together, support each other and

share the same property till their marriages but afterwards they split into nuclear families and the reason behind it is that their wives cannot live together peacefully. The percentage of maladjustment within the families among the working ladies of the village is much higher than the nonworking class.

Should we call women's productivity, working well but not contributing in the household? Man is considered responsibility to provide the household expenditure. So what is the woman's responsibility? Is it the household chores? If yes, is it not suffering due to her absence from the home for her work? Is she not creating tensions for her husband? Is that tension not affecting his productivity? If the husband can tolerate and accommodate all these tensions, why he cannot ask his wife to financially contribute in household? It was observed in the village that the husbands are sacrificing a lot for their wives to keep them working.

The criticism on the Muslim regarding discriminating attitudes towards the women is to discourage the women to do household chores. Developed countries want to bring the women out for work by giving them the concept of economic empowerment. It all goes in their benefit. By raising these issues they want to create a bad image for Islam so that they could control that convergence. Secondly, the third world countries are bigger market for the developed countries. By investing in the development of the underdeveloped countries they actually create market for their industrial as well as consumer goods. On one hand they earn money from the third world countries and on the other hand they save money because of them. Through the phenomenon of economic empowerment of women the developed countries want to have a bigger labour force in our countries. They want to have a better control over them and also to bring the labour rates even lower. When the women will also come and work, the labour rates will automatically decrease.

As observed in the village normally the economic contribution means nothing for a family. The working ladies have to spend more to keep themselves working. They need maids and servants, more clothes, shoes and cosmetics, transportation and many other things which often need their husbands' contribution. There are some indirect costs of being economically empowered which we do not calculate. The working ladies cannot pay full attention towards their children and household chores due to which household environment suffers, tensions arise between husband

and wife as well as between the other family members and finally the joint families spilt-up into nuclear families.

CONCLUSION

Ever since God has created the mankind and the life began on earth, the roles of both the sexes in the daily routine began to take shape. These roles were different from each other as the God has created them differently. The work inside the house is supposed to be for the female members of the society, whereas the work involving outside mobility is the duty of male members of the society. A male is considered the main source of income, who works in the fields or employed somewhere else to win bread and butter for the family.

The importance of the household chores cannot be denied. For smooth running of the household and the society these household chores play an important part. Normally we give more importance to the women's direct economic activities because the flow of money is visible whereas in indirect activities it is invisible. The indirect may bring more economical benefits but may be at some other time. Proper socialization and training of their children is always important and economically more beneficial but in future. Normally we do not calculate these benefits in financial terms due to which we ignore the importance.

The philosophers and social scientists always talk about the male dominance, discrimination and violence against the women, gender inequality, powerlessness, lack of decision making and so many other things. No doubt that many of these issues are valid but there is always another side of the picture where the women are not suppressed. They are the decision makers. For the last few years the developed countries have created these issues and are struggling very hard to bring the women in third world countries out of their homes for work. They are giving them very astrictive incentives but they always have hidden motives like availability of cheap labour, creating a market of their products and many others.

The economic empowerment of women always looks more attractive but it is creating some serious problems also. The children are not properly looked after. Many types of deficiencies develop among them. The houses are not well managed and clean. It becomes a source of tension

between husband and wife and they often fight with each other. In spite of this ladies prefer working because it gives them many advantages also. They don't have to look after their parents-in-law. In their absence their husbands do most of the works. In the evening they don't have to do much work as they are tired. Secondly they have command over their husbands. Thirdly they don't have to look after the guests especially their in-laws because they have less interaction with them due to their busy routine.

Women who are involved in the economic activities do not contribute in the household economy. Majority of them are doing it because it gives them an edge over their husbands. They have to spend a lot to keep them fit for the job. They have to buy more clothes, shoes and cosmetics. They have to keep servants also. They need to hire transport. After making all these expenditures they normally left with very less to contribute in the household economy.

In the village, many cases were observed in which joint families split-up into nuclear families due to conflict situation among the brothers' wives. The percentage of maladjustment within the families among the working ladies is much higher than the nonworking class. The problem with working ladies arises when they don't give proper time for household chores and want more power and authority within the family because of being economically empowered.