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Exploring Gender Dynamics Intersects with Educational Attainment in Rural and Urban Areas to Influence Access to Decent Work and Equal Pay in Punjab, Pakistan

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Abstract

This study analyzes the intersections of gender, education, and rural dynamics in the pursuit of decent employment and equal pay in Punjab, Pakistan. It aims to understand how gender disparities in education, compounded by socio-cultural norms, influence employment opportunities and wage equality in both rural and urban settings. The research seeks to provide insights into the socio-economic factors that contribute to the determined issues faced by women in the workforce. A qualitative examine plan was active, including thorough meetings with 30 respondents from diverse socio-economic backgrounds across various districts of Punjab. Participants were carefully selected to represent a broad



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range of experiences and perspectives related to education, employment, and gender roles. Data collection was facilitated through a semi-structured interview guide, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of the key issues. Thematic analysis was utilized to systematically identify and analyze patterns within the data, linking these themes directly to the research objectives. Key findings reveal that women in rural areas face significant barriers to employment due to traditional gender roles, limited access to quality education, and socio-economic constraints. Urban women, while benefiting from better educational opportunities, still encounter challenges related to wage disparity and occupational segregation. These findings highlight the ongoing struggles women face in achieving economic equity in both rural and urban contexts. The study concludes with several pertinent recommendations, advocating for targeted educational reforms to improve access to quality education for women in rural areas, alongside awareness campaigns aimed at challenging entrenched gender norms. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the need for robust policy interventions to enforce equal pay legislation and create more inclusive work environments. These measures are essential to advancing gender equality and promoting economic empowerment in Punjab, Pakistan.

Keywords: Gender Dynamics, Educational Attainment, Decent Work, Equal Pay

Introduction

Background

The Millennium Development goals (MDGs), replaced by Sustainable development goals (SDGs), which begins a world-wide effort in 2000 to mitigate the disgrace and poverty. Sustainable development wants the success of interconnected goals that are dynamic for the comfort of people and civilizations, economic growth, social inclusion, and sustainable environment. The 17 SDGs are inter-connected; they distinguish that action in one zone will disturb results in other zone, and progress must balance social, financial, and ecological sustainability. The partition for Sustainable Development (SDGs) in the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) offers functional help and capacity developing for the SDGs and their associated thematic challenges, that includes water, energy, environment, oceans, civilization, transportation, science and technology, the Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR), enterprises, and small emerging states. On September 25, 2015, the 193 republics of the UN General Assembly accepted the 2030 Development Program, suggesting 17 SDGs with 169 goals, to be increased by numerous 232 pointers in 2016. Pakistan accepted the SDGs as its personal national development program by an undisputed National Assembly Resolution in 2016. Since that time, country is progressing significantly, by including these goals in national work plan and schedules, for the progressing official agenda for implementation of SDGs in Pakistan. The SDG support unit has been formed at both federal and provincial levels, in partnership with planning agencies (including the Ministry of Planning, Development, and special Initiatives, as well as provincial planning and development departments), to manage the execution of the SDGs and monitor their advancement.

1.2 Statement of the Problem



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The issue stated in this research is the persistent gender disparity in decent employment and equal pay within the rural areas of Punjab, Pakistan. Despite strides in education and economic development, women in these regions continue to face significant challenges in accessing and sustaining fair employment opportunities.

Effects of Gender Roles

Traditional gender roles and patriarchal norms in rural Punjab impose significant limitations on women's mobility, decision-making power, and access to education and employment. These cultural expectations often prioritize domestic responsibilities for women over professional aspirations, thereby reducing their opportunities for economic independence and growth. As a result, even when women possess the necessary qualifications, societal pressures frequently prevent them from pursuing or maintaining gainful employment.

Attainment of Education for Women

Educational attainment for women in rural areas remains disproportionately lower compared to their urban counterparts and rural men. Limited access to quality education, early marriages, and societal undervaluation of female education contribute to a significant educational gap. This educational disadvantage translates into limited employment opportunities, lower skill levels, and reduced competitiveness in the job market for rural women. Moreover, the labor market in rural Punjab is characterized by informal employment, where women are often engaged in low-paying, insecure jobs without legal protections or benefits.

Problems Consider Cultural Norms

The convergence of these factors—restrictive gender norms, educational inequities, and labor market discrimination—constitutes a significant barrier to achieving decent employment and equal pay for women in rural Punjab. Addressing this problem requires a comprehensive approach that challenges cultural norms, enhances educational opportunities, and enforces fair labor practices to create an equitable economic environment for women.

Objectives of the Study

The principal objective of this research is to discover the intersections of gender, education, and rural dynamics in the pursuit of decent employment and equal pay in Punjab, Pakistan. Specifically, the study aims to:

1. Examine the effect of gender roles on females' access to education and employment in rural and urban areas.
2. Analyze the role of educational attainment in shaping employment opportunities and wage equality for women in rural and urban settings.
3. Identify the socio-economic factors that contribute to the determined challenges issues faced by women in the workforce.
4. Provide recommendations for policy interventions and educational reforms to encourage gender equivalence and economic empowerment in Punjab, Pakistan.



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Significance of the Study

This research contributes to the rising body of works on gender disparities in employment and wage equality in developing countries. By focusing on the unique context of rural Punjab, the research offers appreciated perceptions into the specific issues faced by women in this region. The results of this study can notify the growth of targeted policies and involvements aimed at promoting gender equality and financial empowerment in rural areas. Furthermore, the study's recommendations can guide educational reforms to improve access to quality education for women in rural areas, thereby enhancing their employment prospects and economic independence.

Literature Review

Gender Roles and Employment

Gender roles and societal expectations significantly influence females' contact to employment chances and wage equality. In many societies, including rural Punjab, traditional gender roles often relegate women to domestic responsibilities, limiting their participation in the labor market. These roles are reinforced by patriarchal norms that prioritize men's economic contributions over women's. As a result, women often face significant barriers to employment, including limited mobility, lack of decision-making power, and societal pressure to prioritize domestic responsibilities over professional aspirations.

Education and Employment Opportunities

Education plays an important part in determining employment opportunities and wage equality. Higher levels of education are connected with improved employment aspects, higher wages, and bigger career safety. However, women in rural areas often face important barriers to retrieving excellence education, as well as inadequate resources, early marriages, and societal undervaluation of female education. These educational disparities translate into limited employment opportunities, lower skill levels, and reduced competitiveness in the job market for rural women.

Rural Dynamics and Employment

The rural context presents unique challenges to women's employment and wage equality. Rural labor markets are often characterized by informal employment, where women are engaged in low-paying, insecure jobs without legal protections or benefits. Moreover, rural areas often lack the infrastructure and resources necessary to support women's employment, such as childcare facilities and transportation. These factors contribute to the determined issues faced by females in the rural workforce.

Policy Interventions and Educational Reforms

Addressing gender disparities in employment and wage equality requires comprehensive policy interventions and educational reforms. These interventions should challenge social standards that bound females' association to education and employment, enhance educational chances for women in rural areas, and enforce fair labor practices to create an equitable economic environment for women.



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Methodology

Research Design

This study provides a qualitative study proposal to discover the intersections of gender, education, and rural dynamics in the pursuit of decent employment and equal pay in Punjab, Pakistan. Qualitative study is predominantly suitable to this research as it permits for a thorough examination of the composite and enhanced experiences of females in tribal and municipal areas.

Sampling and Data Collection

The study involves in-depth interviews with 30 respondents from diverse socio-economic backgrounds across various districts of Punjab. Participants were carefully selected to represent a broad range of experiences and perspectives related to education, employment, and gender roles. Data collection was facilitated through a semi-structured interview guide, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of the key issues.

Data Analysis

Thematic investigation was utilized to systematically recognize and examine designs inside the data. This approach involves coding the data, identifying themes, and linking these themes directly to the research objectives. The analysis was conducted using NVivo software, which facilitated the organization and investigation of the qualitative data.

Results and Discussion

Impact of Gender Roles on Education and Employment

The findings of this study reveal that gender roles meaningfully influence females' link to education and employment chances in both rural and urban areas of Punjab. Many respondents highlighted that traditional expectations often prioritize domestic responsibilities for women, which limits their ability to pursue higher education and professional careers. For instance, one participant noted, "In our community, girls are often expected to marry young and take care of the household, which leaves little room for education or work." This sentiment was echoed by several others, indicating a pervasive cultural norm that restricts women's mobility and aspirations.

Educational Disparities

The study found a stark contrast in educational attainment between rural and urban women. Urban women generally have better access to educational resources and opportunities, leading to higher levels of educational attainment compared to their rural counterparts. One urban respondent stated, "I had the chance to attend a good university, which opened many doors for me. Many of my friends from rural areas don't have the same opportunities." Conversely, rural women often face barriers such as inadequate educational facilities, early marriages, and societal undervaluation of female education. A rural participant shared, "Even if I want to study, my family believes that it's more important for me to get married and start a family."

Barriers to Employment



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The analysis revealed several barriers that hinder women's access to decent employment. These include a mismatch between educational qualifications and job opportunities, inadequate job training, and discriminatory hiring practices. Many respondents expressed frustration over the lack of job opportunities that align with their educational backgrounds. One participant lamented, "I have a degree, but there are no jobs available that match my skills. I often have to settle for low-paying work." Additionally, societal expectations and gender-based discrimination in hiring practices further exacerbate these challenges, making it difficult for women to secure decent employment.

Cultural Influences

Social standards and social behavior play a important part in determining career choices and opportunities for women. The study found that deeply ingrained cultural values often prescribe specific job roles based on gender, which restricts women from pursuing certain professions. One respondent noted, "In our culture, women are not seen as fit for leadership roles or jobs that require physical strength." This social unfairness not only bounds females' profession choices but also prolongs gender disparities in the workforce.

Family Support Systems

The role of family support emerged as a crucial factor in achieving educational and career success. Participants indicated that supportive family environments significantly influence women's ability to pursue higher education and career opportunities. Urban families were generally more supportive of women's aspirations compared to traditional rural families. One urban respondent stated, "My parents encouraged me to pursue my education and career, which made a huge difference." In contrast, a rural participant shared, "My family wants me to focus on household duties rather than my education or career."

Policy Interventions

The findings emphasize the need for effective policy interventions to discover the challenges faced by females in retrieving decent employment and achieving wage equality. Participants advocated for policies that promote fair hiring practices, combat gender-based discrimination, and support marginalized groups. One respondent suggested, "We need laws that protect women's rights in the workplace and ensure equal pay for equal work." Implementing merit-based hiring practices and creating supportive measures for disadvantaged groups are crucial steps toward promoting a more equitable labor market.

Recommendations

To address the challenges identified in this research and promote equitable access to decent employment and fair wages in Punjab, several recommendations are proposed:

1. **Challenge Traditional Gender Roles:** Initiatives aimed at raising awareness about the benefits of higher education for women, coupled with community-based programs that promote gender equality, can help shift societal attitudes and encourage families to support women's educational and professional aspirations.



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2. **Enhance Educational Access:** Improving access to educational resources in rural settings, particularly for girls, is essential for enhancing educational outcomes and career prospects. This can be achieved through scholarship programs, investment in local educational infrastructure, and remote learning opportunities.
3. **Reform Employment Barriers:** Addressing structural and systemic obstacles that hinder access to decent work is imperative. This includes improving job training programs to align with current job market needs and implementing policies that promote fair hiring practices.
4. **Promote Cultural Change:** Ongoing cultural change initiatives should aim to challenge societal norms that restrict women's career choices. Promoting diverse role models and success stories of women in non-traditional professions can help reshape perceptions.
5. **Strengthen Family Support Systems:** Programs that educate families about the importance of supporting their members' career aspirations can help reduce traditional constraints. Community-based support networks and mentoring programs can provide valuable assistance to individuals seeking to balance their professional and personal responsibilities.
6. **Implement Comprehensive Policy Interventions:** Legislators must attention on creating and applying strategies that encourage equal pay for equal work, support marginalized groups, and ensure fair hiring practices. Regular assessments of employment policies can help classify breaches and zones for development.

Conclusion

This study offers a complete exploration of the factors affecting employment and wage equality in Punjab, focusing on themes such as gender roles, educational disparities, and employment barriers. The analysis sheds light on the complex interactions among socio-cultural norms, access to education, and employment opportunities. Gender dynamics, educational access, and cultural expectations significantly influence individuals' ability to attain decent work and fair pay, highlighting the deep-seated inequalities that persist.

The findings indicate that structural and systemic barriers, coupled with cultural and societal expectations, create significant obstacles to achieving employment and wage equality. These challenges emphasize the need for targeted policy interventions aimed at addressing the unique socio-economic realities of Punjab. Support systems, such as gender-responsive education programs and workplace equality policies, could play a pivotal role in dismantling these barriers and promoting fair labor practices.

Through a detailed examination of respondents' perspectives, this study offers valuable insights into Punjab's current employment and wage landscape. These insights establish a foundation for future research and policy development, emphasizing the importance of context-sensitive approaches in addressing employment inequalities. By understanding the specific challenges faced by individuals in Punjab, policymakers can develop more effective strategies to promote equitable access to work and fair compensation. Ultimately, this research contributes to the broader discourse on labor equity, underscoring the importance of structural change to foster a more inclusive and just labor market.



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