

## The Role of Education on Women's Socio-Cultural Empowerment in Newly Merged Districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

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**Abstract:** *As a fundamental social institution, education plays a vital role in shaping society. The institution of education is a bed-rock of societal norms, values, and progress. It is dynamic for the development and prosperity of society and in the transformation of knowledge and promoting human empowerment, despite of gender. The objective of the study is to measure the influence of education on women's socio-cultural empowerment in the newly merged districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The nature of the study is quantitative. Sample size of 225 (female school teachers) were selected through the Krejcie and Morgan sample size determination table from three districts Khyber, Mohmand and Kurram newly merged districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The data were collected from 225 school teachers (Primary, Middle, and High) through structured questionnaires and then were analyzed. The data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software, and the results were presented in a clear and concise manner through tables and frequency distributions. Findings of the study showed that: Women's responses 62.96% showed that education supports her to solve gender inequality in society. 42.10% of teachers responded that education promotes her to modify the cultural norm in the society respondents. 61.1% of respondents believed education facilitates woman to bring change in her working position in the society. 55.5% of those surveyed believed that education helps her to reduce female drop out ratio in learning institute. The respondents, who made up 52.63%, agreed that education empowers her to know rights regarding property which has positive influence on women's empowerment. The result shows that education can evolve women's socio-cultural empowerment in the real sense in newly merged districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It is recommended that awareness workshops, seminars, and training should be needed both for female teachers and the general community regarding the importance of education and how education empowers women socio-culturally.*

## **Introduction**

Education is a multidimensional term that helps in assuring desired changes in all domains of human beings. It, regardless of gender, may positively influence knowledge transformation and promote human empowerment, both of which are essential for the growth and success of society (Odera & Mulusa, 2020). It is a thoughtful and systematic initiative, intended to produce defined results, such as conveying knowledge, enhancing skills, and shaping character and individual development. It is a human right and critical for individual and societal development (Reshi, Sudha & Dar, 2022).

For citizens of every country, education is considered a basic necessity and an inherent right. It is regarded as a crucial turning point in the empowerment of women since it unleashes their potential to overcome adversity, redefine their roles, and create a brighter future (Furuta & Salway, 2006). This gender imbalance can be seen in a number of areas of daily life, including the ability to access economic resources, employment possibilities, and educational chances United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2015). Women's education encompasses a broad spectrum of complex issues and debates surrounding the educational experiences of girls and women, spanning various levels of education, including primary, secondary, higher education, and health education, as well as the social and cultural factors that influence their educational journeys (Suen, 2013).

In the context of socio-cultural, women's empowerment refers to enhancing their capacity for to solve gender inequality in society, modify the cultural norm in the society, bring change in her working position in the society, reduce female drop out ratio in learning institute and know rights regarding property which has positive influence on women's empowerment (Khayyam, Ullah & Shah, 2018).

Education is reflected as a vibrant tool for taking the nation on the trail of progress but unfortunately, the education division exclusively and the women's education division as a part is neglected through successive administrations in Pakistan which subsequently point out the bleak situation of female education in Pakistan (Sohail, 2014). Education fosters a sense of agency in women, enabling them to make decisions that align with their personal values and goals (Stromquist, 2015).

Societal norms and patriarchal values in Pakistan perpetuate restrictions on women's mobility, their capacity to engage in paid work and deprivation of inherited property (Nazimuddin, 2015). According to Umoh (2021), social practices and beliefs serve as the foundation for barriers that prevent women from strengthening. The foundation of patriarchal-based control is society, which is a combination of religion and custom that determines and defines women's accepted roles in public life, their adaptability, and their access to resources such as money, social status and to solve gender inequality in society.

Every citizen should have access to education, and women's illiteracy is caused by a lack of access to education. It has been demonstrated that universal secondary education contributes to empowerment and improvement (Parveen, 2008). Women in positions of influence and authority bring a variety of viewpoints and goals to the table, which promotes inclusive and equitable outcomes (Allauddin & Khan, 2020).

Women are key stakeholders in society and if they are provided quality education can bring sea changes in all social spheres of life. History shows that women have played a leading role in society which has produced long-lasting impacts on the development of society. Education has the transformative power to enhance personal experiences, leading to the attainment of goals and aspirations. Researchers and the majority of research studies have identified that women's empowerment is deeply rooted in education, which provides the knowledge, skills, and confidence to challenge patriarchal norms. This study investigated how the level of intensity of education is responsible for women's political empowerment as it is always different in different societies.

## **Objective of the Study**

1. To measure the influence of education on women's socio-cultural empowerment in the study area.

### **Research Question of the Study**

1. How does education influence socio-cultural empowerment of women in newly merged districts?

### **Significance of the Study**

This study holds paramount importance, as education serves as a fundamental pillar of society and a critical benchmark for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As a cornerstone of human progress, education plays a pivotal role in fostering socio-cultural advancement, driving individual and national growth, and empowering communities to thrive. This research study was important for teachers, policymakers, and planners at the national level and for all the researchers coming from NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) and other organizations.

### **Literature Review**

According to Ahmad et al., (2014) women's empowerment is sparked by education. Her empowerment encompasses five key dimensions: self-esteem and self-value, enabling women to recognize their worth and dignity, autonomy and agency, granting women the freedom to make choices and decisions that affect their lives, access and opportunity, ensuring women have equal access to resources, services, and opportunities for growth and development, personal power and control, allowing women to govern their own lives, both in private and public spheres.

Social influence and activism, empowering women to shape societal change, challenge injustices, and promote a more equitable and just world, both locally and globally (Malik & Courtney, 2011).

Education levels, particularly higher education levels, may have an impact on empowerment since they enable women to fulfill a variety of personal, family, and societal objectives (Bhat, 2015).

To knowing about social and cultural values is part of education. Students are better prepared for discussions about cultural ethics and norms through education (Detert, Seashore Louis & Schroeder, 2001).

A person can more easily adapt to their natural and social environments with the aid of certain cultural components. Every member of the society has a unique set of behaviors, attitudes, and ways of seeing the world. An individual's viewpoint on various community models is altered by education (Kurbanova, Botirova & Abdurahmonova, 2022).

Technically speaking, education serves as the primary conduit for the deliberate transmission of societal values, knowledge, traditions, and skills from one generation to the next, facilitated through formal institutions such as schools, colleges, universities, and other learning environments. As a powerful catalyst for change, education enables both social and cultural evolution, shaping individuals and society as a whole (Chakraborty et al., 2018).

Culture plays a profound role in shaping human behavior, as every person is born into a societal framework that outlines expected norms and values, directing their actions and decisions in every sphere of life. A person should advance both in society and personally by learning about cultural values and customs through education (Nieto, 2008).

Social practices and convictions are the root of barriers to women's empowerment (Khayyam, Ullah, & Shah, 2018). Education makes students and teachers aware of the world, the ways that things have changed over time, and the importance of carrying out tasks in line with national values in all fields (Stephens, 2007).

Bhat (2015) has concluded the fact that women's empowerment through education is the process by which they acquire information and skills, overcome obstacles, and gain control over resources like education, employment, property ownership, and human resources that can improve their capacity to make decisions.

According to Gervais (2011), educated women are empowered to express their own thoughts, make informed choices, and assert their human rights in a secure and enabling environment. This, in turn, fosters a sense of self-worth and confidence, even in the face of patriarchal norms that have historically restricted their human rights

Somani (2017) has validated the fact that education gives women more power, more autonomy, and a higher quality of life to females in society.

Mercy and Rani (2019) confirmed that changes are required in education and especially in the curriculum to enable collective identification and address their own needs related to homes, communities, and societies.

Khatri (2016) emphasized that education and knowledge have inspired female to step out of their domestic roles and explore the world beyond, leading to a more independent and liberated lifestyle. Numerous women actively backed and participated in the nationalist cause, winning prestigious positions and posts in government. Women are now at the forefront of efforts to sway public opinion and bring about positive change, championing the cause of women's empowerment and equality in society.

Ibrahim (2012) claimed that position of women in the home is influenced by education. The patriarchal aspect and domination of Pakistani society makes it more difficult for women to own land, to access adequate legal protection for their rights, to participate in politics and socio-cultural norms and values.

A woman with an education may blend into any class or society, openly voice her opinions, and help her community develop socially. Education gives women the knowledge and confidence to stand up for their rights. Countries with educated women are more likely to have democratic governments (Chandra, 2018).

Women, on the basis of education, have higher social status in industrialized nations than in underdeveloped nations (Butt & Victor, 2014).

Engida (2021) claimed that education for women promotes social advancement. It enables them to conduct honorable life structures and status in society. Women's education is acknowledged for its catalyst role in advancing real gender equality as well as a way to enhance cultural and social development outcomes.

Asif (2013) reveals that social, cultural, and religious factors can be a driving force behind women's socio-cultural empowerment, unlocking their potential and enabling them to reach new heights. There are numerous socio-cultural barriers including patriarchy, discriminating social structure, and the Pashtunwali, which limit the empowerment of women in Pashtuns society. In Pashtun codes, there are demarcated ample ways to quality education. The constructive role of the media has increased the socio-cultural empowerment of women.

According to Kreager et al., (2013), educated women typically possess greater self-assurance and social independence which safeguard and minimize their vulnerability to physical and emotional spheres within the house and society.

**Methodology:**

**Nature of the Study**

Every research is to be completed with a specific methodological approach. The current study is quantitative, whereas descriptive design has been applied in the study to accurately and systematically describe the whole situation.

**Sample and Sampling Frame Work**

For this research, a sample of two twenty five female school teachers, representing Primary, Middle, and High schools, was chosen through simple random sampling, serving as a miniature representation of the entire population through Krejcie and Morgan sample size determination table from the three targeted districts (Khyber, Mohmand and Kurram). Then for the equal representation of each segment and district, the researcher takes equal sample from each stratum and district. Below is the sample frame;

**Table No. 1: Newly Merged Districts with Primary, Middle and Secondary Teachers Data.**

Areas	PST	Middle	High	Total
Khyber	38	19	18	
Mohmand	38	19	18	225
Kurram	38	19	18	
Total	114	57	54	

(Krecie and Morgan, 1970)

**Data Collection Tool**

In the research process, tool development is the most technically demanding task. For this particular study, the researcher employed a structured questionnaire as the primary instrument for data collection.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

Data analysis involves transforming raw data into meaningful insights that inform research decisions (Wickham & Wickham, 2016). In this study, the researcher employed Uni-variate and Bi-variate analysis techniques, utilizing the chi-square test to examine relationships between dependent and independent variables and identify significant associations.

**Data Presentation and Discussion**

**Table No. 2: School Teachers' Perspectives on Women's Socio-cultural Empowerment.**

Research Question	Participants	*SA %	A %	UD %	DA %	SDA %	X <sup>2</sup>	**p-value
a. Education supports her to solve gender inequality in society.	PST	34 29.80	56 49.2	20 17.5	03 2.6	01 0.9	92.22	.000
	MST	21 36.84	27 47.36	07 12.28	01 1.75	01 1.75	50.10	0.000
	HST	16 29.6	34 62.96	02 3.70	01 1.85	01 1.85	77.29	0.000
b. Education promotes her to modify the cultural norm in the society.	PST	61 53.5	46 40.4	05 4.4	01 0.9	01 0.9	143.19	.000
	MST	22 38.59	24 42.10	06 10.52	02 3.50	03 5.26	40.28	0.000
	HST	25 46.29	21 38.88	06 11.11	01 1.85	01 1.85	48.22	0.000
c. Education facilitates her to bring change in her working position in the society.	PST	37 32.5	59 51.8	14 12.3	03 2.6	01 0.9	107.75	.000
	MST	18 31.57	29 50.87	08 14.03	01 1.75	01 1.75	50.98	0.000
	HST	15 27.77	33 61.1	04 7.40	01 1.85	01 1.85	69.33	0.000
d. Education helps her to reduce female drop out ratio in learning institute.	PST	42 36.8	60 52.6	09 7.9	01 0.9	02 1.8	125.03	.000
	MST	22 38.59	25 43.85	08 14.03	01 1.75	01 1.75	46.07	0.000
	HST	15 27.77	30 55.55	07 12.96	01 1.85	01 1.85	54.88	0.000
e. Education empowers her to know rights regarding property which has positive influence on women's empowerment.	PST	35 30.7	58 50.9	17 14.9	03 2.6	01 0.9	100.38	.000
	MST	20 35.08	30 52.63	05 8.77	01 1.75	01 1.75	59.40	0.000
	HST	19 35.18	28 51.85	05 9.25	01 1.85	01 1.85	54.51	0.000

**Chi-square (X<sup>2</sup>) table value at 0.05 is 9.49**

**\*\*Significant \*Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), undecided (UD), Disagreed (DA) and strongly disagreed (SDA).**

**Education Supports her to Solve Gender Inequality in Society.**

Table No. 2 (a) shows data regarding education supports her to solve gender inequality in society. In this regard, the question was asked from the 114 Primary School Teachers. As a result to that statement, 29.8% of the teacher preferred strongly agreed, 49.2% preferred agreed, 17.5% preferred for undecided, 2.6% preferred disagreed, and 0.9% preferred strongly disagreed. Chi-square test was calculated 92.22. Similarly 57 Middle School Teachers were asked the same statement. As a result to that statement, 36.84 % preferred strongly agreed, 47.36%) preferred agreed, 12.28% preferred undecided, 1.75% preferred disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. Chi-square was calculated



50.10. Moreover, 54 High School Teachers were asked for the statement. As a result, 29.6 % preferred strongly agreed, 62.96% preferred agreed, 3.70% preferred undecided, 1.85% preferred disagreed, and strongly disagreed. Chi-square test was calculated 77.29. Table value was observed 9.49 at 0.05. Results showed that calculated values are greater than the table value. It showed that education supports her to solve gender inequality in society. These results support the earlier findings of Ahmad et al., (2014).

**Education promotes her to modify the Cultural Norm in the Society.**

Table No.2 (b) depicts that Primary School Teachers (114) were asked that education promotes her to modify the cultural norm in the society. As a result to that statement, 53.5% chosen strongly agreed, 40.4% chosen agreed, 4.4% chosen undecided, 9% chosen disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. Chi-square test was calculated 143.19. These results support the earlier findings of Ahmad et al., (2014). Similarly, 57 Middle School Teachers were asked same statement. As a result to that statement, 38.59% chosen strongly agreed, 42.10% opted for agreed, 10.52% chosen undecided, 3.50% chosen disagreed', and 5.26% chosen strongly disagreed. Chi-square test was calculated 40.28. Moreover, 54 High School Teachers were asked for the statement. As a result, 46.29 % chosen strongly greed, 38.88% chosen agreed, 11.11% chosen undecided, 1.85% chosen disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. Chi-square test was calculated 48.22. These results support the earlier findings of Malik & Courtney (2011).

**Education facilitates her to bring change in her Working Position in the Society.**

Table No. 2 (c) demonstrates that 114 Primary School Teachers were asked, that education facilitates her to bring change in your working position in the society. As a result to that statement, 32.5% selected strongly agreed, 51.8% selected agreed, 12.3% selected undecided, 2.6% selected disagreed', and 0.9% selected strongly disagreed. Chi-square test was calculated 107.7. These results support the earlier findings of Chakraborty et al., (2018). Similarly, 57 Middle School Teachers were asked the same statement. As a result to that statement, 31.57% selected strongly agreed, 50.87% selected agreed, 14.03% selected undecided, 1.75% selected disagreed and strongly disagreed. Chi-square ( $X^2$ ) was calculated 50.98. Moreover, 54 High School Teachers were asked for the statement. As a result to that statement, 27.77 % selected strongly greed, 61.1% selected agreed, 7.40% selected undecided, 1.85% selected disagreed, and strongly disagreed respectively. Chi-square test was calculated 69.33. Table value was observed 9.49 at 0.05. Results showed that calculated values are greater than the table value. These results support the earlier findings of Bhat (2015).

**Education helps her to reduce Female Drop Out Ratio in Learning Institute.**

No. 2 (d) reveals that 114 Primary School Teachers were asked, that education helps her to reduce female drop out ratio in learning institute. As a result to that statement, 36.8% elected strongly agreed, 52.6% elected agreed, 7.9% elected undecided, 0.9% elected disagreed and 1.8% elected strongly disagreed. Chi-square test was calculated 125.03. Similarly, 57 Middle School Teachers were asked the same statement. As a result to that statement, 38.59% elected strongly greed, 43.85% elected agreed, 14.03% elected undecided, 1.75% elected disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. Chi-square test was calculated 46.07. Moreover, 54 High School Teachers were asked for the statement. As a result to that statement, 27.77 % elected strongly agreed, 55.55% elected agreed', 12.96% elected undecided, 1.85% elected disagreed, and strongly disagreed respectively. Chi-square test was calculated 54.88. Table value was observed 9.49 at 0.05. Results showed that calculated values are greater than the table value. These results support the earlier findings of (Chakraborty et al., 2018; Khayyam, Ullah, & Shah, 2018).

**Education empowers her to know rights regarding Property which has Positive Influence on Women's Empowerment.**

Table No. 2 (e) illustrates that 114 Primary School Teachers were asked the above statement. As a result to that statement, 30.7% decided for strongly agreed, 50.9% decided for agreed, 14.9% elected for undecided, 2.6% decided disagreed and 0.9% decided for strongly disagreed. Chi-square test was calculated 100.38. Similarly, 57 Middle School Teachers were asked the same statement. As a result to that statement, 35.08% decided for strongly agreed, 52.63% decided for agreed, 8.77% decided for undecided, 1.75% decided disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. Chi-square test was

calculated 59.40. Moreover, 54 High School Teachers were asked for the statement. As a result to that statement, 35.18% decided for strongly agreed, 51.85% decided for agreed, 9.25% decided for undecided, 1.85% decided disagreed, and strongly disagreed respectively. Chi-square test was calculated 54.51. Table value was observed 9.49 at 0.05. Results showed that calculated values are greater than the table value. These results support the earlier findings of (Bhat 2015; Somani, 2017).

### **Findings**

Findings of the study showed that: Women's responses 62.96% showed that education supports her to solve gender inequality in society. 42.10% of teachers responded that education promotes her to modify the cultural norm in the society respondents. 61.1% of respondents believed education facilitates woman to bring change in her working position in the society. 55.5% of those surveyed believed that education helps her to reduce female drop out ratio in learning institute. The respondents, who made up 52.63%, agreed that education empowers her to know rights regarding property which has positive influence on women's empowerment.

### **Conclusion**

The current study investigates the transformative power of education in advancing the socio-cultural empowerment of females' school teachers in the NMD'S of KPK. The main objective is to understand how education shapes the socio-cultural empowerment of women, as perceived by female school teachers. Results of the study showed that women are interested in to solve gender inequality in society, modify the cultural norm, facilitates woman to bring change in her working position, reduce female drop out ratio in learning institute and know rights regarding property which has positive influence on women's empowerment. Such involvement and active participation of women in socio-cultural activities are due to education. It is education which aware people from the importance of female in the society.

### **Recommendations**

The research findings have led to the following recommendations:

- It is recommended that provide access to vocational training, and entrepreneurial support to enable women to start their own businesses should be arranged to raise awareness about the act's potential to promote gender equality and challenge patriarchal norms.
- It is recommended that awareness workshops and seminars should be arranged to establish literacy programs, workshops, and training sessions to educate women about their rights, health, and economic opportunities and how it evolve female school teacher's empowerment in newly merged districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
- It is recommended that organize community events, campaigns, and support groups to promote women's rights, challenge harmful customs, and foster a culture of inclusivity. Establish legal aid clinics, counseling services, and support networks to help women access justice and protection from abuse.
- It is recommended that that foster partnerships with local organizations, government agencies, and stakeholders to leverage resources and expertise. Provide training and capacity-building programs for women to enhance their skills, confidence, and participation in public life.

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